

# Annual Report

ACCOTINK UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

June 2024

Minister: Rev. William Levwood

President: Julie Schuck



*AUUC is a welcoming and inclusive spiritual home where we inspire each other to live our values.  
Together we Care in Community, Grow in Spirit, and Act for Justice.*

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The Board of Directors and Program Council would like to thank everyone who contributed information for this annual report. We sincerely apologize to any person, group, or activity that may have been unintentionally left out. We are a very active congregation.

## **Minister's Report 2023-2024**

Mission is the heart of what we do together as a congregation. Last church year AUUC adopted a new mission statement. This mission statement defines our core priorities and commitments, to each other and to the wider world. This mission statement has guided my ministry throughout this church year.

(In addition to all of this missional work, there has been work behind the scenes. In collaboration with your HR Advisor, staff position description and evaluation formats were updated this year, staff returned to regular in-person office hours, a search team has spent the Spring in search for a new Director of Spiritual Development for Children & Youth, and I recruited a new Pledge Drive Team, who ran a successful pledge campaign.)

### **AUUC is a welcoming & inclusive spiritual home**

From July through January a small but dedicated group of volunteers worked to update AUUC's website. At my recommendation, this team decided to use the website template developed by our Unitarian Universalist Association, which is based on research into what people are looking for in a church website. It's designed to be easy to navigate so that prospective newcomers can learn about who we are and how to get involved, and longtime members can easily stay abreast of what's going on at AUUC and how to stay engaged.

In response to the Contract-to-Call task force's finding that members want a commitment to membership growth, your Board created a Membership Growth and Inclusion Task Force. This task force has been hard at work defining how to go about living into this call to membership growth and inclusion. In the coming church year, you will be asked to participate in this commitment, by sharing your wisdom, insights, and wonderings in small focus groups, and through your participation in welcoming newcomers, welcoming new members into deeper engagement, and welcoming members new and old into leadership that makes use of their particular gifts and talents.

### **Care in Community**

One way to live our mission is to see if there are any gaps in how we're embodying parts of that mission. Based on my own observations and members' feedback, it's been clear that we need more opportunities to just be together. Inspired by a conversation with AUUC's Music Director, Brad Rinaldo, I suggested offering a twice-monthly gathering to just be together. Unfortunately, this 1st and 3rd Wednesday offering of Food & Fellowship never really took off. What we learned from this initiative is that weekday evenings are not the best time for communal gathering. The success of Sunday potlucks and Friday and Saturday evening movie nights has shown that weekends work

better for these fellowship-focused gatherings. In response to this learning we premiered a monthly 2nd Sunday potluck, which we will continue to offer monthly throughout the next church year. We'll also be looking to expand our movie night offerings next church year.

Another aspect of caring for each other is the emotional and spiritual support provided for members. At AUUC members share a lot of emotional and spiritual support with each other. Through this network of care, Accotinkers alert me to individuals needing support. (So great is the generous caring spirit of AUUC members that I often receive multiple emails about the same person who is in need of support.) In addition, the Pastoral Care Team (PCT) works in collaboration with the minister to provide additional emotional and spiritual support to Accotinkers. The PCT keeps track of immediate and emerging needs, coordinating our response to ensure adequate care is provided, whether in response to a short term crisis or long term need. Throughout this church year, we've worked to streamline our processes to improve our follow up - work which will continue next church year.

### **Grow in Spirit**

After losing some of our Soul Matters small group facilitators last church year, we revitalized our small group ministry this church year, offering four Soul Matters small groups. One of these groups grew out of our Starting Points curriculum for new members. Another group was open to any AUUC member. A third group focused on creative writing as a spiritual practice. These groups have been meeting since October 2023. In November, in collaboration with the Davies UU Congregation, we launched a Soul Matters small group for Caregivers. All in all, about 25 AUUC members deepened their spiritual lives and connections to each other through these Soul Matters small groups. All of these groups will continue next church year and we'll offer at least one additional group, offered in person on a weekday to better serve those who want to deepen connections in person and who don't drive at night.

Recent research is teaching us new things about how to serve children, youth, and their parents. Sunday school, while valuable, just isn't cutting it. Research shows that participation in multigenerational worship has a bigger impact on spiritual development for children and youth than anything else. That's why we offer a monthly multigenerational service. Research shows children and youth benefit greatly from connections with multiple trusted adults in their community, the kinds of connections children and youth can make while engaged in service projects together like our monthly meal packing. Research shows that parents have the biggest influence on the spiritual development of children and youth. That's why we launched the Soul Matters small group for Caregivers. Research also shows that parents have less time to volunteer and that having children and youth help teach younger children deepens their commitment to their faith tradition. That's why we moved our Sunday School offerings to a one room schoolhouse model. And it's working! Since February we've seen a large increase in children and youth participation in all areas of congregational life – attendance at Sunday School and multigenerational services, participation in the meal packing, and youth volunteering on task forces, as worship associates, and even taking the lead in social justice initiatives, like the collection of Period Pack supplies for immigrant families.

### **Act for Justice**

Each year your Social Justice Committee names a study/action focus for the year. This year that focus was on reproductive justice. In addition to several after church discussions on different

aspects of reproductive justice, some offered in person and some online, a few sermons were offered on issues related to reproductive justice. Jenn Carlson kicked us off with a sermon introducing reproductive justice in August. In December, I preached a sermon highlighting the incredibly high infant and maternal mortality rates in the United States, with dramatically higher rates for African Americans and Indigenous Americans, due to both higher rates of poverty and implicit bias in healthcare. That month our outreach collection partner was Mamatoto Village, an organization focused on providing accessible perinatal support services to Black women in DC. In March I preached a sermon highlighting the epidemic of intimate partner violence in the United States, including the connections between domestic violence and reproductive justice.

Throughout the year AUUC continued its many social justice programs. These included the monthly No Child Left Hungry meal packing and food purchasing, hosting the Hypothermia Shelter in January, donating money to our Outreach Collection partners each month, and our robust legislative advocacy efforts. In addition, AUUC's social justice committees – True Accotink Colors (TAC), your LGBTQ+ advocacy and fellowship group, Green Sanctuary Committee, and Racial Justice Committee – hosted movie nights and other events throughout the church year, including a discussion facilitated by your minister and Racial Justice Committee on the ongoing tragedy in Israel/Palestine. AUUC also hosted VOICE organizer Rev. Kenneth Nixon as a guest preacher on a Sunday when VOICE honored AUUC's turnout to VOICE actions by serving a catered lunch after our service. AUUC also hosted two VOICE meetings this church year. And as your minister I was invited to join VOICE's Fairfax Strategy Team. This team is working to organize VOICE member organizations in Fairfax County to host a youth mental health assembly in September and get out the vote efforts in October.

### **We Inspire Each Other to Live our Values**

This church year's Soul Matters themes for each month were centered around the proposed revisions to our UUA covenant and values. To help Accotinkers better understand the six Values being proposed as a revision of our seven principles, I collaborated with AUUC Administrator, RW Carney, to design bookmarks with abbreviated definitions for each Value. These rainbow bookmark designs were picked up by the UUA to be shared with other UU congregations.

The six Values – Justice, Equity, Transformation, Pluralism, Interdependence, and Generosity, with love at the center – were explored in depth in our Sunday services. I relished this opportunity to share the covenantal foundations of our UU tradition. Many Accotinkers have shared how these services have helped to inspire them to live these values in their daily lives.

