



FISCAL YEAR 2024 REPORTS
FOR THE 73rd ANNUAL MEETING

THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
CONGREGATION IN WESTPORT

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73rd ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA
SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 2024

- **Call to Order** (L Garvey, Board President & Moderator)
 - Meeting Protocols and Instructions for Remote Attendees
- **Opening Words and Chalice Lighting** (Rev Alan Taylor)
- **Quorum Report** (S Emberling, Secretary)
- **MOTION: To allow the use of hybrid voting at this meeting**
- **Approval of Member Meeting Minutes:**
 - June 11, 2023: Annual Member Meeting
 - March 10, 2024: Special Member Meeting on Construction
- **The Very Fine Lifetime Volunteer Service Award** (R Sankar, Trustee)
- **Board of Trustees Report** (L Garvey, Board President & Moderator)
- **Report on Construction** (B Cliff, Vice-President)
- **Report on Transitional Ministry** (Rev Alan Taylor)
- **Report from the Committee on Ministries** (J Norman, Chair)
- **Report from the Social Justice Council and Vote on Future Share-the-Plate Recipients** (S Sankar, A Pfluger, Co-Chairs)
- **Report on the #MeToo Resolution** (Rev Alan Taylor)
- **Report on the Anti-Racism Resolution** (Rev Alan Taylor)
- **Financial Reports:**
 - 2023-2024 Pledge Report (E Rockman-Blake, S Somashekar, Stewardship Co-Chairs)
 - Endowment Report (K Vogel, Chair)
 - Financial Results & Proposed Budget (S Grathwohl, Treasurer)
- **Ratification of 2024-2025 Budget**
- **MOTION: To approve spending up to \$110,500 of unrestricted funds from the Endowment, if needed to fill gap in budget shortfall**
- **Elections for the Elected Committees** (e belmont, C McElroy, Nominating Committee Co-Chairs):
 - Board of Trustees
 - Endowment Committee
 - Committee on Ministries
 - Nominating Committee
- **Installation of New Board & Elected Committee Members**
- **Recognition of Congregational Service** (B Cliff)
- **New Business**
 - **75th Anniversary Celebration** (B Cliff)
- **Adjournment**

NOTE: Pre-registration is required for virtual attendance. If attendance in person is absolutely impossible, virtual attendance and voting will be allowed, **but only for those who RSVP** to the Secretary, Stapley Emberling (secretary@uwestport.org or stapley@emberlingstudio.com) no later than 12 noon on Saturday, June 8th. Rules for virtual attendance and a ZOOM link will be sent to you at that time. If you do NOT receive a prompt reply, your request has not been received and you have not been registered. Please follow up until you receive a response to confirm that you have been registered.

BOARD & ELECTED COMMITTEES ROSTER 2023-2024

Terms of Elected Offices as of June 12, 2023

BOARD OF TRUSTEES – 9 members, elected to 3-year terms, in a 3-3-3 rotation. Max of 2 consecutive terms.

Beth Cliff	2026	– 2 nd Term	Vice President
Ravi Sankar	2026	– 2 nd Term	
Jennifer Gerometta	2026	– 1 st Term	
Luke Garvey	2024	– 2 nd Term	President
Deb Garskof	2024	– 2 nd Term	Deputy Secretary
Steve Grathwohl	2024	– 2 nd Term	Treasurer
Wendy Levy	2025	– 2 nd Term	
Stapley Emberling	2025	– 2 nd Term	Secretary
Brian Lasher	2025	– 1 st Term	

COM – 7 members, elected to a single 5-year term, 1 or 2 vacant slots each year

Julyen Norman	2024		Chair
Monica Garrison	2025		
Chuck Colletti	2025		
Melanie Allen	2026	(Completing Term)	
Shahan Islam	2026		
Joanne Orenstein	2027		
Lisa Donahue-Olivieri	2028		

ENDOWMENT – 5 members, single 5-year term, 1 elected each year

Terri Laug	2024	(Completing Term)	
Jamie Forbes	2025		
Cindy Potter	2026		
Tom Hearne	2027		
Ken Vogel	2028		(Chair)

NOMINATING – 5 members, single 2-year term, 2 or 3 elected in 2-year rotation

Cathy McElroy	2024		(Co-Chair)
Eileen Belmont	2024		(Co-Chair)
David Raymond	2025		
Emily Sherwood	2025		
Jerusha Vogel	2025		

ELECTED COMMITTEES NOMINATING SLATE 2024-2025

Terms of Elected Offices to be voted on June 9, 2024

This year we have the opportunity to vote in nine new elected officers: 4 Trustees, 1 COM member, 1 Endowment Committee member, and 3 Nominating Committee members as follows:

BOARD OF TRUSTEES – 9 members, elected to 3-year terms, in a 3-3-3 rotation. Max of 2 consecutive terms.

Terms ending June 2025:

Stapley Emberling	2025	– 2 nd Term	(Secretary)
Brian Lasher	2025	– 1 st Term	

Terms ending June 2026:

Beth Cliff	2026	– 2 nd Term	(Vice President)
Ravi Sankar	2026	– 2 nd Term	
Jennifer Gerometta	2026	– 1 st Term	

Nominees:

Anita Pfluger	2025	– Nominee for Election June 2024 (Completing Term)
Mark Corcoran	2027	– Nominee for Election June 2024
Jon Gage	2027	– Nominee for Election June 2024
Felicia Keeton	2027	– Nominee for Election June 2024

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY (COM) – 7 members, elected to a single 5-year term, 1 or 2 vacant slots each year

Chuck Colletti	2025	
Monica Garrison	2025	
Melanie Allen	2026	
Shahan Islam	2026	
Joanne Orenstein	2027	
Lisa Donohue-Olivieri	2028	
Sofia Dumery	2029	– Nominee for Election June 2024

ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE – 5 members, single 5-year term, 1 elected each year

Jamie Forbes	2025	
Cindy Potter	2026	
Tom Hearne	2027	
Ken Vogel	2028	Chair
Terri Laug	2029	– Nominee for Election June 2024

NOMINATING COMMITTEE – 5 members, single 2-year term, 2 or 3 elected in 2-year rotation

Emily Sherwood	2025	
Jerusha Vogel	2025	
Melissa Balmer	2026	– Nominee for Election June 2024
Lindy Hennessy	2026	– Nominee for Election June 2024
Eileen O'Reilly	2026	– Nominee for Election June 2024

STAFF ROSTER

Rev. Alan Taylor, Transitional Senior Minister
Rev. Dr. Edward Thompson, Minister of Music
Rev. Jim Francek, Community Minister - Pastoral Care
Rev. Carrie McEvoy, Community Minister
Rev. Frank Hall, Minister Emeritus
Nate Pawelek, Lead for Family Faith Formation (until October 2023)
Angi Haen, Director of Faith Formation (started November 2023)
Nick Barra, Assistant Director of Music
Lexi Fonda, Assistant Director of Music
Sue O'Meara, Accountant
Ruth Fontilla, Congregational Administrator
Mike Roman, Part-Time Custodian

TRANSITIONAL SENIOR MINISTER

What is Transitional Ministry?

It has been a privilege to serve you as a Contract Transitional Senior Minister. After failing to find a minister during the Interim Minister Search Process, your congregation sought a Contract Transitional Minister. I hadn't been in search but was intrigued at the prospect of serving you. Because my family is settled in Oak Park, IL, I proposed a hybrid model where I fly in twice a month for ten days (first three trips of 10 days each) and attend to all other parts of the ministry remotely, including a monthly sermon. Your Search Committee and Board embraced this unconventional arrangement—a bold decision!

In conversations with your Search Team, it emerged that the Congregation needed a healing, non-anxious presence rather than an interim minister who assesses the wider system and implements immediate changes. I intentionally sought to get to know you and the wider system as a spiritual director or a family therapist would—creating spaces for open, honest conversations about how you want to be with one another. While I share some of my observations in this report, I have sought to lead your congregation into greater health through a process of allowing disagreements, concerns, and hurt feelings to be shared. Fortunately, there is not major misconduct but there are systems and patterns of behavior that are likely generations in the making.

I intentionally refrained from making significant changes this past year due to all the changes you're going through. There are many theories of change and many ways to navigate a Transitional Ministry. I engaged Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, Rev. Terasa Cooley, and Rev. Scott Tayler as mentors / coaches. Within the Congregation, the Transitional Ministry is supported, in part, by a Transition Team: Randy Burnham, Cheryl Dixon Paul, Sharon Poole, and Ken Vogel. Their role is to help me understand congregational dynamics and to be a sounding board for my efforts. Great support has come from engaged members here who have shared with me varying perspectives and now are engaging in thoughtful conversations.

Prior to coming to TUUCW, I admired how many members of this congregation over the years have become denominational leaders and ministers. This congregation has also long been known for a fabulous music program and one of the strongest social justice programs in the Unitarian Universalist Association. Over twenty UU ministers identify TUUCW as their original spiritual home.

During the search process, I learned how this congregation has long brought together highly creative people, many of whom participate(d) in the music program and many of whom have been committed to social justice activities. I also learned that over the last twelve years, membership, pledging, staffing, and the number of children declined significantly. The reasons attributed to these changes:

- a challenging ministerial transition a decade ago

- changing habits during the pandemic
- several people not feeling seen or heard
- conflicts that left many feeling that decisions were made that were not transparent or inclusive

During the search process, I was impressed by the openness about these challenges and what was needed in a Transitional Minister—a non-anxious individual who is strong in the pulpit, makes space for healing, and enjoys getting to know all kinds of people. I have sought to be that minister.

Beginning of the Transitional Ministry

When I began in mid-August, I sought to meet with as many people and leaders as possible. I encountered many people who harbored a pent-up need to share as I quickly became acquainted with many members and friends of the Congregation. The intensity of the welcome was surprising. In my first two sermons (and future communications), I laid out the role of a transitional minister as holding the space for honest and open sharing so that challenging patterns of behavior can be identified and healing can emerge. Given the multitude of strong feelings around many issues, I couldn't refrain from saying in my first sermon, "It seems like a lot of you thrive on drama here." Over a dozen people expressed gratitude for simply stating humorously "an elephant in the living room." In that sermon, I also shared my theology, simply put: "Sh[aving cream] happens. Grace happens." I knew I was meant to be here when I discovered a Grace Happens bumper sticker—that I made fifteen years ago—on the inside of the vestments closet door!

During those first few weeks, I was amazed at how many hours several board members put in and troubled by how often they had recently dealt with—as individuals and a collective—aggressive and disrespectful comments, behaviors that wouldn't be tolerated in the workplace. I was also troubled that a number of long-term members from different parts of the congregation expressed frustration with Board process and communication. I was surprised to learn of similar patterns in the past that suggested systemic challenge. As it became clear that there was a disconnect between several leaders and the Board, the Board readily sought to rebuild trust (as I will flesh out later).

After those first three trips of 10 days apiece, this is what I discerned among you:

- A deep longing for turning inward for the sake of taking care of the community
- A deep longing for spiritual grounding and nourishment
- Unresolved grief regarding the departure of past ministers
- Lack of systems that allow for constructive criticism to be shared with the Board and with the Senior Minister
- A lack of clarity about policies and practices of decision-making
- A lack of clarity regarding ministerial authority, congregational polity, and the nature of policy governance that encourages decisions to be made at the lowest levels possible
- Broken trust, painful divisions, and a deep longing for healing among many

Development of a Shared Transitional Ministry

Shortly after I arrived, the Appreciative Inquiry leadership shared their report on the congregation-wide process that began prior to Rev. Morehouse's announced resignation and finished after it. I discussed the Appreciative Inquiry report with the lead facilitators this process and writers of the report: Tom Hearne, Rev. Jim Francek, and Lyn Kobsa. The Board and I discussed the report at the Board Retreat. Out of that thoughtful conversation emerged the plan on how to prepare the Congregation for a New Settled Minister Search. The Arc of Shared Transitional Ministry was created shortly thereafter:

The Arc of Shared Transitional Ministry at UUWestport



The Board and I agreed to prioritize rebuilding trust. To rebuild trust, we agreed that two things needed to happen prior to engaging the visioning process that happens before launching a ministerial search: addressing conflict transformation and identifying clear transparent decision-making processes in a way that invites the participation of the wider congregation. In the ensuing months, we planned what this would look like. A Transforming Conflict Team launched in February and a Governance/Decision-Making Team begins their work in June. These teams will conduct their work through this next year, after which the Congregation hopefully will be ready to engage a visioning process. So, this means a ministerial search would be put together in the spring of 2025 so that a Settled Minister can be called in the spring of 2026 and would begin their duties in the fall of 2026.

Some of you have asked why not begin this search process now. Several reasons: trust-building takes time; it behooves the congregation to identify and transform patterns of behavior that lead to conflict if you want a healthy relationship with your next minister; the work of discerning decision-making processes isn't simply structural work, it requires relational engagement not only with leaders but with the wider Congregation; and now with the upcoming retirement of Rev. Ed Thompson, the Congregation undergoes another significant transition during which a shared Transitional Ministry is especially helpful in the long run.

Transforming Conflict

I'm pleased with the progress you have already made in the work of Transforming Conflict. The culture here—like most UU congregations—has been to avoid conflict or ignore it. A training I attended regarding conflict put it succinctly: “Conflict is normal, healthy, and inevitable within any group of people. The existence of conflict is not determinative of the quality of relationships within a congregation, it's how the congregation deals with conflict that matters. Suppressed conflicts fester and conflict avoidance often enables those who are acting in disrespectful, spiteful, and otherwise emotionally and spiritually immature ways. Embracing the existence of conflict and providing a healthy and productive way of dealing with it opens up the possibility of deeper and more meaningful relationships among members of the congregation.”

When conflict isn't addressed in a healthy manner, more and more congregants avoid active participation—and leaders become the targets of disaffected members. This is TUUCW's recent experience. It was troubling to see

how many critical emails the Board receives, especially at the beginning of the year. To begin this work, this is what I did:

- Gave two sermons addressing the presence of conflict directly and sought to set the theme of the year as “Beginning Again in Love.”
- Offered three workshops on Brene Brown’s BRAVING the Wilderness about what makes for healthy communication and claiming one’s voice.
- With the Board, created a Transforming Conflict Team with Linda Lubin, chair, and two members of the Board, Committee on Ministry and Transition Team: Brian Lasher, Jen Gerometta, Lisa Donohue, Monica Garrison, Randy Burnham, and Cheryl Dixon-Paul.
- With the Adult Faith Formation Team, designated *Transforming Conflict* by Rev. Terasa Cooley as the Congregational Read this year. Nine small group conversations were held, two of which I facilitated.
- Contracted with Rev. Terasa Cooley to preach, facilitate workshops, and consult with me, the Board, and the Transforming Conflict Team.
- Supported the Transforming Conflict Team in addressing how to cultivate skills for healthy communication.

Shifts I’ve seen made this year in line with the goals of Transforming Conflict:

- The Board held Bagels with the Board on a monthly basis and shifted it to follow the worship service and heightened the quality of conversations.
- The Board ended the practice of having a “Pro” and a “Con” microphone at congregational meetings, thus taking a big step from a debate culture to a discernment culture.
- Many leaders prioritized process over outcomes, including the Board in how they led the Congregation to decide whether and how to raise more funds for the building.
- Several meetings were held in circles where everyone had the opportunity to share without being cut off.
- Improved email etiquette—and far fewer disrespectful or hurtful emails.

Transforming Conflict work still in process

Cultivating skills for intentional conversations leading to deeper relationship.

Unfortunately, Rev. Terasa Cooley was unable to be with us in March. Her workshop with us was postponed to October 6. She is known as one of the most effective skills-building teacher and culture-change catalyzer around issues of conflict.

The practice of covenant may need to be rehabilitated.

Six years ago, the Congregation developed a Congregational Covenant of Right Relations; however, this Covenant is large. After I gave a sermon on the use of covenants in our heritage, I was surprised how a number of people shared that they distrust the word “covenant.” Some people have experienced this notion of covenant of shared agreements to be used to exclude people rather than address behavior. Several members have shared their perspective that “covenant” has been used in a hurtful manner, both at TUUCW and in the wider UUA.

Creating an honest, open grievance process.

Several members shared with me at length how they believe the congregation struggles with racial and/or class oppression. Other members have at times experienced the congregation as unsafe for people with mental health or neurodivergent needs. In the quest to be inclusive and affirm the worthiness and dignity of all, the Congregation will be served well by a clear process on how people who experience hurtful or disrespectful treatment can share their concerns.

Assessing the role of the Committee on Ministry.

The Committee on Ministry is charged to assess the ministries and committees of the congregation and to provide support when there is a conflict between a leader (including the minister) and another member. They are currently the holder of the Congregational Covenant of Right Relations. Because the Transforming Conflict Team includes members of the Board and the Transforming Conflict Team, this body is well positioned to

facilitate conversations and make recommendations with the Committee on Ministry about how to transform conflict and whether a grievance process described above is the responsibility of the Committee on Ministry.

Governance, Decision-making and Transparency

I've encountered a lack of agreement about the level of authority the senior minister is given over decision making as well a lot of misunderstanding about Policy Governance. Policy Governance is a form of governance where the Board is charged with addressing the core values, "ends" or goals, and the policies to ensure the values of the Congregation are engaged. The board is a deliberative body, not an executive one. The senior minister is charged with executive duties on how to meet the "ends"/goals—and is expected to delegate to both paid staff and volunteer leaders/committees. Ideally, decisions are made at the lowest possible level. For policy governance to work well, there must be two things: a senior minister capable of delegating to staff and volunteers and a strong Board-Congregation linkage. The Board's work is ultimately relational, not technical, as it discerns what values are bedrock, what horizons to move towards, and what policies are needed to ensure healthy and ethical engagement.

I'm delighted the board has chartered a Governance Team to address questions.

Additional Observations

Mission and Connections. You have a clear Mission: Inspire, Connect, Act. There is a lot of inspiration here from the quality of the music to the stories about opportunities to serve to the worship services. There are plenty of opportunities to act—several service projects that engage volunteers in meaningful ways to opportunities to participate in legislative advocacy on behalf of legislation that furthers our values. However, one area to shore up is the opportunity to connect. I intend to work with the Leadership Development Team to oversee this critical part of the congregation, including bringing the Congregational Administrator on to this team to ensure the monthly gatherings of the committee chairs include how the practices of working as a volunteer evolve.

Preventing Burnout. Many people have expressed guilt that they cannot more involved, knowing there are many volunteer needs to maintain the activity level of the past. A strong work ethic exists here, and it gets amplified and transmitted through anxiety about the congregation's future. Anxiety limits congregations. Congregational involvement should be meaningful, rewarding, and fun. This has been a year of encouraging volunteer leaders to expand to new roles and nurture new leaders.

Future Steps

In partnership with the Board, Staff, COM, and Transition Team, this next year I will:

- Conduct a congregational history timeline workshop.
- Support the Governance Task Force addressing decision-making and transparency that will offer multiple avenues of involvement.
- Support the Transforming Conflict Team, including rescheduling Rev. Terasa Cooley's workshop.
- Re-affirm the role of the Committee on Ministry, including a clear feedback loop for leadership.
- Navigate the transition of the leadership of the fabulous music program from the beloved Rev. Ed Thompson as Minister of Music to an interim Music Director.

All of these steps shall help inform the exciting process of visioning to determine what kind of minister will be the best fit for you in the next chapter of your congregational life.

What is Needed from You?

There are many ways in which people show up for one another in this congregation in a caring and supportive way. This transitional period requires this of all of us, given that the work is not confined to me, the staff, or the Board. We will continue to look to you for your ideas, your participation, and your generosity. If you have not found a particular way to get involved and wish to, please contact me or one of the staff. We can help you find your way.

Summary

Shared Transitional Ministry is a process to rebuild trust and cultivate new patterns of engaging with one another. We cannot hope to wrap a bow around such complex issues and call it complete. I'm heartened by how many leaders bring such self-reflection and commitment to learn how to discern collectively how you want to be together. So much is in bud thanks to the inspiring heritage here and the sincere, creative, and committed group of members among you. This is a liminal time in the congregation's history made possible by the hard work of the Board, the staff, and all of you who bring your goodwill to this enterprise we call a faith community. It is a privilege for me to partner with you in this work. I look forward to another year of companionship as you continue to nurture deeper relationships, living out meaningful ways to impact lives in the wider community, and fostering personal growth.

I look forward to hearing your questions at or after the Annual Meeting on June 9. You may also email them to me at alan@uuwestport.org or set an appointment to talk with me.

Respectfully submitted by Rev. Alan Taylor

MINISTER OF MUSIC

In spite of the obstacles, we sang on. By obstacles I am referring to the ongoing Covid situation and the fact that several of our choir members contracted Covid. Secondly, while I am making good progress with my post-stroke recovery, I still had a little way to go. So, beginning last September I agreed to continue on a half-time basis. This represents a major change to the program.

Regarding the program itself, the major change has been to put the Children's Choir on hold; this was due to low numbers – 3 children. Instead, we began to have 15 minutes of music at the end of chapel every Sunday because we felt it was important for all of our youth to have some music. Lexi Fonda, one of the Assistant Directors of Music, leads these sessions. Both Lexi and Nick Barra direct the Teen Choir. Both Nick and I have been conducting the Bell Choir rehearsals. I also conduct the O&AS and the Adult Choir.

At this point the groups that are meeting are: the Bell Choir, the Adult Choir, the Once & Again Singers and the Teen Choir. In spite of all the difficulties, we were able to have a Holiday Concert and a Spring Concert. Let me be sure to mention the names of some of the soloists who have been so helpful to us: Jenna McPartland, Paige Steel, Mike Costantino and Andy Gundell. Other events of the year included our annual Carol Sing-along, and the visit from New York based Choral Chameleon in February.

