

ANNUAL REPORT

ACCOTINK UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

June 2025

Minister: Rev. William Levwood

President: Julie Schuck



LGBTQ

Welcoming Congregation



ACCOTINK UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

Care in community. Grow in spirit. 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 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE CONGREGATION 2024 – 2025

At the annual Board retreat a few weeks ago, I commented that I wondered what it would be like to be a minister when our Nation and the world aren't in crisis. As I complete my seventh year of ministry, my fourth year as your minister, I've realized that much of my experience of ministry has been about stewarding communities through huge crises. That's certainly been true this year. In normal times, this report would be organized around AUUC's Mission Statement. But these are not normal times.

A Welcoming & Inclusive Spiritual Home → Membership Growth

When the task force responsible for facilitating AUUC's mission statement two years ago was in the final stage of wordsmithing, one of the members asked: "Are we truly a welcoming and inclusive spiritual home or is that an aspiration?" I answered that it was both. AUUC has long been a welcoming and inclusive spiritual home. And there were then, and still remain, ways that this congregation can become even more welcoming and more inclusive. I felt in that moment that this part of the *mission statement* was going to be the de facto *vision* for the next few years at AUUC. I believe that has been true.

In 2023 your AUUC Board created a Membership Growth & Inclusion Task Force. Over the next two years this task force, led by Al Stolpe and Kristina Watts, with input from congregation members, visitors, and newcomers, engaged in a thorough process to determine next steps toward this goal.

In addition, a reconstituted Membership Development Committee, led by John Long, initiated a number of activities, including orientation and "Starting Point" sessions, to help newcomers become better acquainted with AUUC and its traditions, to help speed their integration into our AUUC community, and to help ensure that they remain with us as members of our congregation.

At the beginning of this church year, we began to see the fruits of these efforts. Good luck getting out the door after the Sunday service if you were a newcomer without a handful of people welcoming you: listening to your personal story of what brought you to Accotink, and connecting you with others who shared your concerns and callings. This shift in our congregational culture, which seemed to happen overnight, was years in the making. In September 2024 a dozen new members joined the congregation. This first burst of membership growth continued, reaching nearly twenty new members by the end of that year, and as of last Sunday cresting above forty new members this church year. This is truly remarkable!

For context, mainline Protestant churches have been declining in membership for decades, from thirty million sixty years ago to about ten million today. Even among mainline Protestant congregations bucking the trend and managing to grow their membership, the average rate of growth is 4% for congregations with more than 250

members and closer to 2% for smaller congregations. By comparison, *more than 20%* of current AUUC members are new to membership this year. And I know I am being repetitive here, but again, this is truly remarkable!

Prepare Me to Be a Sanctuary

As Unitarian Universalists, we don't believe anyone needs to be a UU to save their soul from eternal damnation or even to be a decent human being who contributes positively to their society. The thing is, *people do need Unitarian Universalism!* This has always been true. And it's more true, so much more true right now!

I'm so glad that we did the work over the past couple of years to become even more welcoming and even more inclusive, so that when the \$#!t hit the fan, when people desperately needed shelter from the storm, we were ready. Ready to welcome them with open arms. We were prepared *to be a sanctuary*. And we will continue to *be a sanctuary*.

Make Me a Revolutionary

And not only that. Our sanctuary will be a base camp for the revolution. We will support and sustain each other, because everyone deserves that. *And* we will support and sustain each other so that we can show up and take action! It hasn't been easy to know how to respond to the onslaught of this new administration. But we at Accotink were well-prepared.

Accotink has had justice-making in its bones since long before I became your minister! (It's an important reason why I chose to become your minister.) We were prepared. We already had thriving programs to support the most vulnerable, from our meal packing for food insecure children to our hosting of a hypothermia shelter for the unhoused for a week in the winter (for two weeks this year!). Through collecting food, clothing, and period packs for immigrants; through Justice DMV; and through our weekly collections in support of local nonprofits (Outreach Organizations), we already had a thriving, multipronged advocacy and social justice program to address needs at the local, state, and Federal levels, with focuses on LGBTQ+ rights, climate justice, immigration justice, racial justice, and more.

Even though that foundation helped ensure we were well-prepared for the current administration, a new group, Accotink Takes Action, has helped us increase our advocacy by assisting AUUC members to sift through the static to contribute: through phone calls to legislators, economic boycotts, and participation in protests.

The Year to Come: Nurturing a Resilient Community

The political deluge has been a tsunami-like inundation that has required all hands on deck. This flood shows little signs of retreating. To weather the ongoing storm is going to take all of us: supporting each other, lifting each other up, encouraging each

other. We must continue to be *a sanctuary*. And we must continue to be *revolutionaries: answering the call to action, seeking justice for all*. And we will continue to answer this call in the coming church year.