I also collaborated with AUUC's Music Director, Brad Rinaldo, on a project we called the Gifts of Our Hymnal. There is perhaps no better repository of who we are as Unitarian Universalists than the many hymns, chants, and songs found in our hymnals. We made it a point to repeat hymns that embodied our UU Values and chants that can provide spiritual sustenance in difficult times so that you have these musical meditations available to you when you need them the most.

I am truly honored to be your minister. It's clear that AUUC has a bright future ahead. I'm excited to continue this journey with all of you, as we grow together and *draw the circle wide*, both within and beyond our walls, living our UU Values and sharing our UU tradition with the many people who need our message and the sanctuary of communities like AUUC.

~ Rev. Wm Levwood ~

## Board of Directors' Report 2023-2024

**Covid still with us:** The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic continued to ameliorate during 2023 and into 2024, although we have continued to see isolated cases, including several severe infections, among the congregation. In fact, AUUC had its own minor, yet concerning superspreader event when five or six congregants came down with Covid after attending a meeting of a church men's group. Still, all Covid-related requirements for testing, masking, and social distancing in the church have been eliminated and in-church activities have resumed. However, we have seen a marked preference among a significant number of congregants for Zoom (virtual) meetings and services.

**Membership and Attendance:** Over the past several years AUUC membership has remained fairly stable at @173 members and 115 households. This is about where we stand today. Historically, AUUC membership has hovered between 180 and 200 members, so we are still recovering from the membership and attendance deficits incurred during Covid.

Increasing AUUC membership has been identified as a critical goal by the Board, as well as by many congregants and our committees that depend on sufficient volunteers to accomplish their work. To support this goal, last year the Board established the **Membership and Inclusivity Task Force** to:

- Identify ways to support membership growth and new member engagement, and
- Recommend ways to make the congregational culture more inclusive.

The Task Force's work will take significant time and effort, but we believe its goals are critical to support the church's ministry and prevent burnout of our hard working volunteers.

**Finances:** Financially, AUUC has done surprisingly well in recovering from the pandemic. Our church auction and recently completed pledge drive both brought in much-needed funds, and over the past year we made every effort to keep expenses low. As a result, we did not have to make any significant cuts to our 2023-2024 budget, we rescinded cuts to staff members' hours, we paid down our mortgage, we gave staff a cost-of-living increase after their salaries were frozen during the pandemic, and we reinstated our contribution to the church's depreciation fund, which goes towards maintenance of the church and grounds.

The Board also approved a proposal to create a **reserve fund for the church's Our Whole Lives (OWL)** program. The fund will hold in escrow fees paid by participating families and be used to pay for future teacher training.

As our Financial Advisor's report states, the next several years will be critical in determining our long-term financial health, so we are hopeful that we will see increases in membership and attendance, that general economic conditions improve, and that church members continue to recognize AUUC as a beneficiary worthy of their generosity.

**Financial Management:** Notwithstanding our relatively stable financial status, the Board believes that AUUC needs to take additional steps to support our long range financial health. Therefore the Board established a **Finance and Stewardship Task Force** to:



- Draw on member financial expertise to support the Financial Advisor and the Board with financial oversight, recommendations, and long-range financial planning,
- Better institutionalize financial policies and procedures,
- Integrate our various efforts on finances and stewardship, and
- Institute UUA-recommended financial controls.

The task force has already made major progress in accomplishing these goals. Our interim Financial Advisor, Andy Meredith, jump started the Board in this work, and it's been continued by our new principal in that position, Tim Schwartz-Watjen. Of note: the task force has developed a plan and charter for a new **Finance Committee** to support finance responsibilities and stewardship.

**Committee Management Task Force:** A third task force was established to address long-standing issues with AUUC's committee management processes and structure. These issues included unclear goals and purposes of some committees; overlapping, out-of-date, and non-standardized definitions of AUUC organizations, including committees, affinity groups, task forces, teams, and advisors; challenges with retaining, sharing, and standardizing committee information; and the need for all committees to have meaningful, up-to-date charters. This initiative will address these issues to better support the church's ministry and operations.

**Infrastructure Task Force:** The Infrastructure Task Force is charged with gathering information on the church's physical plant and developing a report detailing the facility's current baseline and tactical and strategic plans for maintaining and enhancing the facility into the future. Information sources include the Building and Grounds and Green Sanctuary Committees and the WINS report. At a minimum, the report shall address 19 individual areas of the facility (e.g., HVAC, roof, windows), and will be used to: (1) plan for each recommended maintenance/enhancement task, (2) determine how to pay for these tasks (e.g., budget, depreciation fund, a capital campaign, grant or other), and (3) include provisions to ensure that all tasks are done safely and with minimal impact on AUUC's mission and on our lessees.

#### **Additional accomplishments:**

- The Board completed a comprehensive review of **AUUC's Bylaws**; made necessary updates, revisions, and corrections; and coordinated the revised policy with AUUC committees. The new Bylaws document will be presented to the congregation for approval at this year's Annual Meeting.
- The Board developed and approved a new **Policy on Vendors at AUUC-Sponsored Events**.
- The Board developed and approved a new **charter for the Board of Directors**.
- Ed Kringer, the Board's Human Resources consultant, worked with Rev Lev to develop **updated position descriptions and performance standards** for all church staff.
- AUUC hosted its 13<sup>th</sup> annual **hypothermia shelter** week through the Bailey's Crossroads Community Shelter, providing home-cooked dinners, breakfast bags, snacks, hats, gloves, toiletries, socks, and other amenities.
- The Board held a two-session, eight hour **Spring Retreat** this May to review its work over the past year and begin planning for the upcoming year.

- AUUC partnered with the UU congregation of Frederick, MD in the **ordination of Kathryn Adams**, a long-time (17 years) member of AUUC. Her ordination ceremony took place at the UU Church in Frederick on January 28. This December Kathryn will complete her Masters of Divinity from Meadville Lombard Theological school and will then enter her preliminary fellowship.
- AUUC accomplished some much needed improvements in our infrastructure systems and providers, including: a **new roof, new exterior doors, and energy efficiency improvements**. We also contracted with a **new HVAC maintenance contractor**.
- Our **nearly native garden** has benefited considerably from the several “all hands on deck” work days that were held this past year, each one attended by @15 workers/aspiring master gardeners. A lot of work was done, work that is readily reflected in the profusion and beauty of the garden’s flowers, trees, and shrubs.
- The **Children and Youth Spiritual Development Committee** has had a successful year through its implementation or continuation of a number of popular programs, including a **Soul Matters** group for parents, an **Our Whole Lives (OWL) Curriculum** for children grades 4-6, a **Multi-Generational Worship Community** initiative, and the integration of **A Time For All Ages** presentations with **Spiritual Development** lessons.
- A small working group led by Kate McDevitt **revised and updated the AUUC website** and transferred the website to a UUA WordPress template and a new web hosting service.
- AUUC’s Racial Justice Committee had another active year, holding discussions on and being active in numerous organizations and programs, including **Banned Book Club, Get Out the Vote, Food Justice VA, Justice Forward VA and VICPP, Get Out the Vote**, and **Fairfax NAACP’s Criminal Justice Committee**.
- The congregation had a scare when it was thought that Brad Rinaldo, our long-time and talented Music Director, might leave for another position. The entire congregation is happy that he ended up staying. Church members on the Music Director search team have agreed to become part of a **new Music Committee** to evaluate the state of our music program.
- The Building and Grounds Committee has done extensive research on the feasibility of putting **solar panels** on the roof of the church as a way of producing our own power and saving significant money (in the long term). The Board has approved their proposal and will be presenting it to the congregation for approval at the June Annual Meeting.