I am hoping that by September even more of our singers will feel safe enough to return.

Our strong choral program has been the backbone of our music activities for a long time. It is a spiritual practice for many people. I look forward to a new normal for continuing that important work. And I say: THANK YOU to all of the individuals who are so committed to this inspired and inspiring effort.

Members of the Music Committee are: Candace Clinger, Debbie Handler, Tom Hearne (chair), Jenny Klein, Diane Moller, Gian Morresi, Cathy Paine, Chris Place, Connie Rockman.

Rev. Dr. Edward Thompson, Minister of Music

COMMUNITY MINISTER

I would like to share my heartfelt gratitude to this congregation for allowing me to be your Endorsed Community Minister for the 2023-2024 program year. My primary job this year has been as the Palliative Care Chaplain

Fellow at Greenwich Hospital. I have also been privileged to serve as a minister in this congregation. Over the year I have led three Sunday services, I co-led a “Blue Christmas/Solemn Season” service to hold space for those facing difficult emotions during the holiday season, I represented the congregation by welcoming the NAACP who hosted a town hall meeting to address racial discrimination faced in Westport schools, and I covered pastoral care needs for a month during summer 2023. The congregational polity of Unitarian Universalism means that UU Ministers who are not directly hired by a congregation are able to maintain their fellowship by being endorsed by a congregation. A congregation does not need to endorse a community minister – the hope is that the relationship between a community minister and a congregation is mutual – ideally both are made stronger by working together in their community. You – the UU Congregation in Westport - has loved me into the minister I have become, has supported me every step of the way, and has endorsed me as their community minister. As I move into my new position as Assistant Minister at The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Raleigh, my heart is full with the love, grace, support and opportunities to grow that TUUCW has provided to me. Please know that I will carry you all in my heart and soul wherever I minister in this broken yet beautiful world.

Respectfully submitted by Rev. Carrie McEvoy

FAITH FORMATION

Our Faith Formation programming goals for 2023- 2024 were inspired by our mission statement. Faith Formation goals were to provide programming that fills three buckets: Spirituality Bucket, Community Bucket, and Social Justice Bucket. The following report contains the various ways Faith Formation programming has filled these three buckets.

Spirituality Bucket

Children and Youth participated in Sunday services through chalice lighting, and reading the Story for All. They also played an active role in four multigenerational services. During the multigenerational services, the children and youth participated in ceremonies, read poems, helped usher, sang in the Children’s Chapel Choir or Teen Choir, and performed a play called *The Cracked Pot*.

In January, Faith Formation’s Programing, along with Music Programming, started the Children’s Chapel Choir for grades K-6. The Choir is directed by Lexi Fonda and rehearses most Sundays after Faith Formation Classes. Occasionally, the Children’s Chapel Choir has met with other musicians in our congregation to explore instruments such as bells and an autoharp.

Sunday Faith Formation classes are a major portion of the Spirituality Bucket. The title of the Sunday Faith Formation classes for 2023-2024 included Mind Body Skills (Youth Group); Our Whole Lives (7th - 9th Grade) (fall); CartUUns (4th-6th Grade) (fall); The Gift of Connection (K-3rd Grade) (fall); Coming of Age (7th - 9th Grade) (spring); Riddle and a Mystery (4th - 6th Grade) (spring); and Moral Tales (K - 3rd Grade) (spring).

Faith Formation would like to recognize that over 30 people volunteered to help our program, including rotating weekly teachers, the volunteers for one-time-projects, and Faith Formation Committee Members. Here is a list of those volunteers: Ari Palczewski, Dayle Brownstein, Linda Hudson, Janet Luongo, Susan Sherman, Lynn Canter, Reed Balmer, Melissa Balmer, Fred Marshall, Lina Valenzuela, Michele Fleisher, Tory Donahue, Emily Sherwood, Beth Cliff, Sofia Dumery, Lisa Donohue, Patti LaVoie, Ravi Sankar, Bob Welsh, Bob Perry, Jerusha Vogel, Ken Vogel, Maria Mendoza-Smith, Randy Burnham, Matty Kind, Ruth Fontilla, Eileen O’Reilly, Cathy Paine, Debbie Handler, Diane Moller, Carol Hamilton, Beth Cliff, Connie Rockman, and Grandmother Nancy Andry. Also, a special thank you to the youth who helped with the younger children through the year: Grant Thorburn, Paige Steele, Iris LaMastro, and Penny LaMastro. Thank you!

Community Bucket

The Faith Formation programming filled the Community Bucket with events geared to connecting the children and youth to each other and other members of our UU community.

Many examples of programming that filled the Community Bucket are events and activities that grew out of a partnership of Faith Formation with another UU group. Here are some examples:

- Music Committee for the Holiday Sing Along;
- Voices Cafe for a School of Rock concert;
- First Friday FUUn nights for board games;
- Barn Dance;
- Mending the Sacred Hoop for a trip to Rowanwood Farms;
- UU Seder
- Potluck welcome meal for Rev. Alan's family.

The Community Bucket includes our volunteer teaching team. The number of volunteer teachers grew after the Director of Faith Formations and Safer Congregation Committee recognized that our practice of having only one adult teacher with a teenage teacher did not fit within our Safer Congregations Policy of having two adults; therefore, we needed more volunteer teachers, which in turn helps connect our children to more of our UU community.

Our Community Bucket now includes a nursery. Young children ages one to four have attended regularly since February, 2024. Thereafter, Faith Formation programming added Kareen Garrison as our paid nursery attendant and other volunteers helped in the nursery, too. The addition of these very young children and their parents is a welcomed change to UU Westport and our Faith Formation programming.

Social Outreach Bucket

The Faith Formation programming filled the Social Outreach Bucket for two events. Our Coming of Age group (7th - 9th graders) participated in a food drive called *Stamp Out Hunger* by organizing and hauling food donations. Our Coming of Age group and Youth Group volunteered at the Spring Clean up to tidy the grounds at UU Westport.

Our Faith Formation Director has also made connections in our community to help us fill the Social Outreach Bucket in future years. For example, by connecting with CAST, the organization that helps refugees with apartment set up, through Laundry Love, an organization that assists people who are struggling financially with access to free laundry facilities, and through regular attendance at Social Justice Committee meetings.

In conclusion, our Faith Formation community has grown in some meaningful ways during the past year, and we look forward to exploring further growth and opportunities in the 2024-2025 year.

Respectfully submitted by Angi Haen

ELECTED COMMITTEES

Board of Trustees

This year, like the last, has been a time of tremendous challenges. Financial shortfalls, the status of our beloved Minister of Music, reconstruction of the sanctuary, and the departure of our senior minister. We the Board have continued to work to both to maintain our primary role to set direction and policy, and to act at a more operational level to “keep the wheels turning”. There have also been joyful successes, most notably the hiring of Rev. Taylor as Interim Minister; he has revived worship, and brought a new tone of community.

Board Goals: We have continued to work towards financial stability, although a balanced budget has remained an unrealized goal. Through the amazing work of the Tech Team, we have been able to provide a more stable online experience. Our streaming of services and congregational meetings has become more robust, allowing remote participation.

The rehabilitation work on our physical plant has continued, and a healthy collaborative process to decide on the windows renovation, was followed by a successful campaign to garner the necessary funds to carry out those renovations in the coming year.

Congregational Ends: In September 2023, the Board selected three of our 12 ends – or strategic goals – to focus on as our priorities for the 2023-2024 year. While all 12 are important and we continue to work toward achieving them, we saw three as the most critical for this year. They are:

- 1.1.2 Embraced in a community of spirit and love where they can open themselves to pastoral care in times of joy, sorrow and transition, and are committed to the well-being of one another.
- 1.2.1 We embrace a culture of diversity, inclusivity and tolerance, where we treat each other with loving kindness and mutual respect, working together to resolve any conflicts with love and compassion.
- 1.2.4. We become a financially sustainable, engaged, growing Congregation comprised of all generations.

We have monitored efforts and progress in these areas.

Sustainability and Growth: This continues to be an area of concern. We supported the Stewardship team (of two people!) in holding a number of cottage parties, centered around discussion of our values. Primary values elicited are: community, engaging sermons, a strong music program, a strong religious education program. This led naturally into the Pledge campaign theme of “Giving Your Values”. The Pledge drive was moderately successful, with donations increased over last year, but of concern, the number of donors decreasing. We also have budgeted funds to address publicizing of TUUCW and revamping of the website, and social media presence, which is becoming more and more important as our “face to the World”.

We, together with Reverend Alan and the staff, have done an excellent job keeping expenses down. However, over 70% of our total expenses are “people costs,” i.e., salaries, benefits, etc. The rest of the budget covers utilities and operating costs that are non-negotiable. There is, therefore, a limit to the reductions that can be made. While the Endowment Committee has been generous in filling the financial gap, that is a finite resource, which cannot be spent down.

Linkages and Communications: We as a Board have tried to communicate regularly and clearly our efforts and issues facing us. This has occurred principally through Soundings. The AI effort was also one of our sponsored efforts to gain feedback from the congregation. One of our more successful initiatives was the regular “Bagels with the Board” gatherings, where congregants get to ask questions and raise issues with members of the Board, and with each other.

Music Program: In the past year, we have worked with Rev. Thompson to support and enact his decision to move to half time. This was supported through budgeting and hiring Nick and Lexi as support artists, and running the children’s choir. But of course, the recent news of Ed’s decision to retire has been a seismic event.

We are currently working with Rev. Alan to formulate a graceful and celebrated exit for Ed, and envision the future of the Music Program.

Other Board Work:

- A major accomplishment was the hiring of Rev. Taylor as Interim Minister, and the renewal of his contract for a second year. In the coming year, we as a community will need to assess and decide about when we will seek a Settled or Called Minister.
- The Board selected a partner for the Appreciative Inquiry work to address the divisions and conflicts within the congregation. Several meetings were held to elicit issues and positions. This set the foundation for the conflict transformation efforts in the coming year: how we want to be in community with each other, to learn to treat each other with kindness and respect, and agree to live within our covenant of Right Relations.
- Governance: TUUCW adopted Policy Based Governance during Rev. Finkelstein's ministry, with significant work done to develop policies to guide and support PBG. As stated in our Constitution, the Board proposes goals, establishes priorities, and monitors their execution. The Senior Minister is responsible for the implementation of these goals and policies. The Board monitors the performance of the Senior Minister in his/her/their execution of these duties. This is the essence of Policy Based Governance. Over the past year, it has become clear that this approach is not tenable under the current circumstances, due to the workload imposed on the Senior Minister. Our prior senior minister was unable to manage all the demands of running the congregation, and especially with his departure, the Board was forced to get more involved in operational issues, "down in the weeds". A Governance Team has just been launched, which will examine what is both ideal and possible in governing our congregation. Significant involvement of members, and regular communication is expected.
- On a monthly basis, the Board and Rev. Alan review and report on the operation and health of the TUUCW organization. We have also looked at big picture issues, such as defining membership, our church identity, and attracting new members.
- Name change: After the successful conclusion and vote to change our name, we have worked through the logistical details of propagating "The Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Westport" through legal and public channels.

Finances: We have been working diligently to try to close the budget gap between pledges (and other income) and our expenses. As noted, 2/3 of our expenses are in salaries and benefits. The only way to reduce these is to reduce staff, which we cannot do and remain operationally viable.

Next Year: The Board will once again select its Ends and Goals at its annual retreat in August/September, and we believe that prioritization of scarce resources will be more important than ever. The Board will liaise with the Governance Committee to evaluate policy-based governance, and to direct the ministry toward the ends that keep us financially healthy and achieving our mission.

A personal note: I have been the President of the Board for four years now, and my time will end June 9. It has been an incredible experience, with great highs and lows, collaborating with a talented, dedicated and hard-working group. It has been a difficult period, with many challenges and conflicts, which I will not reiterate. It has been my honor to live out my commitment to TUUCW through service in riding the "white water" of this period.

There is one issue I would like to address specifically: the length of my tenure as President, which at least a few have raised as an issue. I felt the obligation to continue in this leadership role through the times of uncertainty and conflict. Last June, when the Board selected its officers for the year, Rev. Morehouse had left, and Rev. Taylor was not yet known to us. I believed then, as I do now, that continuity of Board leadership was important to the well-being of the Congregation, and accepted re-election as President. I now step down with gratitude.

Sincerely, Luke Garvey, President, Board of Trustees

Committee On Ministry (COM)

According to our Constitution, The Committee on Ministry is responsible to the Congregation for:

- Ensuring that the Congregation, in its programs and ministries, is fulfilling TUUCW's Mission and Vision.
- Providing consultation, education, conflict management, and assessment to the leaders and members of the Congregation on an ongoing basis.
- Annually give their assessment of the effectiveness of the Congregation's ministry.

The year began with a shared sense of uncertainty: a surprising negative result to the search for a called minister; a temporary appointee with a hybrid schedule; a stalled renovation project; a looming deficit; and several interpersonal disputes brought to the COM.

The first half of the year was taken up by a learning curve, as the COM and Rev. Alan delved into their respective ideas about a working relationship. In addition, the COM was engaged in difficult and intensive dispute mediations. Ultimately it became clear that the COM by itself was not the right body to deal with deep-rooted conflicts within the congregation and so Rev. Alan proposed, and has since formed, a special team, which will receive professional training in conflict resolution. Two members of the COM, Lisa Donohue-Olivieri and Monica Garrison have joined that team.

At the suggestion of its members, the COM revived a former practice of assigning members as liaisons to several key ministries and committees in order to create a feedback loop to the COM on congregational activities. A list of these liaison assignments is posted on the bulletin board in the foyer, along with photographs of the COM members, the COM charter, Covenant of Right Relations, and other information. The board was a new addition in 2023-2024.

The COM facilitated a listening circle on "How do we want to be together?", participated in EXPO, and recently held an interactive event in the foyer to hear from congregants on their own assessments of the year to date.

A responsibility assigned to the COM is to assess how the congregation allocates its resources to respond to the diverse ministry needs. Given the difficult financial position currently, the COM has been unable to fulfill this task.

As an oversight committee, the COM is responsible for ensuring that ministries and committees follow our mandate to Inspire, Connect and Act. It is also responsible for approving new ministries and committees. During the year the COM approved four new groups: the Reproductive Justice Committee; Disability and Mental Health Task Force; Mending the Sacred Hoop; and Coffee and Conversation Committee (aka Food Ministry).

Submitted on behalf of the COM by Julyen Norman (chair)

Members: Monica Garrison, Chuck Coletti, Lisa Donohue-Olivieri, Joanne Glasser-Orenstein, Melani Allen, Shahan Islam.

Endowment Committee

The Endowment Committee manages the Congregation's capital funds to further the mission of the Congregation and to preserve assets to enhance the long-term financial security of the Congregation.

The endowment committee maintains several funds, some of which have restrictions on their use placed by the donor or by the board. These funds are as follows:

General Fund (Unrestricted)

- Board may request distributions up to 10% of the Endowment in a fiscal year.
- Requests beyond 10% require 2/3s vote of Congregation present at meeting.

Bernhard Music fund

- Donor restrictions: For the benefit of the music program

- Board restrictions: 2/3 of income for enhancements, not for salaries

Wortheim fund

- Donor restrictions: grounds maintenance, outside speakers or urgent needs: congregational or structural

Scouller/Nelson Fund

- Donor restrictions: enhance family faith formation
- Board restrictions: 2/3 of income, option for one-time 10% use of principal

Jan Park Social Justice

- Donor restrictions: Social Justice recommended, not required

Social Justice, B&G, Lifespan funds

- Board restrictions: to be used as designated

At March 31, 2024, the balances of these funds are:

Wertheim	\$ 2,290,227
Scouller/Nelson	\$ 122,525
Social Justice	\$ 43,082
Powers Music	\$ 121,045
Bernhard	\$ 319,984
General	\$ 1,021,451
B&G	\$ 6,418
Lifespan Faith Formation	\$ 4,695
Total	\$ 3,929,428

Recent Historical Balances

Date	6/30/2023	6/30/2022	6/30/2021	6/30/2020	6/30/2019	6/30/2018	6/30/2017
Wertheim	1,985,678	1,869,908	2,003,480	1,559,682	1,534,808	1,462,839	1,318,687
Scouller/ Nelson	106,232	102,905	61,596				
Social Justice	37,353	54,439	54,448	39,712	41,376	39,144	3,413
Powers Music				77,848	81,112	76,735	73,570
Bernhard	382,381	356,734	363,180	205,793	205,957	199,267	192,159
General	956,293	932,930	1,057,686	932,832	1,056,849	857,895	821,351
B&G	5,565	5,193	5,193	3,787	3,946	3,733	3,413
Lifespan	4,071			3,787	3,946	3,733	3,413
Total	3,477,573	3,322,109	3,545,583	2,823,441	2,927,994	2,643,346	2,416,006

To date, the Endowment disbursed \$75,000 to the Operating Budget as general support in the current year. The endowment has committed Capital Campaign matching funds of \$525,000 that will be released as construction progresses. As the Congregation foresees financial challenges in the next few years, the Committee is prepared to consider additional requests for disbursements within the limits imposed by donors and the Constitution.

Respectfully submitted, Ken Vogel, Chair

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee (Nom Com) is charged with finding qualified candidates to fill vacant positions on the four elected congregational committees:

- The Board of Trustees
- The Endowment Committee
- The Committee on Ministry
- The Nominating Committee

The Nom Com is comprised of 5 congregation members, each serving a 2-year term. The returning members serve as committee co-chairs.

Members on the 2023-2024 Nominating Committee:

Cathy McElroy, co-chair
eileen belmont, co-chair
David Raymond
Emily Sherwood
Jerusha Vogel

Our process:

Our initial meeting: a review of the guidelines that inform our responsibilities. We then seek input from members of the other elected committees to determine their anticipated vacancies. Armed with that information we lay out our goals for the coming year. We compile a list of potential candidates and back-up candidates. Note: Individuals with at least 1 full year of membership at TUUCW are eligible to serve on any of these 4 committees. Before presenting our list of candidates to the Board of Trustees we share it with Reverend Alan for his input and review. The nominees are then asked to submit a biography as well as a photo of themselves to be disseminated to members of the congregation. The vote takes place at the Annual Meeting.

Slate of NEW Nominees for Election on June 9, 2024

Board of Trustees

Mark Corcoran (2027)
Jon Gage (2027)
Felicia Keeton (2027)
Anita Pfluger (2025) – Completing term

Committee on Ministry

Sofia Dumery (2029)

Nominating Committee

Melissa Balmer (2026)
Lindy Hennessy (2026)
Eileen O'Reilly (2026)

Endowment

Terri Laug (2029)

Submitted by eileen belmont

BOARD APPROVED COMMITTEES

Audit Committee Report

The firm of Hope & Hernandez, P.C. was retained again this year to do a “Review” of the financial statements of TUUCW for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023. As is TUUCW policy, the Congregation’s finances are Audited one year and are Reviewed the following year.

The scope of a Review is more limited than that of an Audit. A Review includes primarily applying analytical procedures to the financial data produced by management and then making inquiries of management to ascertain if the stated financial information is accurate.

One major difference between an Audit and a Review is that the objective of an Audit is for the auditor to be able to express an Opinion about whether our financial statements are fairly presented. In a Review, the auditor does not express such an opinion. Instead of an Opinion, the auditor gives an “Accountant’s Conclusion”. This year’s Conclusion states “...we are not aware of any material modifications that should be made to the accompanying statements in order for them to be in accordance with the modified cash basis of accounting.”

TUUCW’s financial Statements are prepared on a Modified Cash Basis. The Modified Cash Basis provides an extra level of insight into our finances that cannot be gained by just using cash basis accounting. One example of Modified Cash Basis is how short-term and long-term items are treated. Short-term items, such as recurring monthly expenses (utilities, landscaping, internet etc.) are recorded on the income statement according to cash basis. Long-term items such as fixed assets or property and equipment are recorded on the balance sheet using the accrual method.

The cost for the Review this year was \$5,720 plus \$400 to complete our Form 990-T tax Return. An annual Audit would cost an additional \$2,000.

The Form 990-T is the IRS form used by nonprofit organizations to report “unrelated income”. For TUUCW, this primarily relates to our parking lot income. In most years, the parking lot income is offset by parking lot expenses, so we do not need to pay any taxes. Importantly, the IRS does not consider the rent received from our nursery school to be unrelated income, so we also pay no taxes on this income.

NB: Due to the lack of historical cost data, TUUCW estimated a \$3,000,000 beginning balance of the value of land, buildings, furniture, fixtures, and equipment as of July 1, 2014. The Congregation then began depreciating its fixed assets in the year ended June 30, 2015. Due to this lack of historical cost data, any Auditor’s Opinion that we do receive in the future will always be a “Qualified Opinion”.

The Review report for 2023 was reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees at the February 2024 Board Meeting. A copy of the Review report is available for review in the TUUCW office.

Respectfully submitted, Stephen Grathwohl and Bob Trefry

Capital Campaign Construction Team and Congregational Engagement Team

The work of the Capital Campaign Construction Team was on hold at the beginning of this fiscal year. Construction was stopped in the spring of 2023 by the Board who requested that the Congregation have the opportunity to review the architectural plans that were developed four years earlier.

On October 22, a congregational meeting was held with Pamela Clemens of Goody Clancy. Pamela shared the architectural plans. To allow for members to share their responses to these plans, Rev. Alan Taylor hosted a congregational gathering where John Turmelle answered many questions. It became clear that several members hoped to have the opportunity to give further funds so that the new windows will be about the same size as the current design.