To do so, we'll do whatever we can to strengthen the social safety net for our members and our larger community. We'll expand the ways we connect with each other: in fellowship where we just enjoy each other's company, and in gatherings for deep listening where we sustain each other's spirits, choosing hope, again and again.

We'll deepen our theological understanding of Unitarian Universalism so that we have a firm and flexible foundation as we keep our commitment to building and *being a diverse, multicultural Beloved Community where all thrive!*

And we'll continue to show up for justice: joining in coalition and solidarity with others so that together we have the power to *stand upright in the wind* and to turn the tide: transforming the world with liberating love: helping to *bend the long arc of the moral universe towards justice*.

May it be so.

And may we be among those who make it so.

Amein. Amen. Amin. And Blessed Be.

~ Rev. Wm. Levwood ~

Board of Directors' Report

Mission/Purpose: The Board of Directors is responsible for setting church policy, supervising staff, and directing the affairs of the congregation. The Board determines and presents an annual budget to the congregation, approves staff contracts and employment agreements, and reviews and approves long-term rental agreements.

Noteworthy accomplishments: Last year, the Board identified increasing AUUC membership as an important goal. We are happy to report that AUUC gained 36 new members during the 2024-2025 program year, bringing our membership up to 190. This success is due in large part to the energy and activities of our minister, staff, and committees, notably the new buddy initiative overseen by the Membership Development Committee.



Other notable accomplishments:

- Administered congregation vote that landed in favor of supporting a Statement of Conscience on Reproductive Justice.
- Administered congregation vote on going solar, which resulted in congregation approval of the installation of solar panels. The Board secured member loans for the install and balanced repayment with utility savings for no net impact on budget. The Board oversaw the installation of panels in the fall and has been monitoring savings on electricity.
- Initiated process and appointed task force to carry out the first annual ministerial assessment.
- Developed and approved budget for 2024-2025 church year. Board revised budget in September to take into account some additional expenses and a larger surplus from the 2023-2024 church year.
- Facilitated discussions and planning to make improvements to the sanctuary and gallery.
- Adopted a practice that every service contract has a living wage clause.
- Approved the establishment of a Finance Committee and its charter.
- Engaged expert consultants to support cell tower re-negotiations.
- Held a special congregational meeting February 2025 to vote on supporting the ordination of Brenna Kelley, along with the UU Congregation of Rockville.
- Approved 4 AUUC delegates to the 2025 UUA General Assembly.
- Adopted policy on interactions with ICE.
- Held a Spring Retreat in May to review the Board's work over the past year and begin planning for the upcoming year.

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 opportunities are ancillary benefits of the annual campaign.

2025 Pledge Campaign Coordinators: Olivia Tuggle and Julie Schuck, with assistance from Rev. Levwood, Ed Kringer, Mary Kringer, Stan Lichtman, Nancy Melito, Al Stolpe, and Joe Tuggle. Special thanks to Pam Cox, Connie Diamant, Sheilah Dols, and John Hall for their amazing and heartfelt testimonials!!



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Accomplishments/Activities: This year's pledge theme was "You are not alone: Sustaining Hope Together" to recognize the challenges of 2025 and the importance of communities like AUUC. As expressed in our mission statement, the congregation remains committed to being a welcoming and inclusive spiritual home. We are community owners of the church, and as such, it is our responsibility to provide the financial resources to maintain the operational expenses of our ministry. Pledged income is a primary source of funding to support our small team of dedicated staff and cover building expenses.

The pledge campaign kicked off on March 2 and extended through April 20. At the time of this writing, the 2025 pledge campaign has raised \$313,244 through 88 pledges, against a goal of raising \$339K. While we didn't hit our dollar goal for this year, we exceeded last year's pledge total of \$303K (also 88 pledges). We continue to have many congregants enrolled in Direct Deposit, which ensures continuous income throughout the coming fiscal year. During the campaign, we gathered as a community during our Second Sunday potlucks to celebrate AUUC's egg-ceptional qualities! The whole congregation thrives because of the generosity of our members and friends. We thank you once again for a successful pledge campaign.

Program Council

Mission/Purpose: The Program Council (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/representatives of all major committees in the church.

Accomplishments:

- Chair participated in monthly and ad hoc Executive Committee meetings to manage the day-to-day business of the church.
- The Council worked to incorporate AUUC's new Mission Statement into our monthly Council meetings, making sure committees are adhering to the church's mission.
- Chair managed a google drive to store meeting notes, bylaws, policies, procedures, and other documents critical for the Program Council's reference and documentation.
- Council 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.
- Chair has worked with a new Task Force to coordinate and organize committees, groups, advisors, etc.
- Organized a monthly movie night for the congregation.
- Opened up the "Invitation to Generosity" part of each Sunday service to include committee leaders and representatives.