**Looking Forward:** By most objective measures (staffing, financial, programmatic) AUUC has had a good year. We saved money, were able to continue most of our service and community projects and activities as well as implement some new initiatives. Going forward we anticipate being able to build on this year’s successes and realize more accomplishments of which we can be proud.

## Financial Advisor's Report

As community owners of this church, it is our responsibility to provide the financial support to maintain the operational expenses of this ministry. The Board of Directors has fiduciary, policy-making, and hiring responsibilities for AUUC and provides oversight on our operational budget. Day-to-day contribution and expense management is handled by the congregational administrator, bookkeeper, and volunteer treasurer. The Financial Advisor serves a two-year term on the Board of Directors as a liaison between the Board and the staff and treasurer.

Our primary and most significant source of funding is pledged donations (75%). Other sources of income (25%) include rentals, auction fundraising, plate collections, and grants. Over half of the church expenses is directed toward staff salaries, benefits, and professional development, another 30% covers building loans, insurance, and operations, and the remainder is used for repairs, consumables, and discretionary support of affiliated programs.

The following provides a snapshot of our executed budget for the 2023-2024 program year (at the time of this writing). For more details, please contact the Board President.

<b><u>AUUC 2024 Budget Execution</u></b>		
	<b>2024</b>	<b>4/30/2024</b>
	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Actual</b>
<b><u>Income</u></b>		
<b>Contributions:</b>		
Pledges	\$304,380	
Subtotal Pledges (w/ loss allowance and est. over payments)	\$298,380	\$255,611
Plate	\$5,500	\$3,739
Special Grant	<u>\$20,000</u>	<u>\$20,000</u>
Subtotal Contributions	\$323,880	\$279,350
Rental Income	\$22,000	\$18,114
Cell Tower	\$23,805	\$19,838
Fundraising (Includes Auction)	\$26,000	\$26,156
Misc	<u>\$5,500</u>	<u>\$5,030</u>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$401,185</b>	<b>\$348,488</b>
<b><u>Expenses</u></b>		
<b>Fixed Overhead/Administration (loans, insurance, security, bank fees):</b>		
Subtotal	\$123,174	\$111,781
<b>Discretionary Overhead/Administration (repairs, consumables, child care):</b>		
Subtotal	\$19,100	\$13,894
<b>Fixed Staff Costs (salaries, taxes, insurance, professional expenses):</b>		
Subtotal	\$242,000	\$200,341
<b>Discretionary Staff Costs (worship, music expenses, bookkeeper fees):</b>		
Subtotal	\$11,950	\$5,245

<b>Program Council:</b>		
Subtotal Committees	\$6,650	\$2,501
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$402,874</b>	<b>\$333,762</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>-\$1,689</b>	<b>\$14,726</b>
<b>Depreciation Transactions:</b>		
Exterior Door Replacement		-\$3,726
Roof Replacement		-\$29,590
<b>Total</b>		<b>-\$33,316</b>
	<b>7/1/2023</b>	<b>4/30/2024</b>
	<b>Start</b>	<b>Actual</b>
<b>Funding Reserves</b>		
Unencumbered General Fund	\$65,297	\$80,023
Depreciation Fund	\$67,890	\$34,574
Endowment Fund	\$136,398	\$136,398
Chrysalis Fund	\$40,125	\$0
Memorial Fund	\$52,397	\$52,397
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$362,107</b>	<b>\$303,392</b>

### Highlights of the Board's fiduciary activities and decisions:

- Scott Larson served one-year as Financial Advisor and had to step down in the fall. Andrea Meredith was appointed by the Board to fill the position and served November through April 2024 and collected information and provided guidance on the transition of tasks from treasurer to bookkeeper and budgeting. Thanks both!
- Board directed that money remaining in the Chrysalis Fund be used to pay down our mortgage and hasten the time when debt is not a large part of our expenses.
- Board initiated conversations and then appointed a task force to develop a plan and charter for a Finance Committee to support finance responsibilities and stewardship.
- Board approved a new Legacy form for use by Endowment.
- Board designated Julie Schuck and Ed Kringer as signatories on the church Vanguard accounts. Board directed that donations as stock transfers be converted to the money market account as quickly as feasible.

## Pledge Report

**Mission/Purpose:** The annual Pledge Campaign is coordinated by a team of volunteers with oversight from the Board of Directors. The purpose of the Pledge Campaign is to identify, through pledged commitments, the donations of members and friends that will fund the majority of AUUC's annual operating budget for the next church fiscal year running from July 1st – June 30th each year. Pledged donations represent roughly 75% of the annual operating budget. Membership outreach and sometimes Pastoral Care feedback are ancillary benefits and results of the annual campaign.

The **2024 Pledge Team Members** included Liz Prescott, Julie Schuck, Timothy Schwartz-Watjen, Al Stolpe, and Olivia Tuggle with assistant from Rev Levwood, Ed Kringer, Mary Kringer, Stan Lichtman, Nancy Melito, and Joe Tuggle. Special thanks to Dale Howell, Olivia Tuggle, Timothy Schwartz-Watjen, and Elizabeth White for their amazing and heartfelt testimonials!!

**Accomplishments/Activities:** This year's pledge theme was **Draw the Circle Wide** to emphasize our mission of being a welcoming and inclusive spiritual home, to indicate our interest in membership growth, and to reference how the imagery of circles - seen in April's eclipse and this year's Olympics icons and images. The five Olympic rings have come to symbolize unity, connection, and growing stronger together while striving to be one's best self – a fitting expression of our own mission to inspire each other to live our values.

At the time of this writing, the spring 2024 pledge campaign has raised \$270,000 through 78 pledges, against a goal of raising \$320K. The pledge team estimates as many as ~15 pledges and another \$30,000 in income may yet be forthcoming. While we didn't manage to hit our goal, we are on track to align with the past year (\$306K/93 pledges). Additionally, we have many congregants enrolled in Direct Deposit, which ensures continuous income throughout the coming fiscal year. Also, we celebrate having received 2 brand new pledges, and as a community average, we recognized a 6.25% increase per pledge.

We gathered as a community to jointly celebrate the Pledge campaign kick-off on April 14, the half-way mark on May 5 with May Day / Beltane festivities organized in conjunction with Sacred Wheel, and the campaign closing on May 19 with recognition of the gold, silver, and bronze medal winners. In the end, the whole congregation wins (and thrives) because of the generosity of members and friends. We thank you once again for a successful pledge campaign.

**Looking Forward:** We anticipate holding the 2025 Pledge Campaign earlier in the year, kicking off the Campaign late February, and continuing community events in conjunction with the Campaign. We hope to have established a Finance Committee to provide additional oversight and advice for the pledge team and broader financial stewardship.

## Program Council Report

**Mission:** The Program Council coordinates the activities of AUUC committees in executing the mission of the Congregation through its membership and programs.

**Members:** Kate Heilig (Chair) and the chairs/leads of all major church committees

**Accomplishments:** The Program Council:

- Had monthly and ad hoc Executive Committee meetings to manage the day-to-day business of the church.
- Worked to incorporate AUUC's **new Mission Statement** into our monthly Council meetings, helping to make sure our committees are adhering to the mission of the church.
- Under the leadership of the Chair, established and managed a **google drive** to store meeting notes, bylaws, policies, procedures, and other documents critical for the Program Council's reference and documentation.
- Held monthly meetings with 10-15 attendees to: share committee or church-wide announcements, brainstorm issues, discuss challenges and successes, discuss council specific business (e.g., budgets), and other church business.
- Participated in the **Committee Management Task Force** to coordinate and organize committees, groups, advisors, etc.

**Looking Forward:**

- The Council will continue working with the Executive Council, Board, and committees to support AUUC's mission and values.