On November 19, Rev. Alan Taylor facilitated a meeting for people to ask questions regarding the planned phase of the work. Hopes were expressed that additional funds could be raised for windows and sliding glass doors at the current size. John Turmelle answered the technical questions as the one continuing member of the Capital Campaign Construction Team. At this meeting, the re-formed Capital Campaign Construction Team was introduced: John Turmelle, Rob Laug, Jay Lubin, Holly Jaffe, and Elena Rockman-Blake with Rev. Alan Taylor as the staff contact.

The Board appointed a Congregational Engagement Team to create a process to determine whether further funds should be sought and, if so, what should be prioritized. Beth Cliff, Ken Vogel, and Brian Lasher joined those on the Capital Campaign Construction Team to devise a process for the Congregation to vote on whether to seek further funds for the larger windows and sliding glass doors.

On March 10, a congregational meeting was held by the Board and facilitated by Ken Vogel. The congregation affirmatively voted to approve a matching gift of up to \$175,000 from the endowment. Priorities were identified if \$175,000 wasn't raised.

Beth Cliff, Sharon Poole and Brian Lasher were named as the individuals to be contacted if members or friends would like to give. The soft ask among members and friends brought in over \$200,000, which means the Capital Campaign Construction Team has an additional \$375,000 to support the vision of installing the larger windows and sliders.

In May, Goody Clancy and Turner Construction began reviewing the costs and design. Because of the time it takes to plan and order necessary parts, construction will not commence until late spring 2025 and hopefully will be finished by October 2025.

Compiled by Rev. Alan Taylor

Finance Committee and Treasurer's Report

In many ways, the Treasurer's Report this year is very similar to the Reports for the past 3-4 years, with two big exceptions:

- We have a new Interim Minister...Rev. Alan Taylor
- Our beloved Minister of Music has announced his retirement...Rev. Ed Thompson

As stated last year, TUUCW remains a strong and vibrant Congregation. But we are a smaller Congregation than we were 10 years ago. And that difference continues to be reflected in our finances and our pledging.

The size of our Congregation and the change in our two most important staffing positions will ripple through our annual budgets for at least the next couple of years.

This Year: 2023-2024 Budget and Budget Reforecast (see Chart One)

The Current Budget is the first year of Rev. Alan Taylor being our Interim Minister. But this Budget is not Rev. Alan's Budget. This Budget was designed by Rev. John Morehouse before he left TUUCW last Summer.

In recent years, our finances have been negatively affected by a variety of issues: Covid, congregants passing on or moving out of state, the high cost of living in Fairfield County, and now inflation and rising interest rates. We have fewer pledgers, especially on the higher end, and total pledge dollars have not kept pace with expenses.

A rule-of-thumb for UU budgeting is that Pledges should equal Total People Costs. Our Pledges only equal 75% of our People Costs. To fund our Total People Costs, we must use all of our Pledges and all of our Facility Use Fees.

Positive Note #1: Many members of our congregation have “stepped-up” their pledges and contributed more than in prior years. They have also contributed in more ways than were expected. Our average annual pledge amount has risen.

Positive Note #2: We recently initiated a short-term Phase Two fundraiser for the Capital Campaign. In just one month, we were able to surpass our hoped-for total. We raised over \$200,000.

Positive Note #3: This year’s Budget Gap should be \$35,000 less than anticipated. An almost 20% improvement.

Summary information for the 2023-2024 fiscal year includes:

1. Pledge payments are tracking slightly higher than Budget. Restricted Contributions and Fundraisers should also exceed Budget.
2. Total Revenue should exceed Budget by over \$50,000.
3. Expenses are slightly higher than Budget, primarily due to a rightsizing of People Costs. Rev. John was on Medicare, and this saved the Congregation more than \$25,000/year. Rev. Alan is not on Medicare, plus he has a family. And it is likely that any future Senior Minister will also have a family and not be on Medicare. We must continue to budget for this higher level of People Costs.
4. Our Budget Gap this year is Reforecasted to be (\$140,000)
5. To cover the Budget Gap, we will use Reserves and Endowment Funds (both Endowment’s Annual Distribution to the Operating Budget and a special Emergency Distribution).

Next Year: 2024-2025 Proposed Budget (see Chart One)

Once again, the 2024-2025 fiscal year will be most affected by the level of our Pledges and our People Cost. This year we will also have to factor in Rev. Ed retirement. Rev. Ed’s retirement will leave an enormous spiritual void in our Congregation. How we fill that void will have a direct effect on both our Expenses and our Congregation’s future.

Revenue is projected to be \$715,000 which \$50,000 higher than this year’s Budget and nearly identical to this year’s Reforecast. Part of this projected increase is due to two new fundraisers, one in the Fall and one in the Spring, along with a Summer Tag Sale. The success of these three efforts will directly affect our bottom line.

Expenses are also expected to be about \$50,000 higher than this year’s Budget, and \$35,000 higher than the Budget Reforecast. Much of this increase is due to People Costs. The Music Program and Family Faith Formation will also see a small increase.

We remain unable to align our Revenue with our Expenses. There are three realities that we currently live with:

1. At \$441,000 Pledges account for 62% of all Revenue
2. At \$591,000 People Costs account for about 66% of all Expenses
3. Pledges should equal People Costs...but they don’t

We simply do not have enough congregants making pledges, and especially, not enough pledges at the higher end.

Over the past couple of years, we made some positive adjustments to People Costs, but those savings have been eliminated due to right-sizing the true cost of a Senior Minister.

Summary information for the Proposed 2024-2025 Budget includes:

- 1) Total Revenue is projected to be \$714,000 and Total Expenses are projected to be \$895,000.
- 2) This leaves a Budget Gap of (\$180,000), which is close to last year’s Budget, but \$40,000 more than the Budget Reforecast.

- 3) The true cost for the Senior Minister's compensation and benefits will be \$185,000, which is \$40,000 more than budgeted last year. And the Congregation should expect that it will cost this amount or more going forward.
- 4) The realignment of the Music Department is still being planned. Last year, we hired Nick Barra and Lexi Fonda as part-time Assistant Music Directors. With Rev. Ed's impending retirement in December, there will soon be additional changes, both to the staff and to the music program. For many, many of our Congregants, Rev. Ed's music and the choir programs that he leads were a key factor in drawing them to UUWestport. We need to ensure that Rev. Ed's legacy of a strong Music Program continues.
- 5) Starting last year, all staff will receive an annual COLA adjustment of 2.50%.

About 40% of the projected Budget Gap will be covered by using Reserves, Restricted Endowment Funds, and Endowment's Annual Distribution to the Operating Account = \$70,000.

For the remaining 60% of the Budget Gap, we will ask Endowment for an emergency distribution = \$110,000.

In 2021, the Congregation was told that 2021-2022 would be a "transitional year." There would be a Budget Gap that year, but in the following year (2022-2023), we would have a balanced budget...the Budget Gap would be eliminated.

That has not happened.

And it remains unclear as to when we will be able to eliminate the Budget Gap.

The Future (2025-2026 and beyond)

As was stated at the beginning of this Report, TUUCW remains a strong, vibrant congregation.

But since we are not as large as we once were, we need to adjust our finances to reflect this new reality. Can we find ways to increase membership? Can we find creative ways to increase our Revenue? Can we avoid painful cuts to our People Costs and Program Services?

If changes are not made, the Budget Gap for each of the next five years will be almost \$200,000 each year!

As Rev. Alan has stated, Budgets are moral documents.

How we structure our Budget is a true reflection of our Mission and our Priority Ends.

We are the congregation that we choose to fund.

Challenges remain.

Membership and Pledging will continue to be key components of any successful program.

Respectfully submitted by Stephen Grathwohl, Treasurer

NB: It is interesting to note that ten years ago (2014) our Budget showed Total Expenses of \$950,000 which is slightly more than our current Budget. The big difference is that ten years ago our Pledges totaled \$665,000 and Total Revenue was \$1,075,000. And we had a Budget Surplus of \$125,000.

Other Financial Information

Balance Sheet Comparison 2023 vs 2024 (see Chart Two)

From a Balance Sheet perspective, we are in a very enviable position:

1. Our property is appraised by the Town of Westport at \$8,110,000
2. Our Endowment and Other Investment Accounts total \$3,930,000*
3. Our Total Assets equal \$8,616,000
4. **We have basically no Liabilities**
5. **Our Equity is \$8,580,000**

*NB: The Endowment Committee has pledged a portion of its total investments to support the Capital Campaign:

- Pledge for Phase One = \$350,000
- Pledge for Phase Two = \$175,000
- Total Pledge = \$525,000

These pledges will reduce the net available Endowment and Other Investment Accounts down to \$3,405,000.

Capital Campaign

Phase Two of the renovations have been given the go-ahead. Initial architectural and engineering work has started.

As mentioned previously, the Congregation did a very short-term fundraising effort in April to increase the amount of Capital Campaign funds available. We requested \$175,000 from the Congregation, which would be matched by Endowment. This would raise the funds available by \$350,000.

Instead, the Congregation gave slightly more than \$200,000! This raised the total additional funding to \$375,000.

As of April 30th, the current funds available are:

1. Cash = \$55,000
2. Internet Account (ADM) = \$195,000
3. Congregational Pledge Phase Two = \$200,000
4. Endowment Pledge Phase One = \$350,000
5. Endowment Pledge Phase Two = \$175,000
6. TOTAL = \$975,000

There is an additional \$90,000 in funds pledged during Phase One of the Capital Campaign that have not yet been received. These pledges will remain open in hopes that the pledge dollars will ultimately be received.

Attachments

- 1) Chart One:
 - a. Proposed Budget for 2024-2025
 - b. Current Budget for 2023-2024
 - c. Reforecast of the 2023-2024 Budget (as of March 2024)
- 2) Chart Two
 - a. Balance Sheet Comparison 2023 vs 2024 (as of April 2024)

Chart 1, Page 1

		2023-2024	2023-2024	2024-2025
1	PROPOSED BUDGET	Annual Budget	Reforecast	Proposed Budget
2				
3	Ordinary Income/Expense			
4	Income			
5	4009 · Pledge Income			
6	4006 · Total Pledges & Online Gifts			
7	4000 · Offline Pledge & Gifts-Current	427,660	433,000	470,000
8	4000.1 · Annual Pledges not Received	0	0	(29,000)
9	Total 4006 · Total Pledges & Online Gifts	427,660	433,000	441,000
10	4002 · Pledge & Gifts - Prior Years	0	10,162	0
11	Total 4009 · Pledge Income	427,660	443,162	441,000
12	4049 · Other-Unrestr Contributions			
13	4714 · Bequest Income-Unrestricted			
14	4020 · Non-Pledge Contributions			
15	4020.5 · Non-Pledge Contr-Holiday Appeal	15,000	13,828	14,000
16	4020 · Non-Pledge Contributions - Other	20,000	23,995	24,000
17	Total 4020 · Non-Pledge Contributions	35,000	37,823	38,000
18	4010 · Plate Collection	30,000	24,322	25,000
19	Total 4049 · Other-Unrestr Contributions	65,000	62,144	63,000
20	4040 · Restricted Contributions	8,000	12,325	8,000
21	4040.2 · Flowers	1,200	1,990	1,800
22	4185 · Fundraisers	10,500	17,696	9,500
23	4085.1 · Autumn Year Round Stewardship Ask	0	0	10,000
24	4085.2 · Spring Community Fun	0	0	10,000
25	4085.3 · Summer Tag Sale	0	14,000	12,000
26	4186 · Voices Cafe' Concert Income	9,000	9,000	9,000
27	4190 · Pass Thru Share the Plate	7,200	11,170	10,000
28	4269 · Facility Use Fees			
29	4261 · Facility Use - Nursery School	79,200	79,200	84,000
30	4261.1 · Explorers Learning Community Corp	0	5,000	11,000
31	4262 · Facility Use - Other	15,000	11,596	12,000
32	4264 · Parking Lot Rentals	29,700	29,900	29,700
33	Total 4269 · Facility Use Fees	123,900	125,696	136,700
34	4719 · Other Income			
35	4710 · Interest Earned	300	8,102	300
36	4716 · Other / Misc.	3,200	4,139	3,200
37	4716.1 · Insurance Reimbursement	0	10,000	0
38	4030.1 · Trips	10,000	100	0
39	Total 4719 · Other Income	13,500	22,342	3,500
40	Total Income	665,960	719,526	714,500
41				
42	Expense			
43	5450 · Total People Cost - BL			
44	5000 · Total Comp, Benefits & Taxes			
45	Total 5008 · Salary, Housing and Wages	353,787	370,771	384,987
46	Total 5029 · Payroll Tax, Sui, Fica, SECA,WC	33,483	34,876	37,831
47	Total 5019 · Pension	34,634	29,813	33,870
48	5024 · Medical/Dental & Disability	62,476	63,076	71,364
49	Staff Comp, Benefits, Taxes & WC w/o Senior Minister	337,254	330,932	342,904
50	Senior Minister Salary and Housing			128,125
51	Senior Minister Payroll Taxes			10,726
52	Senior Minister Pension			12,812
53	Senior Minister Medical Benefits			33,485
54	Total Senior Minister Comp, Benefits & Taxes	147,126	167,604	185,148
55	Total 5000 · Total Comp, Benefits & Taxes	484,380	498,536	528,052
56	5000.1 · Payroll Error	0	22,845	0
57	5070 · Professional Expense Allowances			
58	5003 · Senior Minister-Prof Exp	12,000	12,000	13,000
59	5012.5 · Interim Minister Expenses	12,500	12,500	17,000
60	5404 · Minister of Music Prof Exp	1,000	1,000	1,000
61	5035.2 · SJD Prof Exp	0	0	0
62	5033.2 · Faith Formation Prof Exp	0	1,000	1,400
63	Total 5070 · Professional Expense Allowances	25,500	26,500	32,400

Chart 1, Page 2

			2023-2024	2023-2024	2024-2025
PROPOSED BUDGET			Annual Budget	Reforecast	Proposed Budget
64		5300 · Contracted Services			
65		5350 · Cleaning Janitorial	18,200	15,164	18,658
66		xxxx · Legislative Advocacy Coordinator	0	0	0
67		5929 · Contractor - Worship Audio Visual	10,400	7,650	5,200
68		xxxx · Contractor - IT	0	0	3,520
69		xxxx · Contractor - Website/Communications	5,360	5,360	3,600
70		Total 5300 · Contracted Services	33,960	28,174	30,978
71		Total 5450 · Total People Cost - BL	543,840	576,055	591,430
72		5380 · Maint & Insurance - BL			
73		5309 · Building Maintenance & Repairs			
74		5301 · Maintenance & Inspection Services	9,000	10,057	8,500
75		5302 · Supplies, Hardware & Janitorial	4,500	3,981	4,000
76		5305 · Building & Grounds	5,000	5,000	5,000
77		5303 · Repairs	5,000	5,460	5,000
78		xxxx · Building Security	0	0	0
79		Total 5309 · Building Maintenance	23,500	24,498	22,500
80		5359 · Grounds Maintenance			
81		5351 · Lawn Mowing & Leaf Removal	8,000	8,000	12,000
82		5354 · Landscaping & Gnnds Maint Other	6,500	4,826	3,000
83		5352 · Snow Removal	19,600	13,000	14,000
84		5356 · Tree Work	10,000	10,000	10,000
85		Total 5359 · Grounds Maintenance	44,100	35,826	39,000
86		5379 · Church Insurance			
87		5371 · Property & Casualty Insurance	22,718	27,041	30,125
88		5372 · Umbrella Insurance	1,815	1,762	1,838
89		Total 5379 · Church Insurance	24,533	28,803	31,963
90		Total 5380 · Maint & Insurance - BL	92,133	89,126	93,463
91		5549 · Materials for Program & Worship-BL			
92		5520 · Total Worship & Ministries			
93		5529 · Worship Services			
94		5522 · Flowers	1,500	2,278	2,300
95		xxxx · Soul Matters	0	0	1,000
96		xxxx · Summer Worship Coordination	0	0	400
97		xxxx · Pulpit Guests	0	0	2,100
98		xxxx · Worship Licenses	0	0	600
99		5525 · Worship/Sunday Services	1,000	2,127	1,000
100		Total 5529 · Worship Services	2,500	4,405	7,400
101		5528 · Misc Ministries			
102		5544 · Transitional Ministry	0	1,700	0
103		5544.1 - Transforming Conflict	0	0	2,000
104		5544.2 - Governance Team	0	0	1,000
105		5546 · Worship Associates	1,000	1,000	500
106		5547 · Shawl Ministries	150	150	150
107		5528.1 · Use of Restricted Worship Funds	0	1,259	0
108		5528 · Misc Ministries - Other	4,500	4,500	0
109		Total 5528 · Misc Ministries	5,650	8,609	3,650
110		Total 5520 · Total Worship & Ministries	8,150	13,014	11,050
111		5550 · Music Program Total			
112		5531 · General Music	3,000	3,000	4,000
113		5531.5 · Use of Restricted Music Funds			
114		5531.8 · Use of Restricted Bernhard Music	4,500	4,500	7,000
115		5531.5 · Use of Restricted Music Funds - Other	3,000	3,000	8,000
116		Total 5531.5 · Use of Restricted Music Funds	7,500	7,500	15,000
117		5531.7 · Use of Restricted - Accompanist	5,000	5,000	5,000
118		Total 5550 · Music Program Total	15,500	15,500	24,000
119		5580 · Use of Restricted Funds-Other	0	2,500	0
120					
121		5530 · Family Faith Formation			
122		5575.7 · Use of Restricted Funds - Youth	3,000	0	5,000
123		5575.5 · Use of Restricted - Children	6,000	0	5,000
124		5536 · Adult Faith Formation	500	500	500
125		5675 · Faith Formation Curr & Supplies	2,100	2,100	2,100
126		5685 · Faith Formation Trips	10,000	499	0
127		Total 5530 · Family Faith Formation	21,600	3,099	12,600

Chart 1, Page 3

				2023-2024	2023-2024	2024-2025
PROPOSED BUDGET				Annual Budget	Reforecast	Proposed Budget
128		5532 · SJ Program Expense				
129		5532.1 · Gender Equity Team	500	500	0	
130		5532.2 · IDI	500	500	0	
131		5532.3 · Beardsley School	800	800	0	
132		5532.4 · John Street Outreach	1,500	1,500	0	
133		5532.6 · Black Lives Matter	3,660	3,660	0	
134		5532.7 · Social Justice Council	500	500	8,000	
135		xxxx -UU the VOTE	0	0	0	
136		xxxx - Reproductive Justice	0	0	0	
137		xxxx - Immigration and Refugee Outreach	0	0	0	
138		xxxx - Mending the Sacred Hoop	0	0	0	
139		xxxx - WestBridge	0	0	0	
140		xxxx - Legislative Advocacy	0	0	0	
141		5532.5 · Use of Restricted SJ Funds				
142		5532.9 · Use of Social Justice Reserve	3,300	3,300	3,000	
143		5532.5 · Use of Restricted SJ Funds - Other	1,700	1,700	1,500	
144		Total 5532.5 · Use of Restricted SJ Funds	5,000	5,000	4,500	
145		5532 · SJ Program Expense - Other	0	0	0	
146		Total 5532 · SJ Program Expense	12,460	12,460	12,500	
147		Total 5549 · Materials for Program & Worship-BL	57,710	46,573	60,150	
148		5630 · Office & Utilities - BL				
149		5629 · Office Equipment				
150		5605 · Equipment Leasing	3,850	3,843	3,850	
151		5610 · Computer Equipment & Furnishings	1,200	1,200	1,200	
152		5620 · Computer Expense/Software Subscriptions	4,500	4,641	4,500	
153		xxxx - Website Development	0	0	0	
154		5621 · Website Applications	4,000	3,462	4,000	
155		Total 5629 · Office Equipment	13,550	13,146	13,550	
156		5609 · Office Expense/Services				
157		5601 · Payroll Processing	2,950	2,798	2,500	
158		5602 · Office Expense & Printed Material	3,000	2,610	3,000	
159		5603 · Telephone/Cable	8,700	8,344	8,800	
160		5604 · Postage	1,600	1,343	1,400	
161		Total 5609 · Office Expense/Services	16,250	15,095	15,700	
162		5269 · Utilities				
163		5261 · Fuel Oil	6,000	5,080	6,000	
164		5262 · Electricity	16,769	15,990	16,769	
165		5264 · Refuse	7,500	5,772	5,700	
166		5267 · Water	2,760	2,532	2,760	
167		5268 · Natural Gas	12,000	10,817	11,000	
168		Total 5269 · Utilities	45,029	40,191	42,229	
169		Total 5630 · Office & Utilities - BL	74,829	68,431	71,479	
170		5709 · Denominational - BL				
171		5701 · UUA Annual Fund	20,000	20,000	20,000	
172		Total 5709 · Denominational - BL	20,000	20,000	20,000	
173		5570 · Outreach Exp Misc/Dues	3,000	3,000	3,000	
174		5810 · Fundraising Expenses - BL	400	7,010	2,700	
175		5820 · Voices Cafe' Concert Expenses	5,000	5,000	5,000	
176		5850 · Pass Thru to Charity - BL				
177		5964 · Minister's Discretionary Exp	5,000	4,087	4,000	
178		5830 · Voices Cafe' Beneficiary	4,000	4,000	4,000	
179		5850 · Pass Thru to Charity - BL - Other	7,200	10,439	10,000	
180		Total 5850 · Pass Thru to Charity - BL	16,200	18,526	18,000	
181		5945 · Audit,Pmt Process & Bank Fees-BL				
182		5920 · External Audit/Review Expense	7,000	6,645	8,000	
183		5930.1 · Brokerage Fee	400	400	400	
184		5933 · Credit Card Expense	5,500	4,800	4,800	
185		5935 · Bank Charges & UBIT Taxes & Fees	50	94	50	
186		Total 5945 · Audit,Pmt Process & Bank Fees-BL	12,950	11,939	13,250	