Looking Forward: The Council will continue working with the Executive Council, Board, and committees to support and advance the church's Mission Statement and values.

Auction Team

Mission/Purpose: To raise money for AUUC

Background: AUUC's annual auction has been held nearly every year since the church was established. Members and friends of the church offer up for auction 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 and friends of AUUC get to know each other and have fun experiences, it is very popular.

Co-Chairs: Kumutha Lane, Kate McDevitt



Accomplishments: With no returning members from last year's auction team, this year's co-chairs brought to the 2024 auction a mix of familiar approaches and fresh changes. Playing off the theme of "circles" established in the 2024 pledge campaign "Draw the Circle Wide," this year's auction theme was "Circle 'round for the auction!" And so many in our community did just that. We had a truly international auction event, with remote participants joining us from multiple states and four different countries. Of note: one of our auction items was a handcrafted chalice donated by an individual at another UU congregation.

Timeline:

- August 18: Auction opened for submissions
- September 29: Deadline for items, events, and services to be submitted
- October 19 at 10:30 am: In-person kickoff brunch
- October 19 at noon: Online auction bidding opened
- October 26 at noon: Online auction bidding closed
- October 26 at 3:30 pm: Hybrid live auction

Auction features:

- 190 separate auction entries; 136 were part of the online auction, 51 were part of the live auction, and 3 were live raffle items. Some of these were for single items and services, while many were for multiple seats at events and thus had multiple winners.
- More than 70 donors, some of whom were new to our congregation and first-time auction participants.
- Seven children and youth participated by donating items and/or auctioneering.
- Some events and items were also donated by different church groups, including Green Sanctuary, the Nearly Native Garden, and True Accotink Colors.
- A revision of item categories this year clarified some listings and added new ones.



- Bidders:
 - 2132 total bids were placed during the event
 - 71 different bidders bid on items, and we had more than a dozen first-time bidders this year
- Volunteers: Many hard-working volunteers helped make the event a success by giving advice, providing childcare, creating or sharing promotional art or photos, acquiring and organizing potluck refreshments, giving testimonials/auction pitches, providing event tech support, promoting auction news and advertisements, setting up and cleaning up, running the raffles, auctioneering, and contacting winners.
- Financials: Prior to 2018, the auction results averaged less than \$20,000 annually. Here's the breakdown from 2018 onward:
 - 2018 \$21,841
 - 2019 \$27,217
 - 2020 \$21,468
 - 2021 \$26,570
 - 2022 \$27,680
 - 2023 \$26,244
 - 2024 \$30,696

Looking Forward: The 2025 online auction will run from October 11-18. The live, hybrid auction event will take place the evening of **Saturday, October 18**. The theme this year will most likely be: **Masquerade**. We hope some minor changes to the auction procedures will make the live event more accessible and of shorter duration. We also hope to put into place a formal procedure and timeline for auction fund collection.

Building and Grounds Committee

Mission/Purpose: The Building and Grounds Committee maintains, improves and implements green projects for:

- AUUC buildings,
- Landscaping, and associated systems with the exception of the church gardens (see Gardening and Landscaping Group), and
- The Memorial Garden (see Memorial Ministry Committee).

Members: Dale Howell (chair), Ed Kringer, Don Eckerman, John Burnett, Dean Wanderer, Al Stolpe, Jerry Snyder, Lynn Snyder, Stan Lichtman, Bruce Griffin and Judy Usherson.

Introduction: Ed Kringer, Dean Wanderer and Dale Howell (and others outside the B&G Committee) served on an Infrastructure Task Force created by the Board of Directors in May 2024. The work products of this task force were:

- Documentation of the present state of the building, parking lot and grounds and
- A tactical and strategic plan for maintaining and enhancing them into the future. This plan is a living document that will serve as a roadmap for future church members.

As stated in the 2024 report, the Committee is continually focused on ensuring that no sole individual is the linchpin in the performance of our duties. This is done by openly sharing among all Committee

systems and the other words, to the Committee function member who is up to

Accomplishments: the last year was the system. This system annual electrical The installation was months to approve work didn't start until timely completion.



members all relevant details of church associated support/maintenance. In fullest extent possible for each and knowledge area, there's a backup speed on all current and future projects.

The most significant accomplishment in installation of a roof mounted PV solar is capable of producing all of AUUC's consumption of 39 megawatt hours. delayed by the county taking close to 5 the building permit and even though the December, mild weather facilitated a

Other accomplishments:

- Painted the two largest classrooms in July and August of 2024. Several B&G Committee members and other AUUC members worked on the painting project.
- Developed a Beautification Plan, with the following items completed:
 - Storage shelving was installed in the foyer cloakroom, the hallway closet, and the outdoor closet area.
 - The TV was mounted behind the pulpit, which will make it easier for all congregants to view the service unobstructed.
 - The door between the foyer and the gallery was removed to improve the flow of people in and out of the facility.
- Significant progress was made in the removal of invasive species from the grounds, particularly vines. Bruce Griffin and the Krzos family led much of this effort, and B&G is grateful for their work.
- A video was produced by Steve Meador of FACS that documents some of the energy efficiency improvements made over the last several years by B&G.