## Auction Committee

**Purpose:** AUUC's annual auction has been held nearly every year since the church was established. Members and friends of the church offer a wide variety of items, including paintings, craft products, dinners, excursions, sports tickets, game nights, and many other services and events. Participants bid on the items and high bidders win the item and reimburse the church. This is a major fundraising event for AUUC and, given that this is a way to have members or friends of AUUC get to know each other and have fun experiences, it is very popular.



Since Connie Diamont and Ken Heller first started working on the auction (Ken:

2015-2023; Connie: 2017-2023) its goals have been to: (1) build the AUUC community by facilitating people to people contact through auction activities (dinners, parties, etc), and (2) raise money for AUUC.

**Key Players:** Ken Heller, Dick Robison, Connie Diamant, Mike Fuller, Sandy Beeson, Tim and Kiersten Schwartz-Watjen, Quang Tran, Olivia and Joe Tuggle, Suzy Porth, Judy Stah, Dotty Smith, and Judy Usherson. These individuals organized the auction, served as auctioneers, set up food and drinks, and managed the IT process.

**Accomplishments:** A significant accomplishment in administering the auction was successfully transitioning to the new Auctria auction management software, which is used to assemble the auction catalog and administer auction night activities. Dick Robison was key to getting AUUC set up in Auctria starting with the 2018 auction. His passing meant AUUC has had to engage with and train new people in using Auctria software. This initiative is ongoing.



The processes for generating reports and collecting payments continue to improve. Additionally, use of Auctria means that fewer people are required to organize and run the auction. This allows more time for auction administrators to participate in the event. Also, many individuals brought food and drink and helped with setup and takedown.

Below are the auction results since AUUC started using Auctria in 2018. Prior to 2018, the auction results averaged less than \$20,000 annually.

2018	\$21,841
2019	\$27,217
2020	\$21,468
2021	\$26,570
2022	\$27,680
2023	\$26,244

The 2023 auction was held on November 4. Congregants participated in-person and on-line. Seventy-one members and friends donated events or items. 63 individuals, all from the AUUC congregation, bid on 141 items, resulting in \$26,244 going to support church

operations. Included in the auction catalog were many dinners, game nights, entertainment events, and other offerings. Some of these events were planned as in-person events, others were planned as virtual (Zoom). Through the auction, members and friends continue to show how valued our community is: a substantial community effort and great results!

**Looking forward:** The 2024 auction will likely be held in late October 2024. It is anticipated that the general approach for the 2024 event will be similar to the 2023 auction, i.e., a live auction with live auctioneers and provision for remote bidding.



## Building and Grounds Committee

**Mission:** The Building and Grounds Committee maintains and improves AUUC buildings, landscaping, and associated systems with the exception of the church's Nearly Native Garden, the area in front of the large church sign, and the area designated as 'The Meadow' (see Garden Committee) and the Memorial Garden (see Memorial Committee).

**Members:** Ed Kringer (co-chair), Dale Howell (co-chair), Don Eckerman, Matt Harrison, John Burnett, Dean Wanderer, Al Stolpe, Jerry Snyder, Lynn Snyder, Stan Lichtman and Judy Usherson.

**Challenges:** The untimely loss of Dick Robison in August 2023 presented a major challenge to the B&G team as Dick was both the chair and the primary person doing most of the maintenance and repairs at the church. Importantly, he was the repository of legacy knowledge. With the absence of a transition period, there were some problems in the systemic monitoring (HVAC, security and water leakage) that resulted in delays and false callouts. These were resolved within a few months and resulted in a key lesson learned – have a documented succession plan going forth. For the present, the co-chair arrangement has worked well to ensure there's a backup that is up to speed on all current and future projects. The other significant benefit of the co-chair arrangement is to have two people to manage the workload.

**Accomplishments:** The most significant accomplishments in the last year are:

- **Replacement of the roof and the four exterior doors** in the classrooms. The Certainteed Landmark Pro shingles are among the highest grade asphalt singles available and have a 25-year warranty. The replacement doors are Energy Star compliant and were installed by Care Contracting. A NVSWCD VCAP grant was used to pay 36% of the total price of the doors.
- **New HVAC maintenance provider**, HVAC & Plumbing Unlimited, was selected through a competitive solicitation to semi-annually perform a thorough wellness check of the 3 HVAC systems. This new provider will save AUUC ~\$500 a year and the services received are expected to improve.
- **Energy efficiency improvements** were made above the lobby and in the electrical room to reduce heat and cooling losses. Weatherstripping was installed around the old French doors in the galley. Weatherstripping was replaced on all 3 main entrance double doors. B&G is producing a video documenting these improvements and promoting the church's energy conservation efforts.
- Sixty chairs were refurbished by removing and washing the seat upholstery, replacing the foam pads and **thoroughly cleaning the chair frames**. This is an interim solution to bridge to the eventual replacement of the chairs.
- **Repaired water damage** to the wall in the Spring-Mar Director's office.
- **Repainted the masonry wall** near the west side entrance.
- **Held work day** in October 2023 with an excellent turnout. Several small repairs were made, touchup painting was done, windows were washed and general cleaning was done.
- **Solar Energy:** The Committee has done extensive research on the feasibility (cost, savings, grants, etc.) of using solar panels to save money by producing our own electricity.

The Board has approved the Committee's proposal and will be presenting it to the congregation for a vote during the June Annual Meeting.

**Going Forward:** Monthly work days are being scheduled throughout the rest of 2024.

**Issues/Concerns:** The key concern for the B&G committee is the lack of new recruits. The average age of the current members is over 70 years of age, which limits the tasks that can be performed and the duration of the work. While B&G is always seeking new committee members, we are also considering an alternative other than using volunteers. An alternative could be engaging a local handyman as needed to augment our team. The lack of younger committee members is not impacting us at present but most likely will in the future.

## **Children and Youth Spiritual Development Committee & Director of Spiritual Development**

**Purpose:** Under the direction of the minister, the DSD develops and leads a comprehensive program that nurtures the spiritual and religious growth of AUUC's youth and children.

**Director of Spiritual Development:** Ashley Nelson-Meiners

**Committee Chairperson/Leader:** Olivia Tuggle

**Committee Members:** Julie Schuck, Nancy Davis, Jessica Larsen, and Vanessa Hall. Olivia Tuggle, with the approval of the Board, will be serving her 4th term.

The 2023-2024 year brought about many changes to the role of the Director of Spiritual Development (DSD) and the Children and Youth Spiritual Development Committee (CYSDC). The current DSD, Ashley Nelson-Meiners, will be departing in June. Our mission for 2023-2024 was to restart procedures to pre-pandemic levels, re-engage the youth program, and implement a system that empowers parents to be the primary educators of their children's spiritual development.

### **Accomplishments:**

- The DSD and the Minister regularly collaborated to present **A Time For All Ages** (TFAA) to connect with the lessons being taught in Spiritual Development (SD). New research has shown that children learn the most about spirituality from their parents, not from church classes. For this reason, CYSDC is focusing on creating more opportunities for parents to talk to their children about spirituality. By connecting the TFAA and sermons to the lesson taught in SD, parents and children have something in common to talk about.
- Through the leadership of Joe Tuggle and Chris Fuller we were able to provide the **Our Whole Lives (OWL) Curriculum** for children grades 4-6. With the other facilitators (Jenn Carlson, Vanessa Hall, Kiersten Schwartz-Watjen) we were able to provide OWL classes to 10 students.
- For the third time we were able to do **Trick or Treat for UNICEF**, Trunk-or-Treat, and the Easter Egg Hunt in person.
- We began a **Soul Matters Group** for parents as primary spirituality educators. This group includes participants from the Davies Unitarian Universalist Church. Together we discuss our search for truth and how to help our children find their own truths.
- We have made some progress in building a **Multi-Generational Worship Community**. One of our youths has been controlling the tech for Service on Sundays, and we have two youths training to be worship associates
- We have brought back some pre-pandemic norms, including parent information sessions and teacher training.
- Overall, our youth participation has grown, we have been able to bring back some pre-pandemic traditions, continue some new post-pandemic traditions, and provide more ways for parents to guide their children in faith formation.