Chart 1, Page 4

		2023-2024	2023-2024	2024-2025
PROPOSED BUDGET		Annual Budget	Reforecast	Proposed Budget
187	5949 · Miscellaneous Expense - BL			
188	5533 · Membership Committee	3,000	3,000	1,500
189	5571 · Stewardship Committee	2,000	2,000	1,500
190	5924 · Board of Trustees	1,500	1,500	1,000
191	5938 · Kitchen Supplies	500	500	500
192	5940 · Misc Food & Beverage	4,500	4,500	2,000
193	5941 · Coffee Hour	0	0	1,500
194	5942 · Congregational Gatherings	0	0	1,000
195	xxxx · 75th Anniversary Party	0	0	4,500
196	5962 · Training Expense	1,000	1,000	1,000
197	5963 · Background Check & Hiring	500	500	500
198	5949 · Miscellaneous Expense - BL - Other	1,000	1,000	1,000
199	Total 5949 · Miscellaneous Expense - BL	14,000	14,000	16,000
200				
201	Total Expense	840,062	859,660	894,472
202	Net Ordinary Income	(174,102)	(140,135)	(179,972)
203				
204	Other Income/Expense			
205	Other Income			
206	5975 · Capital Campaign			
207	4070 · Capital Campaign Income			
208	5320 · Capital Campaign Expenses			
209	Total 5975 · Capital Campaign			
210	4850 · Other Sources of Cash			
211	4730 · Use of Prior Year Reserve			
212	4735 · From Children Are Our Future	9,000	0	10,000
213	4724 · From Social Justice Reserve	5,000	5,000	3,000
214	4723 · From Worship & Ministries Reserve			
215	4721 · From Music Reserve			
216	4721.5 · From Accompanist Fund Reserve	5,000	5,000	5,000
217	4721 · From Music Reserve - Other	1,000	1,000	8,000
218	Total 4721 · From Music Reserve	6,000	6,000	13,000
219	Total 4730 · Use of Prior Year Reserve	20,000	11,000	26,000
220				
221	4717 · From Jan Park Social Justice Endowment Fund	0	0	0
222	4717 · From Jan Park Social Justice Endowment Fund	0	0	0
223	xxxx · From Wertheim Restricted Endowment Fund	0	0	2,100
224	xxxx · From Wertheim Restricted Endowment Fund	0	0	2,000
225	xxxx · From Wertheim Restricted Endowment Fund	0	0	2,500
226	xxxx · From Scouller/Nelson Endowment Fund	0	0	0
227				
228	4711 · Endowment Distribution - To Operating			
229	4711.5 · Endowment Distr-Bernhard Music	4,500	4,500	7,000
230	4711 · Endowment Dist - To Operating - Other	30,000	30,000	30,000
231	Total 4711 · Endowment Distribution - To Operating	34,500	34,500	37,000
232				
233	4730.5 · Marketing Study & Implementation (+ website)	20,000	0	20,000
234	4717.5 · Social Justice Initiative	10,000	0	10,000
235	Total 4850 · Other Sources of Cash	84,500	45,500	99,600
236	Total Other Income	84,500	45,500	99,600
237				
238	Other Expense			
239	5800.5 · Marketing Study & Implementation (+ website)	20,000	0	20,000
240	5800.6 · Social Justice Initiative	10,000	0	10,000
241	Total 5800 · Other Uses of Cash	30,000	0	30,000
242				
243				
244	NET INCOME BUDGET VIEW	(119,602)	(94,635)	(110,372)

Chart 2, Page 1

Balance Sheet Comparison - June 2023 vs April 2024					
			June 2023	April 2024	\$ Change
1	ASSETS				
2	Current Assets				
3	Checking/Savings				
4	Fairfield County Bank-Checking		148,134	210,210	62,076
5	Fairfield County Bank-Savings		112,070	89,250	(22,820)
6	Voices Café-Checking		2,480	740	(1,740)
7	Venmo		41,090	5,127	(35,963)
8	Stripe		0	4,526	4,526
9	Capital Campaign Net Cash		13,994	219,990	205,996
10	Capital Campaign ADM Account		235,167	193,629	(41,538)
11	Minister's Discretionary Fund		1,977	2,223	246
12	Petty Cash		18	18	0
13	Total Checking/Savings		<u>554,930</u>	<u>725,713</u>	<u>170,783</u>
14	Total Current Assets		554,930	725,713	170,783
15					
16	Fixed Assets				
17	Land		1,000,000	1,000,000	0
18	Land Improvements		343,620	343,620	0
19	Church Building		1,000,000	1,000,000	0
20	Meeting House		913,889	913,889	0
21	Building Improvements		188,480	188,480	0
22	Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment		140,148	146,937	6,789
23	Capital Campaign Work in Process		1,198,934	1,210,368	11,434
24	Accumulated Depreciation		(842,677)	(842,677)	0
25	Total Fixed Assets (market value is much greater)		<u>3,942,394</u>	<u>3,960,617</u>	<u>18,223</u>
26					
27	Other Assets				
28					
29	Investment Accounts - Restricted (06/23 Market Value vs 03/24 Market Value)				
30	Restricted - Other Accounts				
31	Restricted-Bernhard Music		389,469	441,028	51,559
32	Vanguard-Scouller/Nelson Fund		113,848	127,221	13,373
33	Total Restricted - Other Accounts		<u>503,317</u>	<u>568,249</u>	<u>64,932</u>
34	Restricted - Endowment Accounts				
35	Vanguard 2005 - Restricted		2,068,966	2,290,228	221,262
36	Vanguard - Social Justice-Restricted		38,436	43,082	4,646
37	Vanguard-Building & Grounds Restricted		5,744	6,419	675
38	Endowment Restricted Accounts		<u>2,113,146</u>	<u>2,339,729</u>	<u>226,583</u>
39	Total Investment Accounts - Restricted		2,616,463	2,907,978	291,515
40					
41	Endowment Unrestricted Accounts				
42	UUA Common Fund		633,746	679,771	46,025
43	Vanguard General Fund		340,492	341,680	1,188
44	Total Endowment Unrestricted Accounts		<u>974,238</u>	<u>1,021,451</u>	<u>47,213</u>
45					
46	Total of all Endowment Accounts		<u>3,087,384</u>	<u>3,361,180</u>	<u>273,796</u>
47					
48	Total Investment Accounts-Restricted and Unrestricted		<u>3,590,701</u>	<u>3,929,429</u>	<u>338,728</u>
49					
50	Total Other Assets		<u>3,590,701</u>	<u>3,929,429</u>	<u>338,728</u>
51					
52	TOTAL ASSETS		<u>8,088,025</u>	<u>8,615,759</u>	<u>527,734</u>

Chart 2, Page 2

53	LIABILITIES & EQUITY					
54	Liabilities					
55	Current Liabilities					
56	Other Current Liabilities					
57		Employee Pension Withholding	2,601	1,356	(1,245)	
58		Accrued Pension	40,805	0	(40,805)	
59		Advance Pledge Payments	75,175	36,155	(39,020)	
60		Total Other Current Liabilities	118,581	37,511	(81,070)	
61		Total Current Liabilities	118,581	37,511	(81,070)	
62	Total Liabilities			118,581	37,511	(81,070)
63						
64	Equity					
65	Invested in Capital Assets					
66		Capital Assets	0	0	0	
67		2115 · Invested in Capital Assets - Other	0	0	0	
68		Total 2115 · Invested in Capital Assets	0	0	0	
69	Reserves					
70		Memorial Garden Reserve	6,687	6,687	0	
71		Building Reserve	51,733	37,032	(14,701)	
72		Groundskeeping Reserve	32,666	32,666	0	
73		Sabbatical Reserve	9,965	9,965	0	
74		Faith Formation Reserve				
75		Children Are Our Future	26,319	25,420	(899)	
76		Total Faith Formation Reserve	26,319	25,420	(899)	
77		Social Justice Reserve	10,397	8,909	(1,488)	
78		Music Reserves				
79		Accompanist Fund	49,350	46,650	(2,700)	
80		Choral Chameleon Reserve	1,815	758	(1,057)	
81		Organ Reserve	25,000	0	(25,000)	
82		Music Reserves - Other	22,481	22,481	0	
83		Total Music Reserves	98,646	69,889	(28,757)	
84		Worship & Ministries Reserves				
85		Camp Jewell	838	838	0	
86		Shawl Ministry	1,027	1,027	0	
87		Worship & Ministries Reserves - Other	1,978	1,978	0	
88		Total Worship & Ministries Reserves	3,843	3,843	0	
89		Total Reserves	240,256	194,411	(45,845)	
90		Unrestricted Net Assets	4,849,581	5,051,580	201,999	
91		Permanently Restricted Net Assets	2,178,612	2,178,612	0	
92		Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	428,113	428,113	0	
93		Capital Campaign Net Assets	70,883	70,883	0	
94		Capital Campaign Net Income	65,843	214,668	148,825	
95		TUUCW Net Income	136,156	439,981	303,825	
96	Total Equity			7,969,444	8,578,248	608,804
97						
98	TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY			8,088,025	8,615,759	527,734

Human Resources Committee

The HR Committee operates as an advisory team with ongoing members Kim Fuchs (Chair) and board liaison Deborah Garskof. Sharon Poole was asked to join the HR Committee by Rev Alan Taylor in early 2024, based on her role on the Transition Team Advisory Committee.

The HR Committee's priorities for the 2023-2024 year included:

Early in the 2023-2024, contract reviews included for Acting Faith Formations Lead, Assistant Music Director shared role, Music Minister's role reflecting reduced hours, and Transitional Minister.

Review of benefits programs to better integrate with UUA administration and eligibility requirements for the UUA benefits programs. Recommended that a summary of benefits and cost-share for benefits programs be completed by UU Westport's Accounting Manager prior to the close of open enrollment period each year.

Reviewed and updated Employee Handbook. Resources used for the handbook update included the UUA's Handbook template, as well as UU Westport's 2014 and 2016 approved handbooks and the 2019 draft handbook. The 2024 update of the Employee Handbook was submitted to the Board for review and approval in March 2024, anticipating response and approval in May 2024.

Job descriptions for full time staff roles are currently being reviewed, with Sharon Poole leading this project, working closely with Rev Alan. Sharon is using guidance formulated by a UUA resource recommended by Rev Alan, that is "Stepping Up to Supervision" by Susan Beaumont.

The HR Committee will continue to act in an advisory capacity to the Minister and Board as needed.

Submitted by Kim M Fuchs

Transforming Conflict Team

The Transforming Conflict Team was formed in January 2024 with a charge from the Board of Trustees. It was designed to include two members from the Board, two from the COM, and two from the Transitions Team, and includes Rev Alan Taylor and Linda Lubin (Lead). A letter was sent to the congregation from the Board and Linda Lubin explaining the purpose of the team.

Goals of Conflict Transformation Engagement:

- To help us understand how our own minds and bodies respond to conflict—and learn new ways of responding.
- To develop skills for responding to conflict in relationships in a healthy and productive manner.
- To understand the cycles of conflict and systems in congregational life.
- To develop Congregational practices in which conflict can be treated as an opportunity for growth rather than a crisis of division.

Over the arc of the months since its inception, the Team has been meeting twice a month. Its work has included:

- Creating a covenant for the team
- Offering discussion series on Brené Brown's "Braving" (YouTube)
- Multiple discussion groups on Terasa Cooley's Transforming Conflict: The Blessings of Congregational Turmoil
- A weekend of activity was planned around Rev Cooley's visit in March however, illness prevented her from being present. The team quickly revised the weekend and offered:
 - An hour-long program after Rev Cooley's sermon
 - Zoom sessions, held later, for the Board, the TCTeam, and the Transition Team with Rev. Cooley
- Articles and surveys have been placed in Soundings on a nearly weekly basis keeping our work as visible as possible

- Team members have taken training with the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, as well as the UUA. Further training for team members is under consideration
- Discussion and at times assistance in points of potential conflict including Article II

Plans for Fall 2024 are underway and are focused on Terasa Cooley's visit in early October, a Team offering in mid-September, late October, and late November.

Submitted by Linda Lubin, Team Lead

PROGRAM COMMITTEES

A Better Man

This covenanted group has been meeting for six years. We meet monthly on the 3rd Saturday of every month at 8am. Our purpose remains personal growth, connections, service, and aspiring to be better men and better people. A topic is formulated monthly by the leadership team, and each member is able to share their personal experiences in as deep a manner as they wish. Our group has found value in continuity and has been meeting during the summer months.

Membership has remained steady, between 12-16 men per meeting. In our circle, we allow plenty of time to share and bond. Based upon the committed membership, the group has successfully provided a forum for members that fills a gap that provides close male connections and friendships in contemporary suburbia.

While the group has many long term committed members we would welcome anyone interested in coming to a group meeting to see if they are interested in continuing. We open up to new participants, in the model of Small Groups. The group prizes stability within the group, and we welcome and periodically add new members. If interested, please email garvluke22@gmail.com.

Respectfully Submitted, Bob Perry

Addiction Recovery Ministry (ARM)

The Addictions Recovery Ministry (ARM) effort has been flat on its side as far as programming is concerned for about a year. However, as individuals seeking help approach us through our Pastoral Care effort they are counseled by seasoned chaplains and referred to community treatment or self-help recovery centers. The AA group established here over four years ago continues to have twenty to thirty individuals meet on a weekly basis. This is a continuing sign of our congregation's support of those impacted by addiction.

Submitted by Rev. Jim Francek, ACSW, Facilitator – TUUCW – Addiction Recovery Ministry

Adult Faith Formation

The AFF committee was formed to provide educational and spiritual growth opportunities for the adults in the TUUCW congregation. We want to continue that mission in the 2024/2025 year and to co-sponsor learning opportunities for all ages.

Members: Rev Alan Taylor, Jamie Forbes; committee chair, Cheryl Dixon Paul, Linda Lubin, Jenny Klein, Tom Hearne

23/24 Offerings:

- Neighboring Faiths- Ravi Sankar (Temple Israel one day before the October 6 attack in Israel, Pentecostal, Islamic Center)
- Kundalini Yoga-Susan Cain
- Autumn Equinox Labyrinth-Marjorie Partch and Bart Stuck
- Winter Solstice Labyrinth
- Aleph Talks: Where Science and Spirituality Meet. Weekly class on Zoom-Bart Stuck and Marjorie Partch
- Goddess Workshop; cosponsored with TUUCWomen's Group—Janet Luongo
- Sunday morning chanting, 9-9:30am Sunday-Bart Stuck and Marjorie Partch
- Sunday morning meditation, 9:30-10am Sunday-Janet Luongo
- Congregation Read: Conflict Transformation by Terasa Cooley. Chapter discussion groups and Zoom sermon by author in Spring 2024. Programming led by the Conflict Transformation team
- Denominational Read: On Repentance and Repair by Danya Ruttenberg. Discussion groups led by Cheryl Dixon Paul. Summer 2024

Submitted by Jamie Forbes

Caring Network

Our Caring Network is in its fourth year, helping congregants in tangible ways such as meals, rides, or just cards or calls to let them know they are part of our congregation and we are thinking of them. We use the "Lotsa Helping Hands" app to keep us organized and to make sure we can keep track of multiple efforts at the same time.

Dorothy Rich and Beth Cliff coordinate the network; they hear about needs from the ministers, the candle boat announcements, Pastoral Care Associates and word of mouth. We currently have 45 folks on the network, although in truth the number of volunteers who are active contributors is closer to 15-20.

This is just one of the many ways that we as a congregation stay connected and in community with each other. We are pleased that this continues and will do more in the future to ensure people know about it and know how to use it, should they or friends they know have needs we can help with. We welcome more volunteers to help us with doing the tasks, and also with its coordination.

Submitted by Dorothy Rich and Beth Cliff

Coffee and Conversation Committee

Mission:

- 1) To bring people together over good food.
- 2) To raise awareness of and create change in our culture with regard to the exploitation of animals for human consumption.
- 3) To raise awareness of the connection between animal consumption and climate change, human health, and our UU values.

Our initiatives and events included:

- Coffee Hour
- 6-Week Intro to Veganism Course
- Catering for internal events
- Monthly Newsletter
- Raised money for The John Street Bridge group
- Purchased water glasses, bowls, and dinner plates

- Little Vegan Library

COFFEE HOUR. When the year started, we unapologetically instituted a Vegan-only policy for Coffee Hour. We did not attempt to impose it on other events, but we did decide that it was fair to ask our congregation to go one hour without the exploitation of animals, health, and planet. Although there was initial pushback against somethings, particularly dairy, it only took a few Sundays for (most) congregants to get on board. There are still a few who are determined to sneak into the kitchen to put cow milk in their coffee, but, wonderfully, there are even more who have made the switch to plant milk – not only at Coffee Hour, but at home, too. We have received wonderful feedback from so many congregants that they are learning and making changes.

And, of course, that they love the food! Coffee Hour has grown into a weekly event attended by nearly all congregants present at Service on a given Sunday. It is buzzy and, at time, even a bit crowded. We are so pleased to see our friends gathering together instead of hustling out the doors. Community is what it's all about.

We also had one soup sale, which raised about \$200. We split that amount with John Street Bridge, giving them \$100 for their needs, and using the other \$100 to purchase water glasses, soup/cereal bowls, and dinner plates for our kitchen.

Donations on Sundays were on the generous side of reasonable – with some people likely not donating at all, several people consistently throwing in a few bucks, and one or two people being truly generous. If there is a difference between what we make in donations and the cost of the food, then it comes out of our personal pockets. We are just ahead in our account with Sue, however, that includes a lot of ingredients for which we did not seek reimbursement. Ideally, the church budget for next year will include some dollars for Coffee Hour as well as for catering needs.

6-WEEK COURSE. Toward the end of the year, we really had a system going for Coffee Hour and realized we could probably pull off a 6-week cooking class. Registration filled up and had a waiting list. The course consisted of one documentary showing with snacks, four hands-on cooking classes, and one potluck. Feedback from participants is that they truly enjoyed it and learned so much. Most of them are transitioning toward a Vegan lifestyle and have become advocates. We learned that some recipes need to be scaled back and that we need more than two hours per class.

CATERING. The success of Coffee Hour also garnered the attention of those wanting some help with food for events at UUWestport, including committee events, town halls, and the annual meeting. We learned that we need to have a flexible menu with costs.

NEWSLETTER. We have a sign-up sheet for people to receive notices about events and our monthly newsletter. We managed to write and send out three newsletters to about 35 people who signed up. Once the 6-week class started, though, keeping up became difficult. We learned that 3-4 newsletters per year is more doable and probably sufficient.

LIBRARY. Jenna brought in her personal collection of Vegan cookbooks and offered them up as a little library. Congregants have signed out several of them. A few have been returned, and several are still out.

NEXT YEAR'S PLANS:

- Vary the food at Coffee Hour
- Enlist more volunteers and recruit committee members
- Offer a variety of media during coffee hour for those who wish to learn more
- 4 special Coffee Hours during the year as fundraisers (pancake breakfast, soup sale, etc.)
- 2 Vegan potlucks at UUWestport for whole community
- 1-2 Speakers (Sailsh Rao and Gene Baur)
- Field trip to a local farm sanctuary
- 2-3 more 6-Week courses
- Catering for: Homecoming, 75th Anniversary, Annual Meeting

- Partner with other committees where there is overlap of goals
- Become a member-committee of the Social Justice Council
- And... a good old fashioned Church Cook Book!

Jenna McPartland and Julyen Norman, Co-Chairs

Communications – Soundings and UUWestport.org

TUUCW's website - uuwestport.org - continues to chug along. There are some statistics that are interesting to note. For example, 29.94% use MacOS, followed by iPhones at 27.51%, then Windows 10 at 24.47%, then Android at 11.42%. Even Linux users are here by 2.47%. Curious how over 50% of uuwestport.org's visitors are on some form of Apple device.

Google is used almost exclusively. Otherwise, The Auckland Unitarian Church in New Zealand, Patch and Facebook significantly refer us. Terms that are used in Google range from "prince" (due to The Little Prince being a highly viewed page on our site) to "belonging" and "with."

Besides the calendar and Contact Us, the live-streaming page is the third most visited page. People from all over are watching our services. They are also listening. The audio from week to week fluctuates from a small handful to upwards of over a dozen. (The number changes daily and most leave a simple click to indicate they "liked" the sermon.)

Who is visiting? Here are the top 8 countries:

- United States - 150993: hits - 37727: page views
- United Kingdom - 6190: hits - 846: page views
- India - 5174: hits - 1066: page views
- Philippines - 4902: hits - 641: page views
- Canada - 4609: hits - 576: page views
- Australia - 2550: hits - 400: page views
- China - 2540: hits - 614: page views
- Germany - 2331: hits - 1250: page views

The Communications Committee, consisting of Charles Klein, Jenny Klein, Michelle Garvey and Ruth Fontilla meet with Rev. Alan monthly to discuss how communications will proceed - by what tools and other various means. We have begun a full review of the present website and its needs for the future. The first step will be reviewing ALL the pages (nearly 1000) to weed out what is no longer relevant and can be deleted. The Communication Committee also keeps in contact with the Tech Team. The Tech Team is a crucial part of our overall communications.

The digital newsletter, SOUNDINGS, continues to maintain an average of 45-50% of those receiving it clicking on it in their email within the first 24 hours of receiving it.

To submit an item to SOUNDINGS, send to Charles Klein, editor of SOUNDINGS, no later than Wednesday by 5:30 PM for both SOUNDINGS: THIS WEEKEND and SOUNDINGS: THIS WEEK going out that particular week. Early submissions are greatly appreciated. Each week there are two editions. SOUNDINGS: THIS WEEKEND is sent out Thursday night at approximately midnight. SOUNDINGS: THIS WEEK is sent Sunday mornings at 7:00 AM.