- Monthly work days are being scheduled throughout the rest of 2025.

Issues/Concerns: As stated in last year's report, the key concern for the B&G Committee is the lack of new recruits, especially younger volunteers. The average age of the current members is over 70 years. We anticipate that this factor will in the future limit the kind of work that can be performed and how much work can be done at any one time. While B&G is always seeking new members, we are also considering an alternative to using volunteers, i.e., engaging a local handyman as needed to augment our team.

Children and Youth Spiritual Development Committee & Director of Spiritual Development

Director of Spiritual Development: Michele Andersen

Chairperson/Leader: Olivia Tuggle

Committee Members: Julie Schuck, Nancy Davis, and Jessica Larsen. Olivia Tuggle, with the approval of the Board, will be finishing her 3rd two-year term at the end of the next church year (June 2026). Jessica Larsen has agreed to be the Chair Lead for the years 2026-2028.

Accomplishments:

Attendance: The 2024-2025 church year brought about several changes to the role of the Director of Spiritual Development (DSD) and the Children and Youth Spiritual Development Committee (CYSDC). The DSD position was vacant from July 2024 until November 2024, when Michele Andersen became the DSD for 10 hours a week until January 6, when Michele became the DSD for 25 hours a week. During the first half of the year, committee members ran the program on the one-room schoolhouse model. Lessons were built upon the Time for All Ages (TFAA) story used during worship by using crafts, games, and free play time. This helped keep the program running until a DSD could be found. The older children helped out with the younger ones and for the most part it was successful.



It was hard to keep up the Realm attendance during this time though the number of children was relatively stable, with about 10 children and youth present most Sundays. Goals during this time were to increase volunteer involvement and offer support to parents through a Soul Matters Parent Group. Rev. Levwood worked with Rev. Kirkwood from Davies UU in Maryland for the Soul Matters Parent Group, which had on average 6 families participating per month (met on the 2nd Wednesday of the month).

Once Michele began in January, goals were to open the nursery consistently and to offer a separate group for the older youth. This spring we've seen an increase in families' attendance and new families visiting. At current writing, there are 15 facilitators for the nursery, which has been available each week with between 1 and 5 participants, an Elementary group (grades K - 5), which has had participation between 3 and 15 children, and a Youth group (grades 6 - 12), which has had participation of between 3 and 12 youth. Though the groupings were by grade/age, children and youth were free to engage with whichever group they felt comfortable with. A few Kindergarteners went in the nursery on some days, a few 6th graders stayed in the Elementary group and a couple of 4th graders went with the youth. All were made welcome and comfortable, and facilitators were encouraged to support children going back and forth as needed with DSD assistance.

General Program Goals: The DSD and Rev. Levwood, collaborated to present TFAA stories that connected to the theme of the worship service, and the DSD crafted CYSD lessons on those themes loosely using the Soul Matters curriculum. Once a month, the DSD collaborated with the Minister and Music Director to create a Multigenerational Worship service in which children, youth, and adults participated in community building, worship, and activities or crafts

related to the worship theme. Research shows that when we all worship together, children and youth develop a greater sense of belonging to the church and the UU faith. They learn the structure of the service, sing the hymns, and are more willing to take on roles within the service. Children and youth who grow up attending worship are then more likely to continue attending church and participating when they become adults. Worshipers of all ages were provided opportunities to move, to be silent, to create, and to listen. All modalities of learning were incorporated into our multigenerational services so that it could be an enriching experience for all.

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Research has also 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. In addition, monthly “Table Talk” discussion questions (from the Soul Matters Home curriculum) were offered for families to take and use as discussion starters. Resources from the Soul Matters Home curriculum were added to a monthly Family Newsletter that the DSD sent home to all registered families, posted in the All Church “This Week at Accotink” newsletter, and on the AUUC website.

Additional Programming and Activities: The CYSD Chair held several facilitator orientation sessions at the beginning of the church year. These focused on building connection and engagement while centering relationships over class content. The DSD held facilitator and parent presentations about the Philosophy of Spiritual Development at Accotink. Feedback from all these presentations was positive. Participants especially appreciated the focus of classes on “power with” rather than “power over” participating children. Childcare was offered for the in-person presentations.