**Going Forward:** In the future we would like to staff the nursery, provide a Coming of Age curriculum for grades 6-9, and get enough volunteers to accomplish both.

## Communications Team

**Mission:** The Communications Team supports AUUC by facilitating information sharing among members, friends, visitors, AUUC leadership, UUA and affiliates, other churches and organizations, and the broader community. Internally, the committee works to promote and facilitate effective communication with the Board, Council, committees, and the congregation. The Team also works externally to promote AUUC and its activities that are open to the public and to increase Accotink's visibility within the community.

**Members:** Debbie Cohen (lead), Quang Tran, Kate McDevitt, JoAnn Flanagan, and Kate Heilig. (RW Carney also supports communications activities.)

**Activities and Accomplishments:** The Communications Team continues to focus on three key means of sharing information: the AUUC website, social media, and the weekly email newsletter (*This Week at Accotink*). Communications adapted to help support AUUC's changing needs during the transition to both online and in-person services. Ongoing responsibilities and activities include:

- **AUUC Website** – The team manages the church website in cooperation with the Administrator, regularly updating events, activities, and worship-related information, and developing and posting other information as needed.
- During the year, a small working group, led by Kate McDevitt, completely **revised and updated the AUUC website** and worked with staff to transfer the website to a UUA WordPress template and a new web hosting service. The group worked with many members and staff to review, revise and update all of the content. The communications group continues to update the web content regularly and to revise it as needed.
- **Social Media** – The team develops and posts content to AUUC's social media, including its Facebook page, members-only private Facebook group, and Instagram. This is an important means of communication with and among members of the congregation and the larger community.
- **This Week at Accotink** – With contributions from many members of the church, the Communications Team prepares a weekly email update and distributes it via email to all members and friends. This is a key means of communicating information about upcoming events and activities and other church concerns.
- **Sunday service support** – The team posts each Sunday's **Order of Service** to the website Worship page. A reminder email is sent out each Sunday morning with a brief description of the service, a link to the order of service, and a link to allow congregants to attend virtually.
- **Email Notices** – Communications also sends emails to the full email list (members and friends) to respond to specific and immediate needs (such as changes in schedules, reminders about key events, alerts about concerns, and notices of memorial services).

**Looking Forward:** All of the communications activities are expected to continue throughout the year. Communications initiatives will be refined and adapted as needed to support the ongoing activities and function of the church.

## Gardening and Landscaping Group

**Mission:** Maintain and improve landscaping of the Nearly Native Garden, the area in front of the large church sign, and the area designated as ‘The Meadow’ in order to provide a safe, environmentally supportive, and attractive place to visit and worship.

**Members:** JoAnn Flanagan, Anamaria Viveros-Long, Bruce Griffin, Al Stolpe, Judy Usherson, Dotty Smith, Kristina Watts, Diane Bates, Suzanne Daugherty.

### Accomplishments:

- Summer 2023 was quite dry, so much of the gardeners’ energies were devoted to keeping our plants watered. At this writing, we have only identified a few (newly installed) plants that were lost to drought. We salvaged a rain barrel discarded by Spring Mar Preschool and have used it to store water near the front Sign Garden.
- Another major effort was preparation for **leadership succession** as JoAnn Flanagan moves out of the area in 2024. This included improving documentation and turning over major tasks, such as workday organizing, to other group members.
- We held three half-day **all-church gardening events**: Spring, Early Summer, and Fall. We had between 10 and 15 participants at each of these events. Major activities were: continuing to extend the “plant frame” of native phlox around the Nearly Native Garden that borders the parking lot; removing undesirable plants from the area adjacent to the plant frame and on the second terrace; planting native shrubs on the second terrace; consolidating desirable plants such as spiderworts and penstemons into single beds to increase their impact.
- **Maintained the Front Sign Garden:** we continue to remove weeds and add more native plants.
- **Continued to develop the native meadow** in the marshy area at the back of the church lot to reduce lawn area and need for mowing. *This project was 75% funded by a Soil and Water Conservation grant that requires ongoing maintenance of natives for the next 8 years.* We maintain milkweeds to the side of the meadow as part of Pam Cox’s project and have mulched a pathway as a buffer between invasive grasses and our new plantings. We continue to add more natives from other areas of the property where they are not needed and regularly remove non-natives. Some of the natives (especially blue mist flowers) planted in the meadow are spreading to nearby areas.
- Leah Skidmore, our native garden consultant, reports that the meadow plants continue to fill in more quickly than expected. She recommended that we weed whack 25—30% of the meadow plantings annually, starting this November and we have followed through.
- Bruce Griffin continues to **control vines, invasive shrubs, and brush** in the Nearly Native Garden and throughout the rest of the property. JoAnn Flanagan removed three bags of invasive Japanese wineberry vines from between Del’s Garden and the dumpster.
- Anamaria Viveros Long again hired an arborist to treat the **Virginia Magnolia tree** that is a centerpiece of the gazebo area and continues to thrive.
- Judy Usherson continued to support the **potted plants at the front of the church** for a year-round visually pleasing effect.

- We **continue to identify and document the native and problem plants** in the Nearly Native Garden and now the Meadow. JoAnn Flanagan compiled a list of bloom times by month.
- Our most important documents, including plant inventories, meeting notes, to-do lists for work days, and annual reports are now available to group members via [Google Docs](#).
- **Throughout the year we continue to consult with our master native gardener**, Leah Lamba-Skidmore, to advise on projects such as tree pruning and plant choice in all areas of the property.

#### **Looking Forward:**

- Continue to maintain and simplify the major gardens, meadow, and landscape features on church property for aesthetics and environmental value.
- Prune or remove trees that are growing into the parking lot area.
- Clear invasives from the area adjacent to the Dogwood Garden and extend the mix of black-eyed Susans and other natives into that area.
- Add groundcover to the terrace where needed.
- Continue documenting the garden contents, maintenance, and costs.

## Green Sanctuary Committee

**Purpose:** Provide AUUC congregants, youth, and children opportunities to put our UU faith values into action, with particular emphasis on the 7th Principle - respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part - in our building and on our grounds, in our personal lives, and in our local and state communities and beyond by initiating, coordinating, and guiding environmental justice activities.

**Members:** Mary Rose Janya (Chair), Alisa Roman, Mark Roman, Dale Howell, JoAnn Flannagan, Ali Sayed, Lisa Sosna, Judy Usherson-Quast, Dean Wanderer, Jacklyn Kenny, and Marsha White.

We invite to our meetings all who are interested in making AUUC a green beacon in the Burke area. Attending regularly is not required.