Next year we anticipate alterations to the website and possibly SOUNDINGS. All elements of Communications are works in progress and often are moving targets. Much of this is due to TUUCW being in a transitional state itself presently.

Respectfully submitted by Charles Klein, web elf, on behalf of the Communications Committee

Denominational Affairs

As a Unitarian Universalist congregation, we are under the umbrella of our larger faith association – the UUA.

The UUA holds General Assembly (GA) in June – either in person and/or virtually (since Covid) and is the largest assembled gathering of UUs that occurs once a year. As well as business meetings and voting on issues, GA offers classes, panel discussions, a variety of worship, remembering beloved leaders who have passed. There are booths of books, chalices, flags, banners, stickers, bumper stickers clothing, lawn art – all with a UU message. There are plenty of opportunities to meet up with old friends and make new ones. Consider attending a General Assembly and prepare to deepen your faith.

The UUA creates our hymnal, produces high level educational programs and many interactive online sessions. Spiritual Leadership under the UU Institute is one place to find good classes. The UUA connects us with ministers when we are in search. During Side With Love events we can express our desire for social justice in greater numbers than just our own congregation. <https://uuinstitute.org/courses/spiritualleadership-305/>

The New England Region (NER) is our regional grouping of congregations. These leaders run courses throughout the year on stewardship, provide support for office Administrators of our individual congregations, lead in depth discussions for congregants who want to delve deeper into important topics with other UUs. They are there to help us grow and flourish. <https://www.uua.org/new-england>

Respectfully submitted by Cheryl Dixon Paul

Gardens and Grounds

The Gardens and Grounds Committee paused this year due to a leadership change. The Congregational Administrator worked closely with several committee members in order to get various needs fulfilled such as trees trimmed and mulch spread. A “No-Mow May” was started to eliminate the need for gas powered lawnmowers to cut the grass in May as it’s slow growing and not too dense yet.

A congregation wide spring clean-up party was held on May 19 in order to clean up the Memorial Garden and the Meditation Garden.

Submitted by Ruth Fontilla

Interim Minister Search Team (IMST)

Following Rev. John Morehouse’s resignation, the Board of Trustees selected a team to find an interim minister to serve Westport.

The very first thing we did was to get to know each other better, create an atmosphere of safety and trust among ourselves, have some deep discussions and come to a respectful means of sharing information.

Our charge was to be in contact with the TUUCW Board and the UUA headquarters, interview the congregation on what they were looking for in an interim, read and then discuss the packets provided by the applicants, interview the applicants, discuss the pluses and minuses of each, submit our list in order of preference to the Board and the UUA, and wait.

When each of the interim applicants declined our offer, we were asked by the UUA if we would consider a hybrid ministry. Our first response was no! And then we sat back and talked it out. We’d come through Covid together, navigated streaming services and meetings online – our team was actually meeting online most of the time! We had the OWL for conducting hybrid meetings in committee work. We were slightly warming to the idea when we met Rev. Alan Taylor (on zoom) and after an amazing hour of talking, he said that hybrid was the only way he could work with us, that his family couldn’t move here. And then he said he would be really excited to work with us. His spirit and energy leapt through the Zoom screen and each of us felt it!

Your team: Deb Handler, Joanne Glasser Orenstein, Dayle Brownstein, Ken Vogel, Cheryl Dixon Paul

Respectfully submitted by Cheryl Dixon Paul

Membership Committee

We had approximately 80 visitors to the building this year, and 9 people became members. This year, the Membership Committee worked closely with Rev. Alan as we helped him and the congregation through this transition year. Rev. Alan shared ideas on increasing membership with us and we implemented a four part "Pathways to Membership" Program. Throughout the year, this was modified several times as we discovered, or rediscovered, what worked and what didn't. David Keeton, who had been on the committee several years prior, brought his memory of a similar program done back then and melded it with Rev. Alan's vision.

Pathways 1: Intro to UUWestport with the Minister

Pathways 2: Who are you? Sharing of Spiritual Journeys

Pathways 3: Who can we be together? Engaging in UUWestport

Pathways Potluck

We held two complete Pathways sessions. One in the fall and one in the spring. In addition, we held 2 additional sessions of Pathways 1: Intro to UU Westport with the Minister. Attendance at these were moderate, ranging from 2-5 newcomers at each individual session. However, the engagement was excellent, and 9 of the people who attended these sessions have signed the membership book. Everyone who attended at least one of the Pathways sessions was invited to the Potluck, and those were well attended and held in the meeting house. In addition, Jerusha Vogel and David Keeton both invited all the newcomers who engaged in pathways to their homes when their neighborhood circle met to further include them in the congregation.

As a committee, we worked hard to arrange ourselves in a way where we all had a role. The Pathways subcommittee focused on organizing and running the Pathways events. The Visitor Follow up subcommittee was responsible for reaching out to everyone who visited and providing them with information from the congregation. We primarily did this via email, but there were some follow up phone calls. We set up a spreadsheet with all newcomer information in it, including who contacted the person and when. Ruth put information in the spreadsheet when she entered them in REALM and we added information on people as we talked to them. This allowed more than one person to be responsible for outreach and reduced the chance that we visitors would fall through the cracks.

Ruth and membership updated the welcome brochure and the yellow cards given to newcomers. Jerusha contacted several lapsed members to clean up our database, finding that several had moved away or had chosen not to attend anymore, but several were grateful for the pledge reminder and re-pledged. A newcomer poster was created and set out on an easel every Sunday and upcoming newcomer events were posted under it. We tried to have an activity for newcomers to do every month. We mostly piggy backed on events that were already being held by the congregation. We individually invited all newcomers who had filled out a yellow card this year to these events, and had a member of the committee to greet them and introduce them to each other and longer term members.

November - School of Rock

January - Barn Dance, Potluck

February - Potluck

March - UUPlayers play (Rumors)

April - Potluck

May - Hiking with the Hiking Group

June - Gathering at Sherwood Island planned

We plan to continue this over the summer with monthly evening gatherings at Sherwood Island.

Goals for next year: Move all our documents into the Google cloud drive for Membership. Find ways to actively recruit visitors. We will also continue to greet people on Sunday mornings, hold Pathways events, work with Family Faith Formation and other UU committees to engage and advertise for newcomers.

Respectfully Submitted by Jerusha Vogel, Membership Chair.

Other Membership members include: Chuck Colletti, Eileen Belmont, Rob Zuckerman, Jim Cooper, Angi Haen, Dale Kutnick, Fred Marshall, David Keeton and Cathy Paine.

Memorial Garden Committee

The Memorial Garden was dedicated on October 15, 1972 by Reverend Ed Lane as a sacred and peaceful resting place for the ashes of eligible members and their families. We are responsible for policies and records and assisting members and families in selecting sites.

The beautiful curved wall at the entrance to the garden is a less costly option for memorializing a loved one whose ashes have been scattered elsewhere.

This past year we have helped with the interment of the ashes of several members who moved away a long time ago, but had made arrangement to return upon their passing. This includes the Karasik family from whom we purchased the land to build our beautiful building.

It is an honor assist individuals and families to plan for the future or to help during the grief of a sudden loss. Please do not hesitate to contact any of the committee members. We are here for you.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Bell, Cheryl Dixon, Elena Rockman-Blake, Bob Perry, Melanie Wyler

Pastoral Care Chaplains

The Pastoral Care Chaplains at TUUCW has now been in existence for ten years. During that time Pastoral Care Chaplains have supported many members of our congregation a variety of ways.

In the course of this congregational year, our 14 Pastoral Care Chaplains have touched the lives of numerous members of this congregation.

- *The Grief Group* meets twice a year and has provided support to 14 participants, both TUUCW members and members of the larger community.
- *The Thursday Talking Circle* continues to involve 10-14 participants on a weekly basis. It provides them with support and connection through personal check-in and discussion.
- In October, the Pastoral Care group led a *Ministry of Presence Sunday service*, with a focus on deep listening.

Members of our congregation and occasionally others in the wider community reach the Chaplains in several ways: calls to our pastoral care phone line, at the candle boat on Sunday, or through other congregants. The range of the Chaplains' services has included responding to death situations, providing emotional and spiritual support during hospice and end of life, support to those facing major health issues, significant changes in relationships, and other difficult life passages.

The Pastoral Care group also works in coordination with the Caring Network to ensure that all of a congregant's needs are attended to.

Pastoral Care Chaplains meet once a month as a group. The meetings provide them with an opportunity to further and deepen their own education and to support each other in their role as chaplains.

The Pastoral Care Leadership Team: Rev. Jim Francek, Marie-Claire Bue, Kathy Roberts, Tom Hearne, Beverly Bailey and Ravi Sankar.

Respectfully submitted by Marie-Claire Bue

PR and Social/Digital Media

This year, most of the Public Relations work has been carried about by individual committees as they have events or news to share outside of the congregational walls. However, there are a number of occasions when the events or news are driven by the ministers and staff (notably, Family Faith Formation activities) and on these occasions Beth Cliff has stepped up to provide support. This includes alerting blogs, paper newspapers, digital newspapers and news sites, online calendars and bulletin boards, and social media sites (Instagram, X, Facebook, and, on occasion, Linked In) of the events going on at UU Westport, usually with a graphic and short write-up. Many of these cost nothing to post; sometimes there is a small placement fee. In addition, Beth ensures that church services of special note are announced across the towns we typically pull from, including information about children's programming, dress code, time of the service, what to expect, the livestream link, a link to the SOUNDINGS archive, and an invitation to join our mailing list.

Submitted by Beth Cliff

Safer Congregation Committee (SCC)

The Safer Congregation Committee is a minister-appointed committee, currently composed of two mental health professionals, an attorney, a youth health and safety specialist, and the Faith Formation leader. The SCC advises regarding issues of safety within the LFD curriculum, staff, volunteers, and Pastoral Care associates. Safety issues range from physical safety within the building to mental health and sexual impropriety within congregants/staff in the congregation.

Whereas in the past the SCC met ad hoc to discuss critical incidents, it has been meeting monthly, discussing topics centering around mental and sexual health, safety planning, and staff/volunteer trainings. We have revised the SCC protocol and guidelines, including the FFF policies. In addition, SCC's prior responsibility for congregational disruptive behaviors has been transferred to the Committee On Ministry with the advisement of the Conflict Resolution Team.

This past year we have continued connecting with local agencies such as the Westport Police Department, Positive Directions, and the Red Cross. In October 2023 we had a Fall Training on CPR/AED Stop the Bleed, Narcan administration, and Intruder Training. The WPD has been making recommendations for Safety within the TUUCW buildings, which have been discussed with the Board.

For the 2023/2024 year, the members have been: Wendy Levy, PsyD (chair) Rev. Alan Taylor, Deborah Garskof, Esq, Angi Haen, Jay Lubin, and Miki Lasher, PhD.

Respectfully submitted by Wendy Levy

Shawl Ministry

Between June 1, 2022 and June 1, 2024 twenty-five handmade shawls were given to members of our community to serve as a tangible source of concern, support, or celebration during times of significant personal transition.

We were excited and grateful to welcome Rev. Alan Taylor to one of our scheduled meetings in the fall. We got to share some basic information and also share what it means to our members to be a part of our group. We

invited Alan to choose a shawl for his wife, Angie, because she is participating in sharing her husband with us this year. We are grateful.

Once again, we provided hand knit scarves, paired with purchased hats for each of the forty incoming kindergartners at Beardsley School in Bridgeport.

We have resumed making new member cards at the request of the Membership Committee.

They are distributed during the new member recognition ceremonies this year.

We continue making loans to women entrepreneurs in developing countries world-wide through Kiva.org. This year we made 13 new loans using repaid monies. We have \$178.12 in outstanding loans. The total amount loaned since 2007 is \$9150.00 to women in 70 different countries.

Jan Braunle leads this group.

Social Justice Council (SJC)

One of this year's main accomplishments of your Social Justice Council (SJC) was the creation of a new model for determining who receives our monthly Share the Plate collections. In preparation for this change, the SJC offered information on the history of Share the Plate, lists of organizations who have received donations during the past 2 years, and the forms and specific criteria required for members to nominate potential beneficiaries. The launching of this new process begins when members attending our 2024 annual meeting vote for the top 10 nominees who will be on the slate for the 2024-25 Share the Plate program.

The SJC is comprised of leaders representing each of the social action and advocacy committees within our congregation. This year the SJC established an official procedure for the formation of new social justice action committees, resulting in two new committees: Mending the Sacred Hoop--Co-Chairs Jim Francek and Grandmother Nancy Landry, and Reproductive Justice--Chair Leslie Cenci.

Additionally, the SJC focused on three areas of concern:

1. Legislative Advocacy--David Vita was granted the formal title of Legislative Advocacy Coordinator for his continual work with local and state policy issues. The top 3 issues of the council were Gun Violence Prevention, passage of the Husky legislation to expand medical coverage from age 15 – 19, and Reproductive Justice. The possible establishment of a State Advocacy Network (SAN) of UU congregations working together on justice and equity issues specific to UU principles and goals is under consideration.
2. SJC Funding—Individual committees submitted their 2024-25 budget requests which exceeded the SJC amount allotted in our TUUCW annual budget. We examined other possible funding sources, e.g. grants, Voices Café, fund raising, the SJC reserve, the Jan Park Fund for social justice issues, and the Wertheimer Fund which pays for speakers and programs. We will plan for a comprehensive discussion with the Board of Trustees regarding the positive impact the SJC on TUUCW's mission to Inspire, Connect, and Act and the need for appropriate funding.
3. Congregational Engagement— In addition to the new Share the Plate process, we increased communication channels by updating individual SJC web pages on the TUUCW website. In order to foster increased awareness, participation, and commitment to social justice action and advocacy, we continuously submitted SJC articles of interest in weekend/weekly emails of Soundings. We have specifically engaged in efforts that promote SJC committees working together such as individual committees sponsoring Voices Café performances and opportunities for incorporating UU the Vote efforts in all social justice areas. In the fall we will host Alex Wiesendanger, national advocate, for training sessions on faith-based organizing.

Respectfully Submitted, Anita Pfluger and Sudha Sankar

SJC: Beardsley School Committee

Our steadfast commitment to Beardsley's students, teachers, staff, and parents seems to increase each year as additional TUUCW members contribute their time, talents, and treasure to our beloved school. We continue to provide tutors who work with individual or small groups of students on math and reading skills, and a core group of readers share books and stories weekly or bi-weekly in specific classrooms. Our Shawl Ministry keeps on knitting scarves and hats for all kindergarteners, and all of TUUCW comes together at Christmastime with generous donations of gift cards that ease the struggles of some Beardsley families.

This year we provided books for classroom libraries during our traditional Read Aloud Days (RADs) in October, celebrating Hispanic American Heritage Month, and May, honoring Teacher Appreciation Day. We added a December Holiday Read Aloud (RAD) for the Pre-K to grade 3 classes. We select people of color who share their life stories at the annual March Career Day celebration so students can learn about possible occupations or professions they might consider for their futures. A core group of library volunteers catalog donated books, shelve returned books, and organize book giveaways in December and June. One volunteer sings with the kindergarten classes each week, while another hosts a lunchtime book club for a small group of 5th grade girls. Generous members respond to teacher requests on the Beardsley Board or the Amazon wish list for supplies and other needed resources not provided by the district. We are always looking opportunities for creative and artistic enrichment experiences for the children.

A new activity this year was the Senior Interview Program, where sixth graders interviewed seniors from the Residence in Westport as well as several seniors from TUUCW. The students were studying biographies and were interested in learning about the lives and experiences of men and women their grandparents' or even their great-grandparents' ages. Another new event occurred when five members of TUUCW acted as judges for the 5th and 6th grade Science Fair; the judges determined all the science fair presentations were winners! At the beginning of May, sixth grade students were treated to an author visit from Susan Hood, whose book **Harboring Hope** tells the story of a young Danish woman who helped Danish Jews escape from Denmark to Sweden during WW II. Interestingly, the boat she used for the escape, the Gerda III, resides at the Mystic Seaport museum.

We are considered a Community Partner and meet monthly with the principal and the School Governance Council (SGC.) Other community partners include Access Educational Services, the Silvermine Arts Program, and the KEYS (Kids Empowered by Your Support) music program. We also support the Back-to-School Picnic on the last Friday of September and the June Jamboree which is combined with Field day as an especially fun end-of-the-year activity.

We're very happy to report this year's Teacher/Volunteer Pot Luck dinner in May was a rousing success. For several years Covid had caused the cancellation of this event. We're glad it is back on the schedule!

Your Beardsley Committee,
Sari Bodi, Beth Cliff, Lynne Laukhuf, Diane Moller, Anita Pfluger, and Kathy Roberts

SJC: Black Lives Matter Committee

The Black Lives Matter Committee (BLM) was formed in June 2020, by 40 women within our UU congregation. Since that time, BLM has worked to fulfill its mission to raise awareness of the historic roots of racism in our country, offer information that promotes a greater understanding of systemic racism and white privilege, and inspire concrete actions to help build a more just and equitable society. In 2022, our team assisted with the formation of the TUUCW Social Justice Council and BLM has been an active member since then.

This year, BLM responded to attacks on the freedom to read and, more broadly, on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), creating a mini-library of banned and challenged books, many of which are centered on Black and LGBTQ+ themes, experiences and characters. This collection is available every Sunday; members are invited to borrow books and contribute new titles.

BLM also partnered with several SJC committees during the last year.

- We partnered with UUtheVote to write postcards to encourage voter registration.
- We collaborated with the Legislative Advocacy Committee to make phone calls and write testimonials on behalf of issues that align with our values, including health care for youth (HUSKYHealth) and affordable housing (“Work Live Ride” legislation advocated by DeSegregateCT, with whom TUUCW is affiliated).
- In collaboration with Voices Café and the Gender Equity Team, BLM co-produced the February 3rd Voices Café concert. This successful evening featured Crys Matthews who, as a Black queer woman from the South, describes herself as “The Poster Child for Intersectionality.” The concert beneficiary was TransHaven, a program run by and for the trans and questioning community in Connecticut.
- BLM collaborated with the Mending the Sacred Hoop committee to share the costs for musicians involved in Rev. Ed Thompson’s original cantata, written to bring attention and inspire support for Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women (MMIW) and girls. The cantata was performed at our UU service on May 5th.

BLM recognizes the great importance of building relationships with Black community members and organizations. In January, we met with Thayer Barkley and her son, Michael, each of whom have non-profit organizations in Bridgeport. We invited them to use our campus when they saw a need for this space. We were also contacted by the NAACP who inquired about space to hold a town hall. On May 9th, we offered a safe environment within our UU sanctuary for Black families in Fairfield County to speak out about students being racially harassed and bullied in their schools. We look forward to hosting the NAACP and/or others involved in the town hall in the future if they need a welcoming and supportive space.

Our year culminated in a BLM service on May 19th focusing on kindling the flame of racial justice within ourselves and embracing the UU 8th Principle in our lives. As part of the service, congregants responded with their interest in opportunities to support the cause of racial justice offered by BLM and other SJC committees.

As we continue into the new congregational year, BLM looks forward to welcoming new members, continuing our efforts to live more intentionally the words of our 8th Principle, and offering opportunities for our congregation to become more engaged advocates for racial justice.

Respectfully Submitted, Pat Francek and Sudha Sankar, Co-chairs, Black Lives Matter Committee

SJC: Gender Equity

In order to truly be a welcoming congregation for LBGTQIA+ folx, we need to have obvious signage and symbols both outside and inside our building. Earlier this year our new team member Jen Gerometta came up with the verbiage for our new bathroom signage. Many visitors pause to read the words.

We began our year’s first meeting with Alysa Trachtenberg who is the chairperson of Ridgefield CT Pride. She spoke to us on the importance of getting out into the community, encouraging us to make deeper connections.

This year for the February Voices Café we had the good fortune to team up with the BlackLivesMatter Team to sponsor the February Voices with singer songwriter Crys Matthews, who filled the room with Love and Inclusion, creating an evening not to be forgotten. The proceeds benefitted Trans Haven a Connecticut resource run 100% by and for trans people. Trans Haven offers a combination of virtual and in-person community events and programs. We followed up with a Share the Plate the next morning and, combined, we presented a large donation to their organization.

Jen G. offered to docent a trip to the Aldrich Museum where we were joined by the entire staff from Triangle Community Center. The trans artist’s sculptures were mesmerizing and everyone saw something different in their work.

We sponsored a showing of the hour-long documentary of our congregation's history with LGBT and the first Rainbow Task Force. It consists of a series of interviews by Rozanne Gates with early members who banded together to make TUCW a safe and welcoming place for all. We were the home of the first same sex marriage in Connecticut – Rozanne Gates and Suzanne Sheridan. It was a joy seeing long time members back in our sanctuary.

Prior to the showing, Rob Herman installed our large progress flag at the UUWestport main entrance.

GET is working with Faith Formation leader Angi Haen and will sponsor a booth on June 8th for the upcoming Pride in the Park, in Veterans Park, Norwalk. We will be there from 12noon thru 8pm to promote our TUUCW values and programs, and will have fun give aways and literature to hand out. We will share how TUUCWs OWL program benefits us all as we include LGBTQIA+ families in our congregation. We are looking forward to meeting others and showing our Pride!

Members: Marla Kind, Denise Carreau, Jen Gerometta, Jamie Forbes, Sudha Sankar, Cheryl Dixon Paul, Rev. Alan Taylor

Respectfully submitted by Cheryl, Jamie and Sudha

SJC: IDI (Intercultural Development Inventory)

The IDI is a tool to assess our ability to connect across difference. It's a first step in understanding where we're starting from so that we can then work to effectively develop our intercultural competency skills as individuals and as a congregation. In IDI's classes we learn that we have all aspects of the mindset spectrum within us and depending on trauma and circumstance we can show up very differently along our life's journey.