In late winter, we gauged interest in the **Our Whole Lives (OWL)** program for K-1. A couple of families with 2nd graders were interested in attending, so it was opened up for participation to children in grades K-2. However, only 4 families signed up to participate, which was not enough to run the program this year (a minimum of 6-8 is recommended by OWL trainers). As an alternative, we considered providing “Parents as Sexuality Educators”, a free UUA curriculum. However, due to the political and government unrest of this time, parents and guardians indicated they were feeling overwhelmed and despite their interest decided not to participate.

For the fourth time we were able to do **Trick or Treat for UNICEF**, **Trunk-or-Treat**, and **Easter Egg Hunt** in person. We also held a family movie night, two youth game nights, and an outing to the African American History Museum with youth from Transylvania who were here for a choir tour (one of the youth game nights was to meet them). We are planning a Berry Picking event for all ages in early June, and two youth are planning to go with the DSD and Board President to the **UUA General Assembly** in Baltimore June 19-22.

Children and youth brainstormed social justice projects they care about. This year children focused on bringing food for our **Meal Packs**, and youth focused on collecting food and period products for the Food Justice DMV. Additionally, the youth submitted an Outreach Collection nomination and both groups will vote on the Outreach collections for next year.

Whole Church Culture: We have made some progress in building a Multigenerational Community. Attendance at our multigenerational services and monthly potlucks has increased. Meal Packing has become more welcoming to new visitors since the process was slowed down, positioned as a way to connect and provide a community service, and explained in more detail. The DSD and facilitators have made efforts to introduce visiting children to others their age, which helped visitors feel more welcomed and connected. Children and youth are becoming more involved in worship by participating in services, e.g., the chalice lighting and TFAA. One youth has been controlling the tech for Sunday services, and one youth serves as a worship associate and CYSD helper.

Looking Forward: Build a multigenerational community whose members support one another, engage with all age groups, and have positive relationships with one another. Plan and conduct activities to facilitate this goal, including the following:

- Summer Programs:
 - Nursery/Playgroup
 - Maker Space: opportunities for all ages to build a “solution” project based on a prompt related to our UU values.
 - Youth voted 7 to 5 to do a “Holy Troublemakers and Unconventional Saints” program. Leadership skills (Possibly through “Bringing the Web to Life”) are still desired by many and will be added in the future.
- Fall 2025:
 - Nursery/Playgroup
 - Lego ValUUES for grades K - 5
 - UU Values Challenge for grades 6 - 9
 - OWL for grades 10 - 12
- Winter - Spring 2025:
 - Nursery/Playgroup
 - Lego ValUUES for grades K - 5 adding in Mosaic (Anti-racist curriculum) and other social justice topics
 - Youth Group for grades 6 - 12 with a focus on social justice and anti-racist curriculum or leadership skills as the group decides.
- Other Events:
 - Movie Nights, possible multigenerational book read (UUA Common Read)
 - Elementary get-togethers: play-dates, bowling
 - Youth Requested activities: lock-in, ropes course, game nights
- Program Administration:
 - Create facilitator binders and redo classroom flip boards
 - Review charter, volunteer and family handbook, and safety policies
 - Facilitator training on classroom management (UU style) and accommodating children with unique needs and learning styles.
 - Integrate social justice projects into the year’s curriculum where possible
 - Recruiting more facilitators to accommodate our growing attendance and reduce burden on long-standing volunteers.
 - Revise the “Prayground” to be inclusive of all ages and not detract from the worship experience.

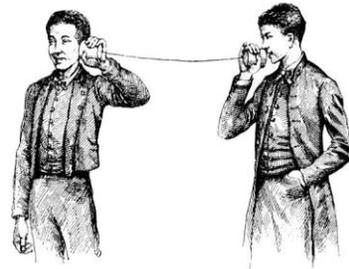
Communications Team

Mission/Purpose: 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. Within the church the Committee promotes and facilitates effective communication with the Board, Council, committees, and the congregation. Outside the church the Team promotes AUUC and its activities that are open to the public and increase Accotink's visibility within the community.

Members: Debbie Cohen (lead), Kate McDevitt, and Lizette Ayala. RW Carney, Office Administrator, lends valuable support to team activities and initiatives.

Activities and Accomplishments: The Communications Team focuses on three key means of sharing information: the AUUC website, social media, and the weekly email newsletter ("This Week at Accotink"). Ongoing responsibilities and activities include:

- Website – Manages the church website in cooperation with the Church Administrator, regularly updating events, activities, and worship-related information, and developing and posting other information as needed. Content is contributed by leadership and members.
- Social Media – 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" – Distributes a weekly email newsletter. With contributions from many members of the church, the Communications Team prepares the weekly email update and distributes it 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 a description of each Sunday's service and the 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 at the request of leadership 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 communications activities are expected to continue throughout the year. Communications initiatives will be refined and adapted as needed to support the ongoing activities and functions of the church.