### Accomplishments:

- Conducted a worship service for **Earth Day** entitled “How to be an EnVIRALmentalist,” planned and led by the Green Sanctuary members and Rev. Levwood. Lisa Sosna spoke about her personal experience with solar power. Dale Howell gave a testimonial.
- Created a “put a leaf on the oak tree” or “put a veggie in the garden” posting in the sanctuary to track individual/family progress on planting native plants.
- Funded the purchase and installation of an **Energy Star dishwasher** with the assistance of the Building & Grounds Committee.
- John Peterson hosted a **Write Here, Right Now session** on March 17, 2024, which generated many handwritten and form letters to support the Farm bill, and three petitions to the VA governor to support green initiatives.
- Was active in local and state environmental organizations including **Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions (FACS), Virginia Interfaith Power & Light, 350.org, and Wild Virginia**. We advertise meetings and actions to facilitate change.
- Participated as a member of the **FACS Advocacy Team**, meeting with elected officials and publicizing action items to our congregation.
- Regularly attended the **Northern Virginia Soil and Water District’s Green Breakfasts, 350.org meetings**.
- Hosted two **movie nights**, with each including a soup supper and discussions.
- Presented the video **2040** to a church group. The video is about climate change and is inspiring, optimistic, and family friendly.
- Showed an episode on Waste from the Netflix documentary **"Down to Earth"** about learning how to move toward a low-waste lifestyle! We had a resource table with samples of sustainable products, books, and handouts.
- Provided one sustainable living, eco-friendly **picnic basket for AUUC’s annual auction**: a natural wicker picnic basket filled with sustainable goodies, including a set of colorful wheat straw tableware and cutlery, fabric tablecloth and 4 cloth napkins, organic wine, plant-based snacks, non-alcoholic sparkling beverages, and Fair Trade coffee, tea, and chocolate.
- Had discussions with Rev Lev on integrating **earth day concepts** into everyday living.

### Looking Forward:

- Dale Howell continued planning for a **food garden project** that will provide vegetables for area food banks. The garden will also cut mowing on a steep hill and encourage multigenerational participation. We anticipate beginning the project in 2025.
- Met regularly to develop plans to **green AUUC**, including implementing **solar power** using grants, and building a composter to support the food garden.
- To support the Greening AUUC initiative, we plan to have an **environmental assessment** of the church building.



## Membership Development Committee

**Purpose:** The Membership Development Committee (MDC) welcomes, mentors, and integrates newcomers and new members into the AUUC community. In addition, MDC maintains records on the size and characteristics of the congregation for planning purposes. The MDC follows up with long-term members to make sure the church continues to meet their needs.

**Members:** John Long (Chair), Chris Fuller, Stan Lichtman, Anamaria Long

### **Activities/Accomplishments:**

- AUUC membership has remained fairly stable at 173 members and 115 households. Likewise, attendance at Sunday services has been fairly steady at an average of 52 in-person and 18 Zoom attendees.
- The Committee has integrated the membership status of members, friends, etc., within **Realm** to provide up-to-date information on members and visitors and to follow-up with visitors' paths toward membership.
- The Committee coordinates the **Sunday Greeters Team** and assures that visitors' contact information is entered in Realm, added to the nametag list, and forwarded to the Communications Committee. Visitors receive an email follow-up with information about AUUC and an invitation to contact us for further information.

### **Looking Forward:**

Together with the Membership and Inclusion Task Force, we are working on a series of projects with a goal of getting the membership close to the 200 level.

We hope to involve the entire church in our efforts to welcome visitors and guide newcomers into a closer connection with the congregation.

## Memorial Ministry Committee

In the past year, the following placements were made in the Accotink Memorials:

**Richard H. Robison**

**Brent P. Beeson**

**Mission/Purpose:** The Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church Memorial Ministry Committee provides ongoing care of the congregation by supporting AUUC members, friends and family who wish to memorialize loved ones in the Accotink Memorials. The Accotink Memorials provide the opportunity for church members, their families and the congregation to receive comfort and express grief, sorrow and loss through memorial services, physical remembrance and placement of cremains, and informal visits.

The Accotink Memorials consist of the Memorial and Meditation Garden and the Tree of Remembrance. The Memorial and Meditation Garden is a quiet and reflective place on the church property that is used to memorialize deceased members, family and friends of the church. The Tree of Remembrance is a memorial inside the church building whose leaves bear inscriptions dedicated to departed individuals.

**Committee Members:** Don Eckerman (Chair), Steve Brown, Peggy Eckerman, Ed Kringer, Susan Brown, John Burnett

### Accomplishments/Activities:

- Two individuals were placed in the Accotink Memorials.
- In November 2023 assisted in **reading the names** of those included in the Accotink Memorials.
- **Managed the Memorial Fund** accounts at Truist, including deposits, payments for maintenance, cenotaph wall and tree plates, and columbarium name plates. Kept records of all donors, purchases, income and expenses.
- **Twice per year appeals** to the congregation for donations to the Memorial Fund to ensure that the Fund remains adequate for its purpose of making the Accotink Memorials self-supporting.
- Drafted and proposed a **by-laws amendment** to establish formal management of the funds contributed to the AUUC Memorial Fund. The proposed by-law amendment establishes the Memorial Fund as a perpetual care endowment. As an endowment, the management options are increased and will allow better returns and principle-based investing.

### Memorial Fund Income and Expenditures May 1, 2023 - April 10, 2024

#### INCOME:

	Name Plates	\$ 268.69
	Donations	\$ 12,543.00
	Interest	\$ 1,156.24



**Income Total**

**\$ 14,894.70**

**EXPENSES:**



Leaf Name plates (Gregory Cave Corp)

\$ 84.75



Memorial Name Plates (Matthews Corp)

\$ 380.67



Garden Maintenance

\$ 4,206.00



**Expenses Total**

**\$ 4,671.42**

**MEMORIAL FUND BALANCES (as of Apr 10, 2024)**



Checking

\$ 15,652.32



Certificates of Deposit

\$ 47,477.90



**Memorial Funds Total**

**\$ 63,130.22**

**Looking Forward:**

- Continue with **routine management** of maintenance, Memorial Fund, and support for interments and other memorial placements.
- Continue with efforts to **build Memorial Fund balances** to levels that are adequate for permanent support for all necessary maintenance of the Memorials.
- **Revise committee charter** to include provisions relevant to Memorial Fund by-law amendments.

## Racial Justice Committee

**Purpose:** To promote a more inclusive and anti-oppressive community through action-oriented initiatives supporting racial equity. Cultivate action-oriented awareness to disarm and dismantle oppressive and discriminatory practices in our community and our world. These purposes are accomplished through focusing on:

- Education and Awareness,
- Advocacy and Action, and
- Relationship Development and Engagement.

**Co-Chairs:** Suzy Porth, Joe Tuggle, Elizabeth White

**Members:** Jen Carlson, Ed Kringer, Mary Kringer, Warren McLaine, Judy Robison, Joe Tuggle, Olivia Tuggle, John Peterson, Dean Wanderer, Pat Bangs, Liz Prescott

### Accomplishments and Activities:

- Held monthly meetings where we shared readings, video clips, legislative news, and information pertaining to the purpose of our committee.
- **Supported Reproductive Justice Study Issue.**
- Supported the **Banned Book Club** series with TAC, including discussions and Movie nights.
- Continued support for **Transgender & Gender Expansive** students, staff, & families in our school systems.
- Supported the **Farm Bill** with the addition of the Black Farmer's Act.
- **VOICE** catered a lunch for AUUC in thanks for all our support.
- Began support to **Food Justice DMV** which provides social assistance as well as food to immigrants.
- Two members joined the **Fairfax NAACP Criminal Justice Committee.**
- Held discussion on **Media Bias.**
- Held presentation and discussion on **Racial Bias In Healthcare.**
- Responded to calls for action to influence Virginia state legislation from our partners, including **Justice Forward VA and VICPP.**
- Led discussion with over 20 participants: **Israel-Hamas Conflict**
- Supported **VOICE Annual Meeting** at AUUC.
- Supported food drive and period products for **Food Justice VA.**
- After service discussion: **Foster Care and Reproductive Justice.**
- Participated in **Get Out the Vote** through Reclaim Our Vote, Reeb Project and VUUSAN.
- Wrote letters to Governor Youngkin to sign the bill on his desk which requires evidence-based training for healthcare professions on unconscious bias and cultural competency.
- Supported and attended **Reproductive Justice** discussions and events.
- Participated in **NAACP Cleanup** of the historic African American Cemetery in Bull Run Regional Park.
- Supported and attended **TAC's Pride Picnic.**
- Supported and attended **NAACP Juneteenth** celebration.