The IDI can be a useful tool as teams and committees at TUUCW change membership. Grounding ourselves in our own stories first, sharing our stories with others in our groups, and then bringing our new skills to the rest of the congregation and the wider community.

I invite you to contact me to find out how IDI can support your teams' vision and mission. Building intercultural competence is IDI's goal. We will continue to offer the IDI yearly to congregants who would like to participate.

Respectfully submitted by Cheryl Dixon Paul, Qualified Administrator of the IDI

SJC: Immigration and Refugee Outreach Committee

The I & R Outreach Committee's mission is to help immigrants in their struggle to integrate into the community, to work for more just and humane immigration policies, and to engage as many volunteers as possible in the process.

Efforts toward fulfilling our mission include:

This year's primary involvement continues to be working with the Connecticut Institute for Refugees & Immigrants (CIRI) to prepare homes for arriving refugees. The CIRI Apartment SetUp Team (CAST) is an effort of many collaborating faith-based organizations in Fairfield County that we work with. CAST is responsible for picking up donated furniture, purchasing household supplies - everything a refugee family needs from toothbrushes to pots and pans, tableware, towels and bedding. On a typical day we thoroughly clean the apartment, deliver and arrange furniture, put away supplies, make beds and organize kitchen and bathroom items. Volunteers decorate the apartments and provide finishing touches that make an apartment feel like a home.

We are also involved with supporting the undocumented and immigrants in underserved communities through our work with Make the Road CT (MRCT).

We continue to advocate for healthcare, and have joined with CT Students for a Dream and MRCT to lobby for Husky 4 All, to extend healthcare coverage to undocumented residents and to children and young adults.

In December we invited Our Woven Community to TUUCW to sell their beautiful handmade items for the holidays. OWC is a group of refugee women who learn to use sewing machines to create unique handbags, scarves and other items from local donated materials combined with fabrics from Africa and other countries to symbolize their cultures. One hundred percent of the proceeds benefit the artists and support program expenses.

Melanie Wyler and Kathy Roberts

SJC: John St. Bridge Outreach

History. For over a decade, April Barron, a grassroots activist in Bridgeport (Helping Hands Outreach, Inc.) has coordinated a Sunday food outreach for unhoused and food insecure individuals on John Street in Bridgeport. Our Outreach coordinates with April Barron in a servant leadership model.

Connect. We have members of our congregational community who have made lunches for the Bridgeport community every week since April of 2020. Overall, the weekly number of lunches has fallen, and fluctuates between 90 and 160, with fewer lunches recently. As with last fiscal year, this past reporting year saw increased connection and reciprocity between the Bridgeport community and those who transport and serve lunches. We Connect Communities One Lunch at a Time and Bear Witness. We have also connected with other Bridgeport-based non-profits seeking to serve the unhoused or food-insecure, children, and currently or formerly incarcerated individuals.

Act and Impact. We have served approximately 40,000 lunches since April of 2020. Our lunches serve the community on John Street and four half-way houses for men returning from incarceration. We also serve lunches to families at PT Barnum Housing Community when the numbers allow. The summer months are more vital service months for PT Barnum, as the children are not receiving breakfast and lunch at school. The impact is much more than lunch, however. We are a known and expected presence on John Street, and are accepted members of the community. We bear witness and listen to life stories. We provide additional resources for individuals when needed, such as diapers, clothing, and newborn accessories for a Mother from Guatemala with two other children whose family lives only in one bedroom in a shared subsidized house. Our Backpack/School Supply Drive and Holiday Toy Drive, both coordinated with April Barron, serve hundreds of families. This past year, we coordinated both drives with Save Our Babies, Inc., an organization started by formerly incarcerated persons seeking to mentor youth-at-risk and provide them with opportunities for the future.

Respectfully submitted by Teryl Eisenberg

SJC: Legislative Advocacy

After 18 years on staff as Director of Social Justice and then Legislative Advocacy and Community Outreach Coordinator, in October, 2023 David Vita became our volunteer Legislative Advocacy Coordinator and member of the recently constituted Social Justice Council.

The Council voted on three issue areas to focus on for the 2023/24 Connecticut General Assembly legislative session. The three issues, and the organizations that we worked with, were: HUSKY Medicaid for immigrants without documentation (HUSKY 4 Immigrants Coalition), gun violence prevention (CT Against Gun Violence), and reproductive justice (Planned Parenthood).

Members of the congregation engaged in the following legislative advocacy actions on 6 bills:

- Phoned and emailed state legislators

- Signed petitions and submitted written testimony
- Attended rallies, press conferences, and Lobby Days in Hartford
- Called upon legislators to co-sponsor legislation

The Legislative Advocacy Coordinator represented TUUCW on the state HUSKY 4 Immigrants Coalition, its Advocacy and Communication Committees, CT Against Gun Violence, CT Planned Parenthood, and the Steering Committee to form a UU State-wide Advocacy Network.

David Vita, Legislative Advocacy Coordinator

SJC: Mending the Sacred Hoop

On November 29, 2023, Grandmother Nancy Andry and myself in collaboration with Rev. Ed Thompson created a service to introduce and celebrate the culture and spirituality of our indigenous people. We incorporated several native people in the actual sharing of these cultural riches. As a result of this effort, a great deal of interest was generated in creating an active committee within TUUCW that would offer a variety of experiences that would deepen both our understanding of indigenous customs & teachings as well as identify ways we could support native people both locally and nationwide.

Initially we had thirty-six people (from our congregation & wider community) express a desire to engage with this process. We hold our zoom meetings on the second Wednesday evening from 7-8:30 pm. To date we have facilitated the following activities:

- MSH meeting 1/10/24- Discussion on intergenerational trauma & the native view of Seven Generations
- MSH meeting 2/13/24- Grandmother Nancy shared two creation stories
- MSH meeting 3/13/24- Discussion of video on the Doctrine of Discovery
- MSH meeting 4/10/24- Presentation by Joseph Many Horses on the meaning of tobacco & healing from plants
- Earth Day Service 4/21/24
- Teaching Circle 5/4/24- Anishinabe Clan System & Teachings on the Sacred Pipe by Joseph Davis & Danielle Leblanc (34 participants)
- Original Cantata created by Rev. Ed Thompson in memory of Missing & Murdered native youth of North America. Raised \$2777 for Medicine Wheel Ride.

EVENTS YET TO COME:

- Llama Farm visit & storytelling 6/1/24- Over thirty participants to participate.
- MSH meeting 6/12/24
- Festival of Nations (zoom) 6/22/24
- Mending Sacred Hoop (zoom) 6/12/24
- Visit Institute for American Indian Studies, Washington Ct (mid-July)
- Mending Sacred Hoop (zoom) 7/12/24
- Mending Sacred Hoop (zoom) 8/14/24
- Green Corn Pow-wow 8/25/24- Mashantucket Pequot Reservation
- Mending Sacred Hoop (zoom) 9/11/24
- Mending Sacred Hoop (zoom) 10/9/24
- Mending Sacred Hoop (zoom) 11/13/24
- Service in Celebration of Indigenous People 11/24/24
- Mending Sacred Hoop (zoom) 12/11/24

This report is submitted by Grandmother Nancy Andry and Rev. Jim Francek. (co-chairs)

SJC: Reproductive Justice

Mission Statement: We educate and advocate for ourselves and others regarding reproductive health and justice, which includes bodily autonomy and abortion, intersecting with racism, poverty, domestic violence and gender identity.

Accomplishments over the past year: Our leadership team has grown to seven members. These include Leslie Cenci, Jamie Forbes, Beth Cliff, Janet Luongo, Sunny Khadjavi, Jan Braunle and Denise Carreau.

We are also fortunate to have an interested “fellowship” of support of our UU members-over 60 men and women who have attended our meetings, “baked/made” for our food sales, participated in postcard writing, stuffed “abortion care” bags and otherwise added voice and commitment to the needs of the reproductive justice movement.

- We offered several educational programs with speakers: one from Planned Parenthood of Southern New England (PPSNE), two from REACH fund of Connecticut, a non-profit organization providing financial assistance for abortion care in Connecticut and a session with Anne Hughes, State Rep on the status of reproductive health in Connecticut.
- In November, we sponsored a bake sale to raise money for “abortion care bags” to be given to patients at various Planned Parenthood clinics in Connecticut. We raised \$650! We worked with Gretchen Raffa from PPSNE to purchase items to make 56 care bags. Multiple age groups and genders gathered one Sunday in February to put these abortion care bags together. Bag contents included sanitary napkins, bed pads, socks, lip balm, tea, snacks, a squeeze/stress ball, and a heating pad.
- We watched and discussed part of a movie on racial inequities with the BLM committee.
- We wrote postcards to support candidates who share our UU values of bodily autonomy with the UUtheVote.
- This spring, we met with the Fairfield County Community Fund to learn about the Black Maternal Health Initiative, specifically about how the organization supports the doula training programs and the families who request this perinatal doula care. Our intention is to provide educational sessions with our extended communities about the need for supporting doula care for birthing people of color in Fairfield County.

Looking forward:

- We will continue to work with Planned Parenthood of Southern New England as requested-hoping for feedback soon on our abortion care bag project.
- We will continue to reach out to other UU congregations and religious organizations to expand our education and participation in Reproductive Justice.
- We will attend authors’ interviews on books relevant to our mission
- We will engage in legislative advocacy with David Vita, the coordinator of Legislative Advocacy.
- We will endeavor to increase our volunteer base, be open to new ideas and expand our work as needed.
- There are intersectional themes in social justice and therefore, a need to work and coordinate with BLM, UUtheVote and Gender Identity committees. As well, it has been important to communicate and seek counsel with the Social Justice Committee as the Reproductive Justice Committee is a new committee, having been established one year ago this past spring.
- We see the next six months as supporting legislation and voting activities prior to the November elections as our priority.

Respectfully submitted by Leslie Cenci, chair of Reproductive Justice Committee

SJC: UUtheVote

Our civic engagement focuses on strengthening democracy and organizing for justice and accountability. UUtheVote, a non-partisan program of the National UUA, guides us and invites us to action. Founded in 2020, our UUWestport chapter of #UUtheVote is led by Janet Luongo with her team of Sari Bodi, Jamie Forbes, and

Kathy Roberts. We are charged with the goal of acting on our UU values and principles to promote the democratic process. We aid people who need their voices heard to register and vote. We work to expand voting and voting rights in CT and in states that suppress the vote of people of color and youth. Between elections, we work to advocate for CT laws that support our UU values. We engage in ongoing education for ourselves, and community on issues, civics, and strategies.

Some of the things we have done this year include:

1. Vote for racial and class justice. Low-income people and people who work at jobs or as parents and caregivers, including many Black people, need flexibility in voting rules to cast votes. In Nov. 2023 CT Voters were able to vote early, a new right won by previous efforts led by Safe Vote, which passed the referendum on Early Voting in CT.
2. Supported access to reproductive health and justice since the Supreme Court Dobbs June 2022 decision to overturn Roe v Wade. We partner with our UU Westport Reproductive Justice Committee led by Leslie Cenci. On May 15, at the Fairfield County Community Foundation (FCCF), Leslie Cenci, Jan Braunle of Repro Justice as well as Jamie Forbes and Janet Luongo from UUtheVote, met to plan an education event in September in partnership with FCCF. We are planning an educational event and a fundraiser to cover expenses to train doulas to care for Black mothers, to stop the alarming rate of black women and babies dying in childbirth.
3. We wrote 780 postcards to residents in Ohio and 290 to residents in Virginia. In Ohio, 56% voted yes for an amendment to the State Constitution -reproductive rights to abortion are now enshrined, ending a state law that prohibited abortion at six weeks, with no exception for rape or incest. In Virginia, the State House and Senate flipped blue, retaking the VA General Assembly after 2 years of divided power. Republican Governor Youngkin stalled in passing his 15-week abortion ban.
4. We sent 1700 postcards to voters in NY, GA, OH, and MT to support progressive values. We partnered with the Center for Common Ground, which reaches out to infrequent Black voters in the South. Our main action has been sending postcards through the Center for Common Ground to Black voters in the South to resist voter suppression. On postcards, we write handwritten messages related to information about where and how to register and vote, date of elections, and how to vote early or use absentee ballots, information on ballot measures, and issues at stake, such as education, health care, reproductive rights, and voting rights. We end with: "Thanks for being a voter."
5. We reached out to CT state legislators: CT passed a bill on election security that adds live surveillance cameras to every absentee ballot drop box; and speeds up state investigations of fraud. In addition, CT passed a bill that creates new incentives for towns to allow affordable housing.
6. We have partnered with other UUs living in other parts of the US, like Steven Axthelm, now living in N.C., will work with us to coordinate democracy actions for N.C and Bob Nixon of UU Stamford, CT asked for guidance in setting up UUtheVote in their congregation.
7. We have partnered with other UUWestport committees like Reproductive Justice, BLM and Gender Equity.

Some of our Goals for 2024-2025 include:

- Increase our volunteers to get at least 1/5 of UUWestport members to be involved (a goal of UUA Good Trouble Congregation). Currently, we have about 1/8 of members involved.
- Inform voters about how to obtain No Excuse Absentee Ballots, a newly earned right (thanks to SafeVoteCT's efforts).
- Attend Poor People's Campaign March on D.C. UUtheVote intends to join Rev Dr. William Barber for his March on Washington D.C.
- Join with Reproductive Justice Committee and BLM and the Fairfield County Community Foundation to make sure not one more Black woman or baby dies in childbirth because of neglect, poverty, or structural racism.
- Plan and host the "Sacred Activism" service on one Sunday in August.

- Send more postcards to infrequent Black voters in Southern States that repress the vote. We send info on registration and voting. Data show that 1/3 cast a vote.
- Train volunteers to make calls, text via computer, write letters to the editor, and knock on doors to Get Out the Vote.
- Before Election Nov 5, 2024, we will educate CT voters that they may support or oppose an amendment to the CT constitution that would authorize the legislature to provide for no-excuse absentee voting in CT. (E. Safe Vote CT in Nov. 2022, won voters' right in CT to Vote Early, and many will use the right to vote early in CT for the first time.

We thank all volunteers for actions - large and small. TOGETHER we win for our values.

Respectfully submitted by **Leadership Team:** Janet Luongo, Jamie Forbes, Sari Bodi, and Kathy Roberts

SJC: Voices Café Committee

Over the 2023 - 2024 season Voices Café successfully maintained its mission to present first class live music, to foster community, and to support social justice programs. The season ended on a transitional note, with Dave Caplan stepping down after six seasons as committee chair. Fortunately, at the time of this writing it's just been announced that Jenny Klein and Shahan Islam will serve as co-chairs of the Voices Café Committee going forward. All are encouraged to thank Jenny and Shahan for helping to sustain of Voices Café into the future.

A highlight of the 2023 – 2024 season was the February 2024 concert with Social Justice Troubadour Crys Matthews. Besides Crys being a remarkably inspiring artist, a notable aspect was that the concert was “guest-produced” by UU Westport’s Black Lives Matter & Gender Equity Committees, who selected as beneficiary Peer Pride / Transhaven, an initiative supporting Trans individuals in CT. The involvement of these committees helped evolve and strengthen relationships among Voices Café and our Social Justice Council, and helped point the way towards ongoing collaborations that can enhance Voices Café’s fundraising for justice initiatives and the marketing of UU Westport and its social justice programs to the broader community.

The Voices Cafe Committee has reserved 7 dates on UU Westport’s calendar, from October 2024 through May 2025, and the committee looks forward to bringing our community another season of great live music and great fellowship for important causes.

In closing, a big thank you to all our supporters, volunteers, and committee members. Volunteers are the lifeblood of Voices Cafe, and spreading the effort across many volunteer hands will be key to sustaining the Voices “ministry”.

Here is a recap of the 2023 - 2024 season:

September 30, 2023	Abbie Gardner & Tracy Grammer
Beneficiary:	HangTime’s Her Time program
November 11, 2023	Fairfield School of Rock
Beneficiary:	Homes With Hope
December 16, 2023	Windborne
Beneficiary:	Helping Hands Outreach
February 3, 2024	Crys Matthews
Beneficiary:	Peer Pride / Transhaven
April 6, 2024	Deep River Ramblers
Beneficiary:	Streetsafe Bridgeport
May 4, 2024	Jesse Terry & Sam Robbins (co-bill)
Beneficiary:	CIRI Apartment Setup Teams (CAST)

Respectfully submitted by Dave Caplan, Committee Chair

SJC: Westbridge Coalition

Since 2008, Westbridge (WB) volunteers have repaired and renovated over 150 homes in and around Bridgeport for low-income families and community organizations. Our clients are often elderly, disabled, single moms, widows, or vets who need warm, dry and safe home. All materials and labor are free to those served, thanks to the support of local churches and individuals. Jobs include fixing leaks, updating bathrooms, installing floors, patching sheetrock, and building wheelchair ramps. Volunteers from all walk of life meet once or twice a week as they are free.

If you want to help out with housing, work with a group of good people, and work with your hands, consider joining us. Contact me at mark.corcoran@hotmail.com.

Respectfully submitted by Mark Corcoran

Soul Matters

Soul Matters is a program that many Unitarian Universalist congregations use to easily share small group material, and worship, music, sermon and faith formation resources. Most notably, our congregation has used this program of monthly themes to help connect our congregants and guide them through a conversation that allows them to more deeply explore their own spiritual development. Our congregation has used the Soul Matters curriculum for several years, but started to experience a decline in group membership.

With the guidance of Rev. Alan, the Soul Matters leadership led a Sunday service in the fall of 2023 and were able to gather names of those interested in joining a “resurgence” of Soul Matters groups. Three groups led by Randy Burnham, Kim Fuchs and Ruth Fontilla were created and have been meeting monthly since March 2024. Sam Somashekar is the fourth facilitator willing to host another group when more people are ready to join a group. The groups will break during July and August and resume in September.

The Soul Matters facilitators' generally meet once a month as a group, and these meetings include Rev. Alan and facilitators of UU Westport’s other small group ministry circles, to exchange ideas and support.

Respectfully submitted by Ruth Fontilla

Summer Services of 2023

Worship for the summer of 2023 was provided by clergy, community leaders and lay leaders from our congregation. Each Sunday Chaplains and Ushers took their places to welcome and support those who attended.

Here are the participants: Shanonda Nelson/Juneteenth; UUA-General Assembly service from Pittsburgh, PA/Rev. Manish Mishra preaching; Rev. Terri Dennehy/the Path to Liberation; Rev. Carrie McEvoy/Growth & Transformation; Lynne Ford/Sacred Play; Adair Heitmann/Mothering; Charles Grady/Working with Formerly Incarcerated; Rev. Julie-Ann Silberman-Bunn/What Drives Us To Action; Rev. Kimberley Debus/Sensing Beauty; Rev. Debra Haffner with Lynda Shannon Bluestein/Connected By Love; David Connell/Living Deliberately; Linda Lubin/Water Service.

Former Worship Associates who participated: Dayle Brownstein, Jamie Forbes, Linda Hudson, Joanne Glasser Orenstein, Connie Rockman, David Smith, Cheryl Dixon Paul.

Respectfully submitted by Cheryl Dixon Paul

Tech Team

During the last year the Tech Team has relocated from the banquet tables in the Sanctuary to the Production Control Room where it is now. We reused existing hardware and added additional hardware for expanded capabilities. UUCW can now control a 3-camera event with 10 Wired microphones, 2 Wireless handheld microphones, and 4 Wireless Lavalier/headset style microphones. We can play Audio/Video clips from the Control Room PC and/or from a laptop connected at the stage. We have 2 large monitors for presenting video content in the sanctuary and another 2 smaller ones for the choir or other people on stage during an event. We use StreamHoster to deliver our services to anyone who wishes to view our events either live or via playback at a time of their choosing. We also have Zoom fully integrated for remote interaction, Congregational Voting, and remote ministry.

Staffing has changed during the last year. We currently have 2 dedicated people to cover the video needs. One person plus myself provide coverage for Audio. Overall, this is not meeting our expanding needs.

I have requested more volunteers from Rev. Alan, the UUCW Board, and the congregation. Several people did express interest and began the process of learning but to date we do not have anyone else to help.

As we increased the capabilities of the production equipment, we also see an increase in the number and types of events to be covered by the Tech Team. While we do have saved settings on the cameras and the audio console, along with written procedures on the set up and operation of the equipment, this remains a skilled position. Training is required. We offer a minimal amount of pay to keep these personal available for events. However, we are in a position of needing to hire professional support when our staff is not available. This trend is increasing. Professional pay is significantly higher. Aside from the budgetary concerns this also causes a rift between UUCW staff since the professional pay is so different.

The current Tech Team Staff is David Vita, Regina Walsh, Fiona McElroy, and Rob Laug

Submitted by Rob Laug

TUUCWomen

TUUCWomen is a ministry for women by women. Our goals are to provide a rich set of opportunities to support women's engagement in the TUUCW community, and overall to provide a variety of opportunities where women can build deeper relationships and nurture feminine spirituality.

Everyone who identifies as a woman and who comes to our congregation is welcome to attend any and all TUUCWomen's events.

Our major focus this year has been spirituality, friends, and fundraising. In the area of spirituality, the TUUCWomen's committee created a day of retreat held at the Meeting House on our UU campus on October 28, 2023. The retreat offered time for inner reflection and opportunity to share at deeper levels of transparency and trust. Workshops included: Gong Meditation, Discover your Inner Voice, Creating your Own Prayer, and How Compassionate are You?