Finance Committee

Mission/Purpose: The Finance Committee enhances the performance of AUUC's financial management systems to help our congregation achieve its annual and strategic goals. The primary role of the Finance Committee is advisory and monitoring on behalf of AUUC's Board and congregation. The Committee supports the Financial Advisor in that official's role as chief advisor to the Board of Directors, Executive Committee, and Congregation concerning financial matters.



Members:

- Financial Advisor: Tim Schwartz-Watjen, transitioning to Dale Howell for 2025-2026 (pending Congregational vote)
- Treasurer: Ed Cochrane
- Endowment Committee Representative: Jim Girard
- Memorials Committee Representative: Steve Brown
- At Large: Ken Heller, Jill Jones, Julie Schuck (July 2025)
- Board Rep: Jessica Larsen; transitioning off for 2025-2026

Accomplishments:

- Finance and Stewardship Task (FAST) Force: The AUUC Board of Directors hosted two exploratory meetings in early spring 2024 to discuss the possibility of establishing a Finance and Stewardship Committee. Feedback from these meetings indicated that further discussion and research would be helpful, leading the Board to establish the AUUC Finance and Stewardship Task Force (FAST Force) in April 2024.
 - The Task Force Charge, issued by the Board, noted that AUUC lacked a centralized group of volunteers to provide advice about budgets, long-range financial planning, and investments.
 - It also highlighted that AUUC lacks a structure to support planning and leadership transition for key fundraising activities.
- The Charge tasked the FAST Force with reviewing existing AUUC financial/stewardship bylaws, structures, policies, and operations; interview key AUUC members and staff about current financial management practices; benchmark similar-sized congregation(s), and provide recommendations about financial-management goals.
- Most FAST Force members had experience with financial management and/or at least one AUUC finance or stewardship activity. Steve Brown, Ed Cochrane, Don Eckerman, Jim Girard, Jessica Larsen (Board Secretary), Joe Tuggle and Tim Schwartz-Watjen (Board Financial Advisor) served throughout the eight-month period. Thank you to these volunteers!

FAST Task Force Activities: The following activities were conducted by the FAST Task Force from May to November 2024, in accordance with the Charge and a plan they developed and provided to the Board.

- **Review Status Quo:** After FAST Task Force members reviewed AUUC Bylaws and Policy and Procedures documents, they met with key volunteers and staff to understand AUUC's current financial status and operations. The AUUC Treasurer, Bookkeeper, Endowment Committee Chair, Memorial Committee Chair, Administrator, past Auction and Pledge leaders, plus a previous Financial Advisor shared their perspectives.

- **Review UUA Best Practices:** UU Association guidance about financial



management best practices and financial controls was applied to AUUC's organization. FAST Task Force members also reviewed financial policy documents/sample committee charters from the UU Congregation of Charlottesville, VA and the Westport, CT UU congregation.

- **Outreach and Research:** Multiple UU churches were studied to understand how they organize their financial operations. Efforts were focused on congregations similar in size to AUUC. FAST Task Force members met with the Bull Run UU Finance Committee Chair and interviewed the UU Fellowship of Fredericksburg Treasurer. In addition, financial policy and procedures documents and committee charters were obtained from the UU Church of Tallahassee and the UU Church in Reston.

FAST Task Force Report: The FAST Task Force provided the Board with an eight-page report on 21 November 2024. The report included recommendations based on best practices and a sense of what is appropriate for our congregation, given AUUC's specific needs and resources. The report includes over 15 recommendations. Also included are a draft Charter and 10 proposed action items for the new Finance Committee, Board, Financial Advisor and Treasurer. The Finance Committee will enhance procedures to help ensure that the Board receives timely advice about annual budgets and other key financial matters. Members will also conduct long-range (5-10-year) financial planning. In December 2024, the Board approved the Finance Committee Charter, and the FAST Task Force report, which included these recommendations:

- Establish a Finance Committee to support the Financial Advisor in their role as chief advisor to the Board, Executive Committee, and Congregation concerning financial matters. Designated and At Large Finance Committee members will assist the Financial Advisor with preparing an annual budget, and develop a long-range financial plan, based on Board-approved vision and priorities.
- Execute the annual budget by adopting an enhanced division of labor between AUUC's Financial Advisor (Board member elected by the congregation), Treasurer (volunteer appointed by the Board), and Bookkeeper (paid staff member). The Finance Committee will propose updates to AUUC's financial management policies and procedures, and modifications to the bylaws.
- The Board will revisit AUUC Finance Committee responsibilities after one year and consider including additional stewardship activities at that time. Additional recommendations were intended to contribute to the following AUUC Board goals;
 - Enhance financial oversight by the Board
 - Improve financial account record-keeping/reporting
 - Adhere to appropriate UUA-recommended financial controls
 - Institutionalize financial management policies and procedures
 - Increase utilization of AUUC's staff bookkeeper for routine tasks
 - Improve collaboration between financial management and stewardship activities