## Rentals

**Mission:** The AUUC Rental Committee develops and monitors procedures for managing long-term rentals of church space and facilities. To the extent that our facilities are not committed to church-sponsored functions, the facilities are available to rent by individuals and community groups that certify that they do not discriminate against individuals based on race, nationality, gender, age or sexual orientation. Use of the facilities by profit-making groups is subject to approval by the AUUC Rental Committee. Note: As of 2024 the Rental Committee is no longer a “Committee,” but rather an Advisory Group.

**Responsibilities:** as directed by the BOD and/or the **AUUC Executive Committee:**

- Develops policy and procedures for AUUC rentals in accordance with the AUUC mission, values, and by-laws.
- Monitors implementation of AUUC rental policy and procedures and reports as necessary to the Board.
- Prepares leases for rental of AUUC space and facilities; obtains signatures of tenants (long term renters with the exception of Spring-Mar and the AT&T cell tower).
- Submits leases signed by tenants to the Congregation President for approval and signature, bringing to the President’s attention any provisions that deviate from AUUC rental policies or procedures.
- Promptly notifies the Executive Committee regarding the initiation of new leases and the termination of existing ones.
- Carries out other functions and responsibilities as specified in AUUC Rental Procedures.

**Members:** Al Stolpe, Advisor

**Staff:** none

**Accomplishments:**

**Current tenants:**

- AT&T cell tower
- Spring-Mar Cooperative Preschool
- Just Breathe Tai Chi Classes
- Peruvian Dance Group
  
- Rental Income 2021 -2024 (approximate)

Source	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
ATT Cell Tower	\$ 23,805	\$ 23,805	\$ 23,805
Other rental income	\$22,000	\$ 22,000	\$ 22,000

**Looking forward:** Develop long term contracts for new and returning renters. For returning renters determine necessary revisions and changes in terms for previously negotiated contracts. Make recommendations to the Board as necessary.

## Sacred Wheel

**Purpose:** Sacred Wheel embraces our Earth-centered UU Source of spiritual teaching that uses traditions and celebrations of the natural year and the goal of living in harmony with the rhythms of Nature. We do this by offering a minimum of eight seasonal ceremonies that are open to all, including beyond Accotink, and that seek to bring us into greater appreciation of the miracle of our natural world and the long history of which we are a part. In addition, the tradition of Accotink includes allowing two of these seasonal festivals to be celebrated as the congregational service, Samhain (Halloween) and Yule (non-Christian Winter Solstice.) At times we may be called on to present additional services for the congregation, or to assist with Religious Education, as we did with a six-week program on Greek religion.

The dates below are the dates that we strive for, but out of practicality we hold them on the Sundays closest to these ideal dates:

- Yule, December 21
- Imbolc, February 1
- Ostara, March 21
- Beltane, May 1
- Litha, June 21
- Lammas/Lughnasadh, August 1
- Mabon/Fall Equinox, September 21
- Samhain, October 31

**Facilitator:** Nancy Melito

**Members:** Sacred Wheel consists of one Facilitator and up to 30 members who are contacted through email regarding upcoming events.

**Activities:** For Sacred Wheel the church year begins with Litha and ends with Beltane.

- **Lammas**, as is now Sacred Wheel's tradition, raised about \$350 for the **No Child Hungry program** through our Bake Sale. We plan to continue to hold a Bake Sale each year in conjunction with Lammas, as Lammas is the celebration of the grain crop, and what better way to put our UU values into action than by feeding children?
- **Samhain (Halloween)** was once again a congregational service, and now we follow that tradition by holding a **Trunk or Treat party** in the parking lot with games, food and drink for all ages. Many thanks to Olivia Tuggle for organizing and hosting the food and drink!
- This year's **Yule** was a joint exercise between Reverend Levwood and Sacred Wheel, and once again was the congregational service.
- Beltane is fast becoming an annual tradition in concert with the Pledge Drive, celebrating the Drive's halfway point. 2024's **Beltane celebration** was the work of Sacred Wheel members Jenn Carlson, Olivia and Joe Tuggle, Whitney Purdy, Elizabeth and Charli White, and David Muirhead. Held inside after service because of the rain, from the photos people had a good time, and Joe and Olivia Tuggle made a lovely King and Queen of the May!

- We have also instituted a **monthly drum circle**, again open to all, and have had some success with that. We do draw from the wider community for the drum circle, which does not require any particular worldview other than the basic tenets of kindness to all and respect for individual spiritual choice.

**Looking Forward:** Sacred Wheel plans to continue presenting seasonal rituals open to all, including outside of the church, and to provide the congregational services for Halloween and Yule.

In addition, Sacred Wheel will also provide the congregational service for the third Sunday in July, when we will present Lammas/Lughnasadh, helping the church to save some money by not bringing in an outside minister. On that same Sunday, We will once again live our faith by holding our now-annual Bake Sale to raise money for the No Child Hungry Meal Pack program.



## Social Justice Committee

### Purpose:

- Stimulate the entire congregation's involvement in social justice activities that translate our UU faith values into action by exploring, initiating, and coordinating social justice efforts, programs, and events.
- Inform the congregation of social justice issues and provide support and a forum for discussion and/or actions.
- Provide opportunities and training for church members and friends, including youth and children, to do social justice work.

**Members:** John Peterson (Chair), Natasha Barnes, Shelley Brosnan, Jenn Carlson, Nancy Davis, Pete Fontneau, Kate Heilig, Ed Kringer, Mary Kringer, Jessica Larsen, Scott Larson, Rev. Levwood, Warren McLaine, Liz Prescott, Suzy Porth, Dotty Smith, Joe Tuggle, Dean Wanderer, Elizabeth White, and Marsha White.

**Members who receive emails not currently active:** Andy Meredith, Ali Sayed, Quang Tran, and the Advocacy and Community of Interest email lists.

### Activities and Accomplishments:

- **Collected food** and other items for **Food Justice DMV** to distribute to immigrants in need. Discussed federal and state advocacy related to immigration. The youth were enthusiastic about collecting sanitary supplies and continued the collection beyond the original end date.
- Sponsored **monthly Outreach Collections for 10 non-profits** selected annually by congregational vote plus Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice (UUSJ) and Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement (VOICE). Since September 2001, \$307,720.06 (as of 4/18/2024) has been donated to community organizations that support our UU values with current monthly collections averaging \$1,593.00, an increase of \$51/month from last year.
- With AUUC congregants, the Committee supported **Halley Elementary School** in Lorton, VA through the *No Child Goes Hungry/Accotink* meal pack program by providing monthly meal packs for students who are food insecure (items included: juice, milk, breakfast bar, oatmeal, tuna or chicken salad, canned pasta, dried pasta, salty snacks, fruit, and ramen noodles). This is a direct hands-on multigenerational service activity for the whole church and is much beloved. Additional supports to Halley Elementary included hand-knit hats, gently used books from our spring book drive, and mentors for at-risk children.
- Supported **Beacon House**, an after-school program in Northeast DC, in various ways. Accotink families and individuals were involved in collecting school supplies, purchasing holiday gifts, and delivering hand-knit hats. This year we organized a program attended by AUUC and Beacon House youth and adult chaperones at the Kennedy Center to view Jason Reynold's play *Look Both Ways*. Our BH liaisons attend liaison meetings when scheduled to keep up-to-date with BH programs and needs.
- For the 21st year, AUUC partnered with the Burke/Fairfax **CROP Hunger Walk** on November 5. Rev. Lev gave the welcome and prayer for walkers as we started from Burke Presbyterian Church. Eight members and friends joined 228 others, raised \$953.68

of a walk total of \$31,496 and made donations of food to ECHO to support individuals with food insecurity locally and abroad.