Our third annual Spring Fest took place on May 11, 2024. This event, with its diverse offerings, provided opportunities for healing, joy, and community. Workshops included: wreath making with real flowers, African-Caribbean dance, Deep Meditation, and a Native American story about the strawberry, followed by strawberries and cream.

Always valued are our monthly women's potluck dinners organized by Eileen Belmont. These monthly gatherings deepen our sense of belonging and connectedness. We meet at members' homes during the year. During the summer, we meet at Sherwood Island Park. The number of participants is rapidly growing.

In 2022, we brought back the in-person holiday boutique, and continued it in 2023. For two Sundays in December, we sold jewelry and scarves donated by our members. Led by Sari Bodi, this event was a successful fundraiser with close to \$4000 contributed by TUUCWomen to the church's budget.

TUUCWomen has served as a launching ground for the Black Lives Matter Committee led by Sudha Sankar and Pat Francek, and for UUtheVote, led by Janet Luongo. TUUCWomen members help UUtheVote, sending out thousands of postcards to encourage people to vote. Both groups are now part of the Social Justice Council.

Janet also led Rise Up and Call her Name, a new workshop of eight sessions in spring 2024. Under Janet's tutelage, female members of the congregation danced and chanted as they journeyed into a time when goddess worship was prevalent.

Respectfully Submitted by Sari Bodi and Elizabeth Macdonald, co-leaders

tucwomen@uuwestport.org

TUUCW Hiking Group

The UUWestport hiking group schedules hikes from September through May. We hike the 1st Saturday of the month and the 3rd Monday to accommodate different schedules. Starting in June and in the summer months we meet at Sherwood Island State Park at 8am on Sunday mornings to walk along the beach before Sunday services. We hike on a variety of CT trails within an hour radius. Our hikes are usually 3-4 miles and are rated moderate. Occasionally we will plan a longer, more strenuous hike to those on our email group.

Our planning and leadership team includes Dave Bue, Lindy Hennessy, Gian Morresi and Jamie Forbes

Unitarian Guys Night Out (UGNO)

UGNO is an acronym for Unitarian Guys Night Out. It was started approximately 20 years ago when several members of our congregation met at a pub in Fairfield to create a social connection outside of Sunday coffee hour. They decided to meet each month and UGNO was born and has grown. This past year we have met almost every month at various pubs and anywhere between 8 and 27 male congregants have attended. This is an informal group with no dues or attendance requirements. The only requirement is to come when you can to enjoy some good cheer with your fellow male UUs. We have an email list and if you would like to be on the list which announces the time and place each month. Send an email to perrybob66@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted Bob Perry, Rob Laug and Dave Bue

Ushers

Glenn Newell and eileen belmont co-chair the team of volunteer ushers. Our key role is to provide quiet support during services on Sunday mornings. To accomplish this, we engage a loyal team of volunteer ushers. There are 4 of us on duty on any given Sunday.

Some of our duties...

- Arrive 30 minutes in advance of the service
- Arrange chairs in the sanctuary and the foyer
- Turn the LIFT ON before the service and turn it OFF afterwards
- Set out headsets
- Lay out name tags in the foyer
- Set up the candle boat before the service and store it afterwards
- Distribute the hymnals prior to the service and collect them afterwards

- Facilitate orderly entry to and from the sanctuary
- Greet people as they enter the sanctuary
- Distribute the Order of Service and collect it afterwards
- Track attendance
- Manage weekly Plate Collection
- Check that everything we put in place before the service is back where it belongs before leaving the building.

We are always looking to add to our team. If you would like to join us... we welcome your help!

Submitted by eileen Belmont

UU Movie Discussion Group

Goal: Our goal is to connect with one another through our shared love of movies and interesting discussions about the movies we see and what they meant to us.

How We Do It: From September through June we meet on the last Friday of the month, on Zoom, and discuss the three movies we selected to watch during that month. Then we vote on 3 movies to watch during the following month. When we meet we exchange views on plots, characters, acting, directing, and what the movie meant to each of us. The discussions are always interesting and we get to know each other better through our different perspectives and related personal experiences.

Results: Through May, we have seen several excellent movies and had some very engaging discussions. When Oscar time rolled around this Spring we discovered that we had seen almost all of the movies nominated for the Best Picture Academy Award because of our choices since September.

Meetings are on Zoom, but some of our movie choices were streaming and some were in theaters — and sometimes members of the group attended in-theater movies together (although this is not a requirement). Members were both lost and gained and currently we have about 14 active participants. Please email Dorothy Rich if you would like to join us: dorothyjeanrich@gmail.com

Here are some of the movies we saw this year that made us think and made for interesting discussions: *Oppenheimer*; *Killers of the Flower Moon*; *The Unknown Country*; *Past Lives*; *The Holdovers*; *Nyad*; *Jules*; *Maestro*; *Rustin*; *The Color Purple*; *The Boys in the Boat*; *Poor Things*; *American Fiction*; *Anatomy of a Fall*; *Zone of Interest*; *Shirley*; *Perfect Days*; *Música*; and *One Life*.

Respectfully submitted, Dorothy Rich

UU Westport Players

With casts numbering a total fourteen players, including four people who had not acted on stage before, and a crew of two veterans, the UU Westport Players gave three performances of a series of four one act plays in November 2023, that I understand raised almost \$2,000.

This past March, we gave three performances of *Rumors*. The cast of ten, including two new players, and a crew that this time included a sound effects operator, netted \$3,000.

Besides bringing first rate community theatre to our congregation, and a helpful income to the congregation coffers, the UU Westport Players creates a bond among its players that grows stronger with each performance. New players have claimed their involvement has changed their lives and provided cherished memories of a special experience.

Respectfully submitted, Jim Luongo

Year-Round Stewardship Committee

Overview. We continue to face several challenges including an uncertain economy and changes in key roles at TUUCW. Revenue came in from congregants fulfilling their 2023-2024 pledges, and we secured planned congregational funding for next year as part of the 2024-2025 pledge drive.

The YRSC continued its focus around core committee members. Our participation has trended downwards over the last two years, and we believe that is attributed to a growing number of new congregants who are not pledging. The YRSC needs to brainstorm on ways to increase participation from new congregants, including early education on the importance of pledging way before the pledge drive starts.

Update on Fulfilled Pledges for 2023-2024 Year. Pledging remains one of our most important business processes: it allows us to budget for next year with a reasonable assumption of what income will be available to us. Our final pledge number for the 2023-2024 year was \$487k, from 189 pledges. As of May 29, we await the final \$60k (12%) of payments on pledges, having collected \$427k so far.

Update on Pledge Drive for 2024-2025 Year. As of May 29, our total pledges for next year, 2024-2025, come to \$478,110, based on our goal of \$500K (96% achievement); virtually the same as last year's total at this time.

The number of households pledging – at 146 this year – was down 23% relative to last year's number.

Breakdown of pledges for 2024-2025:

- 87 households (60%) increased their pledge over last year or they were new.
- 59 households (40%) remained at the same level or reduced their pledge.

We have 43 households who pledged last year but who have not yet pledged as of May 29. Should we be able to get their commitments by June 30 at the same levels as last year, we would in fact achieve our \$500K goal.

Other Activities. The theme of our annual pledge drive was, "Live Your Values, Give Your Values." In that vein, we asked congregants to reflect on what they value about UU Westport in a series of cottage parties. More than 80 people attended small events, hosted by 10 individuals or families, and shared their thoughts in advance of making their pledges.

The YRSC also led additional activities for the year:

- **Holiday Appeal.** We raised \$14k with this appeal. While slightly shy of last year's \$16k, it was still impressive given the economic climate. The YRSC sent out thank-you notes to all givers, and we used SOUNDINGS articles to communicate the campaign.
- **Pledge-related Communication.** We will be sending out "thank you" notes for our givers and pledgers. We also determined those congregants who have not satisfied their pledges to-date, and crafted emails to keep them apprised of where they stand on pledging versus payments. We used SOUNDINGS articles to communicate the pledge drive.

In conclusion, we are grateful for all who have participated in pledging. This is a fundamental process of our community, and we thank everyone for their efforts and generous contributions as they can. While our pledging population continues to shrink, those who remain continue to step up to support our community. Thanks to all.

Elena Rockman-Blake, Sam Somashekar, Rev. Alan Taylor

MEMBER LIST AS OF MAY 7, 2024

Lia Albo	David Callan	Sofia Dumery
Michelle Albright	Lynda Campbell	Joan Duncan
Melanie Allen	Diane Cano	Teryl Eisenberg
Karen Anderson	Dave Caplan	Jonathan Elkind
Nancy Andry	Laurel Carey	Marsha Elkind
Christine Aquino	Denise Carreau	Stapley Emberling
Harbans Arya	Leslie Cenci	Jeff Feinman
Laura Axthelm	Cindy Clair	Margaret Fitzpatrick
Stephen Axthelm	Tanya Clemons	Adam Fleisher
Beverly Bailey	Beth Cliff	Michelle Fleisher
Richard Bailey	Candace Clinger	Anne Flounders
Melissa Balmer	Lynn Colafrancesco	Michael Foley
Reed Balmer	Neil Coleman	Ruth Fontilla
Donald Bancroft	Chuck Colletti	Jamie Forbes
Martha Bancroft	Rosemarie Colletti	Jim Francek
David Bauer	Thomas Comer	Pat Francek
Jackie Beck	Brian Connelly	Luisa Francoeur
Diane Becker	Martha Constable	Kim Fuchs
Diana Bell	Jim Cooper	Jon Gage
Pippa Bell Ader	Mark Corcoran	Leigh Gage
Eileen Belmont	James Corradino	Anita Galvan-Henkin
Casey Berg	Michael Costantino	Monica Garrison
Sharon Bittenbender	Joann Coviello	Deb Garskof
Paul Bluestein	Lynn Crager	Josh Garskof
Alex Boboc	Timothy Crager	Luke Garvey
Sari Bodi	Kate Croarkin	Michelle Garvey
Jennifer Boland	Tom Croarkin	Jennifer Gerometta
Carol Boston	Mary-Jane Cross	Carol Goddard
David Boyd	Ildiko Csik	Hazen Goddard
Deborah Barnett Brandt	Bob Cygan	Peggy Gormley
Robert Brandt	Susan Dam	Andrew Graham
Jan Braunle	Linda Daniels	Steve Grathwohl
Charlie Brennan	Douglass Davidoff	Eric Gribin
Shari Brennan	Ron Davidson	Catherine Guilliani-Groell
Alan Brewster	Marjolijn de Jager	Andy Gundell
Linda Brewster	Joy Del Rosso	Carolyn Gundell
Rainy Broomfield	Steve Del Rosso	Angi Haen
Dayle Brownstein	Douglas Dempsey	Judith Hamer
David Bue	Danielle DiGrazia	Carol Hamilton
Marie-Claire Bue	Cheryl Dixon	Lyn Hamilton
Randy Burnham	Beth Dobsegage	Debbie Handler
Enid Busch	Lisa Donohue-Olivieri	Len Handler
Jennifer Butler	Peter Donovan	Kristi Hardin

Charles Harrington
Bill Hart
Nanette Hausman
Elizabeth Haynes
Alec Head
Tom Hearne
Adair Heitmann
Jack Hennessy
Lindy Hennessy
David Henry
Bobbie Herman
Robert Herman
John Hooper
Jason Howard
Linda Hudson
Shahan Islam
David Jacob
Melissa Jacob
Jalna Jaeger
Sherry Jagerson
Melissa Jagoe-Seidl
Sophia Jagoe-Seidl
Holly Jaffe Johnson
Ann Johnson-Lundberg
Keith Johnston
Doug Jones
Meg Jones
Nicholas Jones
Brynna Kaulback
Maryellen Keenan
David Keeton
Felicia Keeton
Vaughn Keller
Barbara Kezur
Sunny Khadjavi
Bob Kleid
Charles Klein
Jenny Klein
April Kleinman
Lyn Kobsa
Anatole Konstantin
Rosaria Konstantin
Sandy Kozma
Steven Kunstler
Kathy Kurzatkowski

Dale Kutnick
Laura Kutnick
Joe Lack
Nancy Lack
Becky Lai
Nick Lai
Lincoln LaMastro
Peter LaMastro
Brian Lasher
Miki Lasher
Rob Laug
Terri Laug
Lynne Laukhuf
Brian LaVoie
Patti LaVoie
Kevin Leddy
Kristen Leddy
Ryan Leddy
Matt Leonard
Miriam Levin
Wendy Levy
Kathy Lewis-Bain
Patrick Leydon
Sara Leydon
Dara Lieberman
Jay Lubin
Linda Lubin
Janet Luongo
Jim Luongo
Barry Lytton
Claire Lytton
Elizabeth Macdonald
Debra Mahony
Edward Mahony
Darryl Manning
Gerry Manning
Alexa Marshall
Fred Marshall
John Mason
Danielle Masse
Maureen McBride
Cathy McElroy
Fiona McElroy
Carrie McEvoy
Lawrenzo McGee

Nancy McKeever
Jenna McPartland
Matthew McPartland
Kathryn McVicar
John McWeeney
Felicity Medinger-
McWeeney
Diane Melish
Elizabeth Miller
Loren Mitchel
Diane Moller
Sven Moller
Mary Beth Mollica
Sal Mollica
Mary Money
Eric Montgomery
Luke Montgomery
Ming Montgomery
Kristin Morrell
Gian Andrea Morresi
Marion Moseley
Nina Nagy
Shanonda Nelson
Glenn Newell
Noelle Newell
Amy Nonnenmacher
Andreas Nonnenmacher
Julyen Norman
Deborah O'Brien
Jeremiah O'Brien
Jean O'Dell
Patrick Olivieri
Eileen O'Reilly
Joanne Orenstein
Kristine Oulman
Neil Pabian
Cathy Paine
Ari Palczewski
Gwen Parker
Kiera Parrott
Marjorie Partch
Erik Paul
Larry Perlstein
Bob Perry
Gail Pesyna

Eloise Peterson
Anita Pfluger
Marie Pham
Chris Place
Harvey Place
Carol Porter
Cindy Potter
Carole Prescott
Susan Pugliese
Elizabeth Quesada
Alan Rackson
Alice Rago
David Raymond
Therese Raymond-Cline
Marilynn Reed
Dorothy Rich
Kathy Roberts
Connie Rockman
Elena Rockman-Blake
Kim Rogers
Rob Rogers
Mary Jo Romano
Florence Romanov
Liane Roseman
Steven Rosenberg
Bonnie Rother
Kassandra Saloomey
Ravi Sankar
Shrutika Sankar
Sudha Sankar
Penny Schneider
Katherine Schwab
Liz Seaman
Scott Seo
Aaron Seymour
Jane Sherman
Susan Sherman
Victoria Sherrow
Sheila Sherwood
Emily Sherwood
John Simboli
Scott Singer
David Smith
Maria Mendoza Smith
Robert Smith

Tanya Smith
Paula Soares-Somashekar
Rachel Sobolewski
Sam Somashekar
Judy Soronen
Susan Starkie
Laura Steinbrecher
Donna Stone
Bart Stuck
Jean Sturges
Ted Sullivan
Ann Sikes Taylor
Faith Taylor
Ingrid Taylor
Ron Taylor
Arnela Ten Meer
David Thompson
Joyce Thompson
Barbara Thormahlen
Karen Thorsen
Kate Throckmorton
Bob Trefry
Mary Trefry
Gina Troisi
Joanne Turmelle
John Turmelle
Peg Ulrich
Art Ulrich
Christine Updegraff
Andres Valenzuela
Lina Valenzuela
Pat van de Kamp
Ade Van Duyn
Andra Vebell
Ken Vernon
Natalie Vernon
Naree Viner
David Vita
Jerusha Vogel
Ken Vogel
Marliss Walther
Sheila Ward
Marguerite Webb
Bob Welsh
Marion Wertheim

Brenda Williams
Tim Wilson
Trina Wong
Karen Wright
Julia Wyant
Melanie Wyler
Christine Yang
Ted Yang
Robert Zuckerman

MEMBERSHIP SUMMARY OVER THE YEARS

Year	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Beginning of year	501	604	421	383	419
Additions	50	18	13	49	17
Losses	29	70*	49*	13	15
Moved Away		17	9	6	3
Deceased		11	7	6	10
Resigned		3	1	1	2
Other	57*	39	32		
End of Year	604	421	383	419	421

*additional correction for Constitutional definition revision of 2015

Year	2019-20	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Beginning of year	421	415	400	386	372
Additions	27	17	12	15	9
Losses:	33	32	26	29	19
Moved Away	11	2	0	7	4
Deceased	7	7	5	4	2
Resigned	0	0	1	18	3
Other	15	23	20	0	10
End of Year	415	400	386	372	362

DRAFT Minutes of June 11, 2023, Annual Meeting

Please send any comments to secretary@uuwestport.org

(The following minutes will be presented for approval at the June 09, 2024, Annual Meeting)

MINUTES OF THE 72nd ANNUAL MEETING OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION IN WESTPORT JUNE 11, 2023

Call to Order: Luke Garvey, President of the Board of Trustees (the Board) and Moderator for this meeting, called the 72nd Annual Meeting to order at 11:29 AM. This meeting was conducted in the Sanctuary, with a few members who had pre-registered for remote attendance participating virtually on Zoom. Sincere thanks go to Jim Cooper (our technical manager for the Zoom session), to Bruce McNair and the entire Tech Team for doing an excellent job keeping all technical elements running smoothly, to Ken Vogel, our Parliamentarian, to Kathy Roberts, Eileen O'Reilly, and Lindy Hennessy for assisting with member check-in and vote counting, to Trevor Cooper, who graciously agreed to babysit, and to all others who helped with this meeting. Thank you!

Opening Reflection: Senior Minister Rev. John Morehouse shared opening words as the chalice was lit.

Quorum Report: Stapley Emberling, Secretary for the Board, confirmed that the quorum had been met in accordance with our Constitution and that this meeting qualified as a Member Meeting. There were 99 members in attendance in person and 8 additional members who had signed in on Zoom, for a total of 107 members attending the meeting. Our quorum number for this meeting was 58 members.

Approval of Member Meeting Minutes: A motion was made and seconded to approve the Minutes for 3 separate member meetings, as displayed on the website and in the Call To Meeting:

- 1) June 12, 2022 (last Annual Meeting)
- 2) December 11, 2022 (1st vote on Name Change)
- 3) January 29, 2023 (2nd vote on Name Change)

A vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously. The Minutes for the last 3 member meetings were approved.

The Very Fine Lifetime Volunteer Service Award: Board member Ravi Sankar announced that the winner of the 21st Annual Very Fine Lifetime Volunteer Service Award is Anita Pfluger. Congregants expressed their joy and heartfelt endorsement by standing and clapping at length for Anita.

Appreciation and Gratitude: On behalf of the Board, Trustee Wendy Levy formally (and for the record) recognized the significant contributions of key members of our staff and congregation. The Board wishes to thank:

- 1) David Vita for his 18 years of service leading our efforts in Social Justice. The June 3rd party honoring David was a demonstration of the devotion and love he has inspired.

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- 2) The Rev. John Morehouse for his 8 years of service leading our congregation with his ministry, care, and dedication. Many stories were shared and praises given at the June 9th celebration and "All That Jazz" party for Rev. John and Francis Morehouse.

- 3) The Capital Campaign Committee – "made of up dedicated volunteers who helped us raise money for much needed upgrades and improvements to our buildings and grounds. This team included Kristen Leddy and Carol Seiple, as co-chairs, and Mary Jane Cross, Catherine Onyemelukwe, Anita Pfluger, and Rev. John Morehouse, with John Turmelle as facilities manager. Ulla Surland, Diane Melish and Jay Lubin served on the facilities team in the early days as well. This was a huge undertaking, and we are profoundly appreciative of all their work. What a labor of love! We have a new parking lot with appropriate drainage, newly pointed steps, fresh painted railings on the patio and balcony, an updated library and meeting house, replacement of old red carpet, chancel windows, and a leaky sky light. All because of these folks' efforts: drawing up initial needs, getting feedback from the Congregation on priorities and possibilities, working with architects and engineers, and, importantly, raising over \$2 million dollars from our generous Congregation."

- 4) John Turmelle, "for the unbelievable amount of time and expertise he has brought to us – as a volunteer, free of charge – to make our building safer, in compliance with codes and regulations, and yet maintaining its special beauty. This is hard work. We doubt anyone here can appreciate the years – really, since 2015 (that's 8 years!) – that John has put towards this project. And he has done so delivering all this on time, on budget, and within the guidelines and specifications that were established. Incredibly, much of this work occurred during COVID, and enabled all our Sunday services to go on in the sanctuary – even the major Christmas services. The work is not done, and we'll continue to discuss this in the future. But this seemed like a perfect time to honor John and his selfless work on our behalf, for our community at UUWestport."

Board of Trustees Report: Luke Garvey, President of the Board of Trustees, gave the report for the Board. He gave a summary of the work of the Board over this past year, reporting on current and future goals. With the final vote of approval given at the January 29th Special Congregational Meeting, the Unitarian Church in Westport became the Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Westport (although often still fondly referred to as "UU Westport" by many congregants and Westport residents). The full report is available in the 2023 Annual Report.

Gratitude to Andy Gundell: Although, in the heat of the moment, this item was accidentally overlooked at the meeting, the entire Board wanted to express its sincere gratitude to Andy Gundell, who is rotating off the Board this month after serving for a full 3-year term. The Board thanks Andy for his many contributions and for his continued support and wise counsel.

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Financial Reports:

2022-2023 Pledge Report: Connie Rockman, representing the Year-Round Stewardship Committee (and standing in for Elena Rockman-Black, Committee Chair) gave some highlights for the year in Stewardship. Details are in the 2023 Annual Report.