Looking Forward:

- After AUUC's Board chartered the Finance Committee, At Large members were recruited from the congregation. Articles were published in the newsletter that summarized the FAST Task Force and sought volunteers to serve in At Large

- positions. Current committee members include four designated positions (specified in the charter) plus three At Large Members (open to any congregation member).
- During the committee's first meeting on 16 March, At Large members were introduced to key documents: Finance Committee Charge, FAST Task Force Report, and AUUC's outdated financial management policy and procedures. AUUC's financial accounts were also described; General Fund, Reserve and Depreciation Funds, Endowment and Memorial Funds, plus mortgage and cell tower lease/easement.
 - Key topics going forward include;
 - Investment options for lump sum payment from possible cell tower easement,
 - Updates to AUUC's Financial Policies and Procedures document,
 - Finance Committee operations, member roles, future plans and activities
 - Implementing recommendations on strategic financial planning and other topics

Gardening and Landscaping Group

Mission: Maintain and improve landscaping of the Church grounds to provide a safe, environmentally supportive, and attractive place to visit and worship.

Members: Kristina Watts, Anamaria Viveros-Long, Suzanne Doherty, Bruce Griffin, Al Stolpe, Judy Usherson, Evelyn Rinella, Pamela Orr, Eric Caldwell

Accomplishments:

- Hosted two garden workdays, fall and spring, where volunteers from the AUUC community joined us to maintain the garden. In the fall we had 10-15 people help, and in the spring the rain kept people away so there were only about four.
- Held weekly “Weeding Wednesdays” from spring to fall, in the evenings, when group members (and anyone who is interested) can come to work on various garden projects.
- The main focus this past year has been mainly on ridding the garden beds of invasive species: oriental bittersweet, porcelain berry, crown vetch, daylily, Italian arum, multiflora rose are particularly problematic.
- On May 15, 2025 we had a visit from Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District staff for an inspection of the meadow, as per the requirements of the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) which provided funding for the project. The inspectors noted many native plants thriving, and no major issues were identified. Their full report with additional tips and advice is still forthcoming. We will hold a workday in the fall to remove as much as possible of the many invasive species that were identified.
- In May 2024, Youth AUUC Member Owen Krzos completed his Youth Conservation Leadership Institute project with an invasive species removal and native planting project near the church playground. He showed about 10 volunteers how to identify and remove invasive plant species from the local forest, and examples of tree damage caused by some of the species. His group then planted native plants in the areas cleared of invasives.
- We offered three Auction Items this year to promote interest in the garden. Our Spring Breakfast in the Garden was a success, providing a light meal over discussion and an educational tour of the garden. It was a treat to see the early spring ephemerals like trout lily and Virginia bluebells. Another Breakfast in the Garden is planned for fall. For the third item, winner Dale Howell will be leading the renovation of the sign garden with a design of his choosing. This work is planned to begin with construction of a stone wall in the late summer and installation of plants in fall.
- Anamaria, Suzanne, and Kristina have been working on updating the map of the garden, which identifies all trees and bushes as well as patches of perennials.
- Bruce Griffin continues to control vines, invasive shrubs, and brush in the Nearly Native Garden and throughout the rest of the property, this year focusing on areas surrounding 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 fountain (keeping it filled with water), the plants surrounding the fountain, and the potted plants at the front of the church for a year-round visually pleasing effect.
- Throughout the year we continue to consult with master native gardener Leah Lamba-Skidmore to advise on projects such as tree pruning and plant choice in all areas of the property.
- The pollinator/butterfly garden bed, installed last summer with milkweed, coreopsis, obedient plant, and mountain mint is thriving. In fact, a monarch was spotted laying an egg on the milkweed in May 2025!

Looking Forward:

- Complete the renovation of the sign garden to ensure an attractive entrance to the church property, which also demonstrates our values through use of beneficial native plants.
- Continue to remove invasives and transition to native plants as possible. Aiming for at least 70% of garden biomass to consist of native plants, consistent with research that has shown that this amount is needed to support wildlife.
- Work with new member Eric Caldwell, a landscape architect, to develop a “master plan” for the garden to ensure an intentional look.

Green Sanctuary Committee

Mission/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.

Chairperson: Mary Rose Janya

Members: Alisa Roman, Mark Roman, Dale Howell, Evelyn Rinella, Lisa Sosna, Judy Usherson-Quast, Dean Wanderer, and Marsha White.