- The annual observance of the **Season for Non-Violence** was held with an emphasis on reproductive justice, our study issue for the year. Accotink's youth read aloud pre-selected quotes at the chalice lighting during the beginning of Sunday services during February, March, and early April.
- Hosted our 13<sup>th</sup> annual **hypothermia shelter** week through the Bailey's Crossroads Community Shelter providing home-cooked dinners, breakfast bags, snacks, hats, gloves, toiletries, socks, and other amenities. Children created welcome signs and ages 10 and up were able to assist in serving guests.
- Provided public recognition to student peacemakers at area high schools through active participation in the **Student Peace Awards** of Fairfax County. Three AUUC members continued their role in outreach to 30 area high schools, sending application forms and receiving the schools' recipient names and information. The three members also served as SPA representatives to three high schools. Fairfax County is unique in recognizing peace-making at the high school level through this program. 27 of the 30 schools announced Peace Award recipients. Accotink is one of the initial sponsors beginning in 2007, and is one of only 18 local organizations to support the Student Peace Awards.
- From June through mid- September, our congregation supported the **Mawlat Upper Primary School** in northeast India's Khasi Hills by sponsoring their students. Through occasional letters from students and photographs, we displayed a storyboard in the fellowship area. Each sponsorship gives a Mawlat student school supplies, books, and also helps defray the costs of a protein lunch as well as a small stipend for the teacher. This fundraising is important as the village is in a very poor area of Northeast India. Supporting the school keeps students in the village for education. This year we sent \$1955.28 from 23 individuals and families. Additionally, the SJC sent \$200, bringing our total contribution to \$2,155.28.
- Led an advocacy program focusing on both Federal (with UUSJ) and state legislation (with numerous partners such as VICPP, Equality Virginia, Justice Forward VA, ARC of NoVA). Over 60 members are part of the **AUUC ADVOCACY GROUP**, which communicated with numerous legislators/staffers through letters, emails, phone calls, and virtual meetings to promote our UU values by writing letters & emails, making phone calls, and participating in virtual meetings.
- AUUC volunteers have written over **8,000 postcards** over the past four years. To date in 2023-4, volunteers have written over 2,000 postcards (with more to come). We've sent postcards to North Carolina, Georgia, Texas, and Virginia to empower under-represented voters to fully participate in elections by providing voter education, voting locations, and county contacts for local boards of elections. We work through **Reclaim Our Vote, Center for Common Ground, and REEB**.

Other advocacy activities included:

- Providing opportunities for witnessing such as **monthly demonstrations at the NRA**, labor union actions, and LGBTQIA+ rights rallies.
- Providing recognition of **Child Abuse Prevention Month** (April) with outdoor display of pinwheels and SCAN sign.

The Social Justice Committee is integrated into other areas of the church as well:

- An SJC member serves on the **Children and Youth Spiritual Development Committee** to coordinate plans and welcome our youth/children into our various social justice activities. The SJC member has worked closely with the DSD to re-organize the children's

book collection according to proposed UU values and make them accessible to AUUC members, friends, and families.

- The SJC chair regularly attends **Program Council meetings**.
- Rev. Levwood often attends SJC meetings and helps integrate social justice themes into Sunday worship.

**Looking forward:**

- Work closely with the Spiritual Development Committee to determine what social justice activities our youth/children would like to see started and support.
- Because the election in the fall of 2024 is so important, we will not have a study issue for the first six months of next year (July-December). Our members will be working on the election instead.

## True Accotink Colors

**Mission:** To create a welcoming sanctuary for the LGBTQ+ community, to promote advocacy and justice, and to promote understanding and education with regard to the LGBTQ+ community in our congregation.

**Members:** Kate Heilig, Kate McDevitt, Quang Tran, Scott Larson, Nancy Melito, Dick Foster

### Accomplishments:

- Renewed our **Welcoming Congregation** status with the UUA by completing the necessary annual requirements
- Co-led a Sunday Service with Racial Justice to coincide with honoring the Stonewall Uprising and Juneteenth
- Hosted LGBTQ+ **movie night events** and facilitated after-movie discussions
- Led an after-service discussion about gender-affirming care
- Working with AUUC's Advocacy Team, provided and updated information about the status of state legislation affecting the LGBTQ+ community
- Hosted a tent representing AUUC at the **Burke Centre Festival**
- Working with Racial Justice Committee, hosted monthly **Banned Book Club discussions**
- Hosted AUUC's annual **Pride Picnic**
- Revived AUUC's annual **Friendsgiving tradition**
- Attended local **Transgender Day of Remembrance** event with small group of congregation members; Rev. Levwood participated in a reading along with other clergy members
- Worked with and financially supported **Transgender Education Association (TGEA)** including hosting two successful Pie-Off fundraiser events
- Revitalized the **adult library**: new donations, teen books, monthly featured books, and spine stickers corresponding to popular topics

### Looking Forward: We will:

- Continue work to maintain our annual Welcoming Congregation status with the UUA
- Continue to host seasonal movie nights, social events, and discussions
- Maintain the church library
- Continue and expand our relationship with TGEA
- Lead at least one Sunday service each year

## **Worship Associates**

**Mission:** The Worship Associates create space and a container to honor and share meaning and to connect with the abstract or ineffable. We offer a path to carry the gifts of worship into our lives and stories. To accomplish this, Worship Associates: (1) develop the worship capacity of the wider congregation, (2) contribute to the planning and leadership of elements of worship as agreed upon with the worship leaders, and (3) integrate worship messages and themes into other aspects of congregational life.

**Members:** Jenn Carlson (Chair), Sheilah Dols, Paulette Lichtman Panzer, Warren McLaine, Nancy Melito, Judy Robison, Kristina Watts, Wren Kahle, Charli Hernandez-White

**Zoom Worship Managers:** Jenn Carlson, Ali Sayed, Quang Tran, Joe Tuggle, Ana Meredith

### **Accomplishments:**

- Our Worship Associates continued to innovate and support a variety of services and styles with lay and other ministers.
- Over the past year we have worked closely with Brad Rinaldo, our music director, to embrace a much larger portion of the liturgical music tradition of our denomination.
- Our Zoom Worship Managers have run each service with aplomb, fearlessly adapting to the technology and demands of a wide variety of services, videos, and formats.
- The committee has worked to reintegrate candle lighting and joys and sorrows into each service, thereby seeking to reconnect our congregants with one another post Covid.
- Every month members meet to troubleshoot concerns and discuss how to keep services fresh. This time is also used for individual and group development of our capacity to deliver worship to our congregation.

### **Looking forward:**

- The Worship Associates Team hopes to be a force for continuity in the river of changes that will come as worship continues to evolve.
- Our group remains open to change, suggestions, and feedback as we endeavor to make our worship services meaningful and inclusive of all peoples.