Endowment Committee: Brian Lasher, Trustee, reviewed the income and disbursements from the Endowment. The Committee manages all capital funds of the Congregation "with the objectives of preserving assets and enhancing the long-term financial security and well-being of the Congregation." These funds include The Endowment, which was established by our Constitution, The Bernhard Music Fund, and The Scouller/Nelson Fund for Family Faith Formation, though the latter two funds were established by Board Resolutions and are not part of the Endowment. Brian addressed several financial issues and clarified some confusion about how much financial support the Endowment was able and willing to give to the operating budget for next year. The Annual Report contains the written report from Mark Corcoran, out-going Chair of the Endowment.

Financial Results & Proposed Budget: Steve Grathwohl, Treasurer, discussed the 2022-2023 Profit and Loss (P/L) statement for the year, and presented the proposed Budget for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. He also observed that our current financial situation is very like last year's: From a Balance Sheet perspective, we are in good financial shape (strong asset position, no mortgage and almost no liabilities, lots of positive equity, and a healthy endowment). However, from an Annual Operating Budget perspective, we are still operating with a significant Budget Gap, which will continue next year. The full report is available in the Annual Report.

Motion: To Approve Spending up to \$150K of Unrestricted Funds, to be Requested from the Endowment, for the Operating Budget in 2023/2024. Brian Lasher made the Motion, which was seconded, and, after discussion, a vote was called. The Motion PASSED, with 2 votes opposed.

Ratification of the 2023-2024 Budget: A motion was made and seconded to approve the 2023-2024 budget as presented. There was lengthy discussion and several questions raised. The uncertainty caused by Rev. Morehouse's departure this month and not knowing how long TUCCW would be without a Sr. Minister had raised questions for some regarding the proposed new budget and where that "saved Minister's salary" would be allocated. Steve Grathwohl and Brian Lasher answered questions, explained our current financial situation, and clarified points about the budget. Finally, the Question was Called. A new Motion was made and seconded: To stop further discussion of the budget and to vote now on the original motion. 59 members in the room and 7 online voted YES (a total of 66 YES) to stop further discussion and vote on the budget as presented. 19 members in the room and 0 online voted NO. The Secretary incorrectly believed a passing vote required a 2/3 majority of the members in attendance at the meeting (and since the attendance was initially 107, that would therefore require 70 votes to pass). However, our Parliamentarian, Ken Vogel, explained that, in the Constitution, for a single vote (as opposed to an item that

requires 2 votes at 2 separate member meetings to be ratified), a passing vote is 2/3 of the members **present and voting**. There were 85 votes cast in total, so the YES votes would need 57 (or more) to pass. The Motion PASSED: To stop further discussion of the budget and proceed with the vote on the budget. The original Motion to approve the proposed 2023-2024 budget was put to a vote, and PASSED by a vote of YES from 59 in the room and 6 online (total of 65 YES) to 9 votes for NO. (A passing vote here is 50 or more.) **The 2023-2024 Budget is approved.**

Elections: Jim Cooper, Co-Chair of the Nominating Committee (with Joann Coviello), thanked the members of the committee for their hard work and presented the following slate of nominees for election to office.

- **Board of Trustees**
Jennifer Gerometta (1st term to 2026)
Beth Cliff (2nd term to 2026)
Ravi Sankar (2nd term to 2026)

- **Endowment Committee**
Ken Vogel (term to 2028)
Terri Laug (2024 - completing term, eligible to run again in 2024)

- **Committee on Ministries**
Lisa Donahue-Olivieri (term to 2028)
Melanie Allen (2026 - completing term)

- **Nominating Committee**
David Raymond (2025)
Emily Sherwood (2025)
Jerusha Vogel (2025)

A motion to approve the slate of nominees was made and seconded and the vote to approve was unanimous. **The 2023 slate of nominees was approved.**

Installation of New Board & Elected Committee Members: Luke Garvey, President of the Board, welcomed the newly elected Board and other Elected Committee members, charging them to serve the Congregation to the best of their abilities, and charging their fellow committee members and the Congregation to support them in the work they are taking on.

#MeToo Resolution and Gender Equity Report: Rev John Morehouse reported on TUUCW's progress to date on the directives of the 2018 Congregational #MeToo Resolution and noted highlights of the work done by the Gender Equity Team (GET) this past year. The GET also acts as a resource to educate other TUUCW groups and committees in broadening their perspectives and awakening awareness and responsiveness to minority voices and sensibilities in our community and beyond that may have been previously ignored. This

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work has been meaningful in the lives of individual women in the Congregation and powerful in inspiring leaders to rethink the words they use and the ways TUUCW can be more inclusive and welcoming. Rev. Morehouse also mentioned that this is the last year, according to the terms of the 2018 Resolution, that a report is required at the Annual Meeting on the progress of being done at UU Westport to comply with the Resolution.

Report on the Anti-Racism Resolution: Rev. John Morehouse reported on TUUCW's activities and initiatives in support of the Anti-Racism Resolution, passed by the Congregation in June 2021.

Committee on Ministries (COM) Report: July Norman, Incoming Chair of the COM, reflected on the COM's role in support of the Ministry and mentioned goals he and his team have for the upcoming year. The full report from Jenna McPartland, Outgoing Chair, is in the Annual Report.

New Business:

- 1) Jim Francek requested a few moments to be heard. He thanked the Board for its hard work this past year, and asked a question of the Congregation: What are we going to do to create a culture of healing and resilience? He commented that our whole system needs to be reexamined. We need a clear way of understanding who makes decisions and how authority gets shared. When adversity comes, our culture spins out. We also need specific ways to recognize and express appreciation for work well done. There's a tendency to criticize and focus on what has not gone well, but very little attention given to what did go well. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) builds on affirmations and can be very useful. He thinks we all could use training on how to give feedback to others. He suggests a Town Hall meeting in the fall to discuss some of these matters.

- 2) David Vita made a Motion: **To require the Board President and the Sr. Minister to continue to report at future Annual Meetings how well UU Westport is living up to the principles outlined in the 2018 #MeToo Resolution and what work is currently being done to make more progress toward those ends. The Motion was seconded and PASSED by vote.**

Adjournment: A motion to adjourn the meeting was made, seconded, and unanimously passed. The meeting was adjourned at 2:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Stapley Emberling,
Secretary for the Board of Trustees
For June 11, 2023

DRAFT Minutes of March 10, 2024, Special Member Meeting on Construction Options

Please send any comments to secretary@uuwestport.org
(The following minutes will be presented for approval at the June 09, 2024, Annual Meeting)

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEMBER MEETING ON CONSTRUCTION OPTIONS THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION IN WESTPORT March 10, 2024

Brief Summary of Actionable Motions (Abbreviated) Passed on March 10, 2024:

- *To accept the prioritization of construction work, as listed, but not considering any option that does not include sliding glass doors, and to move forward on the work.*
- *The prioritization of the glass panels comes ahead of the ductwork under the sanctuary floor.*
- *To approve the 1 to 1 matching contribution from the Endowment Fund, up to a limit of \$175,000.*
- *To allow the Board and Endowment Committee the discretion to extend the time limit [for CC donations and matching gifts, beyond May 1, 2024], as they deem appropriate.*

Call to Order: Luke Garvey, Moderator, and President of the Board of Trustees (the Board) called the meeting to order at 11:46 AM.

This meeting was conducted in the Sanctuary, with some members who had pre-registered for virtual attendance participating remotely on Zoom. Sincere thanks go to Jim Cooper (once again), our technical monitor for the Zoom session, and to Rob Laug and his Tech Team for doing a brilliant job keeping all technical elements running smoothly throughout the meeting. As we had requested, we could see and hear people speaking from the Zoom call in the sanctuary, and the Zoom participants were able to see and hear the proceedings in the sanctuary. Thank you!

Opening Words: Senior Minister Rev. Alan Taylor shared opening words from the Zoom connection as the chalice was lit in the sanctuary by Luke Garvey.

Review of Covenant and Comments: Linda Lubin, the Lead for the Transforming Conflict initiative, offered thoughts on what it means for our community to be in covenant with each other.

Review of Protocols for Meeting: Luke Garvey, Moderator and Board President, first expressed gratitude and appreciation to Beth Cliff and the Congregational Engagement on Construction (CEC) team for the organization and planning that has culminated in this

meeting, where we will decide together how we want to proceed regarding future construction. He then went over the procedures and rules for the meeting:

- There is a 2-minute time limit for speakers;
- Any congregant may speak, but only members may make motions, amendments, and/or vote;
- Zoom attendees may also speak at the meeting;
- Review of protocols for members on Zoom for how to register their attendance, speak at the meeting, and have their votes counted.

Quorum Report: Stapley Emberling, Secretary for the Board, confirmed that the quorum had been met, in accordance with our Constitution, and that this meeting therefore qualifies as a Member Meeting. There were 64 members in attendance in the sanctuary and 12 additional members who had signed in via Zoom, for a total of 76 voting members attending the meeting. Our quorum number (15% of the membership count at the last Annual Meeting) was reached.

Board Remarks: Beth Cliff (Vice President of the Board and CEC Lead) offered some background and context for this meeting, following up on the information shared at the Town Hall meeting held on February 25, 2024, to discuss multiple construction possibilities. She explained the rationale and intention of the Congregational Engagement on Construction (CEC) team, and briefly summarized the construction work that has been done to date with the Capital Campaign (CC) funds, reported what money is left in the CC fund (about \$600,000), and explained what work we could have done for that amount money. She laid out the process developed by the CEC to inform and engage the Congregation in the decision-making process and select a way forward that could be accepted by all. She posed two questions for the Congregation to consider: 1) Given our understanding of the financial constraints that we have, how would we like to proceed with construction? 2) What are our priorities for the work that needs to be done?

B. Cliff clarified exactly what would be voted on, explaining that motions relating to different construction options and prioritization of the work need only a majority of votes to pass; motions relating to use of the funds from the Endowment Fund require a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting, in order to pass. She explained the details of the different Construction options. And, for total transparency, she shared that the Board, the CEC, and the Endowment Committee do actually have a considered position and recommendation on these decisions: all three of these committees "unanimously believe that we should proceed with the floor and shortened chancel, as designed...and also unanimously support the goal of raising an additional \$310,000 to allow us to have glass walls similar to what we have today." She pointed out, however, that the three committees "are not unanimous in how they feel going forward with the less expensive glass options." Any speakers from these committees, she assured the meeting attendees, will be clear about which "hat" they are wearing and will give their individual opinions.

Many of the construction options would require more money than is now in the CC Fund. B. Cliff discussed having an open appeal where those who chose to, could contribute to the CC fund (between April 1 and May 1), thereby improving the quality of the materials used and achieving a look similar to what we have always had and enjoyed in the

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sanctuary. Another option would be to do nothing at this time and save the remaining CC funds for later. Other options involved choosing different combinations of the work, as funds allowed, with different choices about the prioritization of the jobs. *[For the reader's convenience, a complete copy of the introductory remarks that B. Cliff had planned to give at the meeting are available from her personal notes and are attached at the end of this document.]*

Proposed Motions and Voting Process: Ken Vogel (Moderator for the following segment of the meeting, Parliamentarian, and Chair of the Endowment Committee) was then appointed by L. Garvey to take over as Moderator for the procedural portion of the meeting. K. Vogel then explained the process for the meeting and clarified the voting procedures and requirements. He posited that process itself, both the creating of it and attempts made to adhere to process, can be a highly spiritual practice. He answered questions relating to process. He then brought up a slide on the video monitors that showed the various construction options and the estimated costs for each option. He explained each option and answered several clarifying questions. After explaining the different variables and combinations of the options, K. Vogel reminded everyone that if a motion was made and seconded, there would then be discussion, at which point congregants could come to the microphones and make comments for or against the motion. A member could also make an amendment to the motion, and, if that amendment was seconded, there would then be discussion and then a vote on that amendment. If the amendment did not pass, the discussion would revert back to the original motion still on the table. In order to pass, a motion on the construction options and prioritization (or an amendment to such a motion), requires a simple majority of votes. However, he confirmed what had been reported earlier by B. Cliff: that the voting on a motion that concerns how the Endowment funds are to be used would require a majority vote of two-thirds the number of the members present and voting at this meeting in order to pass.

Construction Options in 2024 (in abbreviated form):

[For the reader's convenience, a copy of the chart that was displayed at the meeting showing the list of options is attached at the end of this document.]

Base Options: *New floor and chancel, but no changes to the glass walls.* (This option includes the following: abate and replace floor, new stage, A/V upgrades, replace one electrical panel, new pathways for electrical heater wiring, new digital thermostatic controls, professional fees, town permit filing costs.) Approx. estimated cost \$556,000.

In addition to completing the Base Options, the options below add the following:

Option 1: *New glass walls with 5-ft., 4-in. stationary glass panels and multiple thick black mullions between the glass panels.* Additional estimated cost \$100,000.

Option 1.5: *New glass walls with 5-ft., 4-in. glass panels that slide and multiple thick black mullions between the glass panels.* Additional estimated cost \$150,000.

Option 2: *New glass walls with 8-ft, 0-in. stationary glass panels (same as Option 1, but with wider glass and fewer mullions).* Additional estimated cost \$175,000.

Option 3: New glass walls with 8-ft., 0-in. glass panels that slide. (This is the option most similar to what is currently in the sanctuary, and is the option preferred by the Board, CEC, and the Endowment Committee.) Additional estimated cost \$350,000.

In addition to selecting one of the options listed above, there was a further option to add ductwork under the floor to prepare for a future possibility of adding air-conditioning to the sanctuary someday. This additional cost for the ductwork is estimated at \$40,000.

Although not under consideration at this time, the question was asked by a Zoom participant what the approximate cost of adding air-conditioning would be. Ken Vogel, after consulting with the research team, replied that it was estimated to be a cost of \$450,000 to add A/C to the sanctuary.

Brian Lasher proposed a Motion, seconded by Beth Cliff: **To accept the prioritization of the construction work as given [as recommended by the CEC on the page displayed at the meeting on the video monitor, and attached to this document] and move forward on the work.** The spreadsheet that was displayed showed the recommendations of the Congregational Engagement on Construction (CEC) team as to the priority of the construction jobs to be done. A lengthy discussion followed, with multiple speakers, plus further questions as to process. Many congregants voiced comments, both pro and con.

From the Zoom call, Sharon Poole put forth a Motion, seconded by Kathy Roberts, as an Amendment to the standing motion: **To eliminate from consideration all options except for Option #3 [which was the "all in" option, calling for the "Base Options" of the chancel and floor renovations, and including "new glass walls with 8-foot panels that slide" (the closest possibility we have to maintaining the current look of the sanctuary)].**

There followed much discussion, including a suggestion of an extra option ("Option 2.5") not previously listed, which might allow for SOME glass walls of the sanctuary to slide, but other glass panels would be stationary. John Turmelle (member of TUUCW and building engineer who has worked closely with the contractors and architects on construction projects and options at UUWestport since even before the May 5, 2019, Congregational approval of a Capital Campaign for building improvements), then came to the microphone and explained why this combination was not possible. For structural and other reasons, all the glass panels could either slide open, or all of them remain stationary. Many further comments were made about the desirability of sliding glass doors as opposed to stationary glass panels to allow fresh air, when needed. Other comments were made about how hot and "unbearable" other areas of the building, such as the East and West Wings, can be in warm weather, prompting further questions about air-conditioning. The point was made, however, that the possibility of air-conditioning was certainly not in the foreseeable future, and the current options referred ONLY to future air-conditioning in the sanctuary.

Statements were made questioning the importance of replacing the glass walls of the sanctuary at this time. Beth Cliff, Terri Laug, and others responded as to why the glass was very important to replace now, for safety reasons, energy efficiency, and current as

opposed to future material costs, among other reasons. Speakers also came forward to report on the importance of replacing the sanctuary floor at this time.

Sharon Poole spoke again from the Zoom connection, asking the Board to reconsider a worst-case scenario — in case not enough money was raised to accommodate Option 3 in the time allotted to receive contributions to the CC Fund (from April 1 to May 1, in order not to coincide with the Pledge Drive). She asked if the Congregation was prepared to wait a year before starting new construction to allow more time so that more money could be donated.

Other congregants voiced opinions: Jenna McPartland said she didn't want to vote on an all-or-nothing decision. She would just like "reasonable improvements" for an amount of money we could "more easily raise."

Ken Vogel reminded everyone that the only Motion currently on the table for discussion was Sharon Poole's: **To eliminate from consideration all options except for Option #3.**

Linda Hudson asked a process question: If this Motion passes, would there still be another opportunity to discuss and vote on the prioritization of the work? K. Vogel answered that, Yes, there would be another opportunity to address prioritization.

At this point, Brian Lasher Called the Question. There was one objection, which meant that we would vote on whether to stop the discussion (and then vote immediately on the Motion), or whether to continue discussion. A vote was taken, and 52-YES votes were received, a clear majority. The Motion to stop discussion and immediately vote on Sharon Poole's Motion was approved.

A vote was called on the Motion: **To eliminate from consideration all options except for Option #3.** The NOs carried the vote by 40 to 36. The Motion was defeated. This meant that all options were still on the table.

A Motion was made by Cathy Paine, and seconded (again, as an Amendment to the original motion made by B. Lasher): **To move ductwork up on the priority list.**

A discussion followed. Mike Constantino spoke to the importance of laying ductwork, as critical for our future. Kathy Roberts commented that the possibility of air-conditioning was a very distant possibility (if ever), plus the ductwork under discussion would ONLY address A/C in the sanctuary, nowhere else in the building, so concerns about being uncomfortably hot in the East Wing were irrelevant right now. She recommended saving that \$40,000 and NOT investing in ductwork right now.

After another question and further explanation on process, Harvey Place made a Motion, that was seconded: **To vote now on the question of whether to use the Endowment funds to supplement the CC Fund.** A vote was called, which passed overwhelmingly.

So, the order of Motions on the Agenda was changed, and a vote was called on the Motion (made, seconded, and discussed): **To request that the Endowment match new contributions to the Capital Campaign Fund dollar for dollar, up to a limit of \$175,000.** Ken Vogel explained that even though the Wertheim Fund was a "restricted" fund within the Endowment, this could be an appropriate use of that fund, according to the specifications of the Wertheim Gift Agreement. Using part of that Fund for this purpose would allow more flexibility in the future use of the unrestricted funds, which constituted a smaller portion of the Endowment than the restricted funds.

In order for this Motion to be viable, the Board had to have passed a motion to make a request to the Endowment Committee (which it did) that the Endowment Committee approve a 1:1 match from the Endowment of all gifts to the CC fund, capped at \$175K. This was then approved by the Endowment Committee, so that the Motion could be brought to the Congregation at this meeting for approval.

For this vote, a two-thirds majority of the 76 members present and voting was needed to pass (at least 51 YES votes would be needed). The Motion passed overwhelmingly.

After that, the discussion reverted back to ductwork, as a preparation for the possibility of adding air-conditioning to the sanctuary at some point in the future. The Question was Called, and there was one person opposed. So, a vote was called on whether to stop the discussion on ductwork and put it to a vote, or to continue discussion. The votes for YES were an overwhelmingly majority. The Motion passed: further discussion on ductwork was stopped. A vote on the prioritization of ductwork was called.

An Amendment was made to the last Motion (that Motion had been, **To move ductwork up on the priority list**), and the Amendment was seconded, discussed, and passed. The amended Motion to be put to a vote became: **Ductwork should have priority over replacement of glass walls in the sanctuary.** A vote was called. The NOs won the vote by 38 to 33. The Amendment failed. Ductwork under the floor would NOT have priority over the glass walls.

At this point, Mike Constantino made a Motion, that was seconded (an Amendment to B. Lasher's original motion): **To strike out all options that do not include sliding glass doors.** After a short discussion, there was a vote. The Motion passed by an overwhelming margin. Thus, Options 1 and 2 were eliminated. Options 1.5 and 3 were still on the table, the distinction between these two options being the width of the glass panels.

Beth Cliff spoke to clarify that *Option 3 did include the ductwork being done.*

Ken Vogel, Moderator for this segment, reminded attendees that the original Motion, **To Accept the prioritization of construction work as given [as recommended by the CEC] and move forward on the work** was now back on the floor, and now included the approved Amendment, **Striking out all options that do not include sliding glass doors.** Discussion followed.

(The following minutes will be presented for approval at the June 09, 2024, Annual Meeting)

Linda Hudson made a Motion that **We extend the amount of time given to raise the money.** (The time allowed was currently one month.) There was a second to the Motion and further discussion.

An Amendment to this motion was made and seconded: **To allow the Board and the Endowment Committee the discretion to extend the time limit [for CC donations and matching gifts, beyond May 1, 2024], as they deem appropriate.** No discussion was needed. A vote was taken, and the amended Motion passed by an overwhelming majority.

The Moderator, K. Vogel, returned the meeting's attention to the **Motion still on the table.** No one asked to speak or requested further discussion, so a vote was taken on the Motion: **To Accept the prioritization of construction work as given [as recommended by the CEC] and move forward on the work.** The YES votes won by an overwhelming majority. The Motion passed, with its approved Amendments:

- **To accept the prioritization of construction work, as listed, but not considering any option that does not include sliding glass doors, and to move forward on the work.**
- **The prioritization of the glass panels comes ahead of the ductwork under the sanctuary floor.**
- **To approve the 1 to 1 matching contribution from the Endowment Fund, up to a limit of \$175,000.**
- **To allow the Board and Endowment Committee the discretion to extend the time limit [for CC donations and matching gifts, beyond May 1, 2024], as they deem appropriate.**

Adjournment: Luke Garvey, Moderator, and President of the Board of Trustees, returned to the podium. A motion to adjourn the meeting was made, seconded, and unanimously passed. The meeting was adjourned at 1:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Stapley Emberling,
Secretary for the Board of Trustees
March 12, 2024

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