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

Accomplishments/Activities:

- A worship service entitled “Climate Optimism: Little Pockets of Joy” was held on April 27 for Earth Day. It was planned by the Committee and Rev. Levwood. Sermon by Brenna Kelley. Music performed by Zak Sandler. *Swimmy*, the Story for All Ages, was offered by Michele Anderson with an art project from the Committee.
- After significant work by Dale Howell, Ed Kringer, Lisa Sosna, and Dean Wanderer, solar panels were installed in December 2024. We received a \$10,000 grant from Fairfax County, and rebate funds from the Inflation Reduction Act are pending. The Committee met nearly weekly to work on this and other plans to “green” AUUC.
- We hosted a movie night on March 22 with supper and discussion. The movie was *Feeding Tomorrow*. “Up against a broken food system suffering from ecosystem destruction, climate change, health epidemics, and inequality, a brave group of visionary leaders in agriculture, healthcare and education work to build a more just regenerative, and resilient system in their local communities.” ([Feeding Tomorrow | Prime Video](#))
- Green Sanctuary is active in local and state environmental organizations including Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions (FACS), Virginia Interfaith Power & Light (VIP&L), 350.org, and Wild Virginia. We continue to advertise (through the Communications Team) meetings and actions to facilitate change.
- The Green Sanctuary nominated FACS for our Outreach collection in April. FACS was selected by congregational vote.
- We actively participated as a member of the FACS Advocacy and HUB Teams, meeting with elected officials and publicizing action items to our congregation.



- We regularly attended the Northern Virginia Soil and Water District's Green Breakfasts, 350.org meetings, and other meetings and events.
- We provided one sustainable living, eco-friendly sunflower-themed basket for AUUC's annual auction. Items included were: sunflower butter; chocolate covered sunflower cups; a selection of various edible sunflower seeds; sunflower notecards; a copper bird feeder with a sunflower and dragonfly that doubles as a solar light; bird seed for the feeder; two packets of sunflower seeds for planting; 5 pairs of deluxe gardening gloves; 4 sunflower cloth napkins; a silk sunflower center piece in a Mason jar; 3 cloth kitchen towels; 2 reusable grocery bags; and a LEGO-style sunflower to build.
- We continue to have discussions with Rev. Lev on integrating earth day and Green Sanctuary priorities into everyday living throughout the church year.
- Due to the installation of solar panels and other energy efficient measures, we have met the criteria for Next Gen Energy Star. The metrics are tracked by the Department of Energy. This is a significant achievement for our church community, and we intend to continue making improvements in the future.

Membership Development Committee

Mission/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.

Committee Members:

- Chair: John Long
- Greeter and Welcome Team: Anamaria Long, Liz Reed
- Administrative Records and Report Team: John Long, RW Carney - AUUC Office Administrator (*ex officio*)
- Connections and Engagement Team: Dotty Smith, Suzanne Doherty
- Members at Large: Chris Fuller, Stan Lichtman

Membership and Attendance Growth: AUUC membership grew from 170 last church year to 186 this year. This included an addition of 38 new members and a loss of 22 (3 deaths, 6 moves, and 13 dropped). The number of households grew from 115 last year to 122 this year. Likewise, weekly adult in-person attendance on Sundays rose from 52 last year to 67 this year. Zoom attendance remained fairly constant at about 20 connections each week.

Accomplishments/Activities:



"But, apart from the pews, the sermon, the hymns, the coffee and, 'all that praying', you'd come again?"

- **The Greeters and Welcome Team** coordinated the Sunday greeters' volunteers, processed the contact information in order to: (1) enter the information in Realm, (2) add addresses to the "This Week" email list, (3) send welcome letters, and (4) print nametags. They also monitored which visitors return to pick up their name tags.
- **Connections and Engagement Team** focused on helping visitors and members become more engaged in AUUC activities by making connections with other AUUC members and groups. They organized periodic new member welcome celebrations to introduced new members to the congregation. They helped connect new members with current AUUC committees and affinity groups by means of questionnaires about skills and by conducting periodic connections fairs. They developed a newcomer orientation session and coordinated regular "Starting Point" sessions. They also monitored participation of long-time members to encourage reengagement – or to remove them from the membership list if warranted.
- **Administrative Records and Report Team** maintained the membership records of AUUC. They entered visitors' contact information into Realm and monitored their status from one-time visitor to repeat visitor to member. They reviewed the membership data base to assure that full contact and participation data were included. They provided reports to the Board, Executive Committee, and Program Council on visitor flow, membership growth, and other topics as requested. They certified the number of members for the annual report to the Unitarian Universalist Association. Two members of this team serve as full members of the Membership Committee.

Memorial Ministry Committee

Mission/Purpose: The AUUC Memorial Ministry Committee provides ongoing support of the congregation by assisting 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, 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 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.

Memorial Ministry Committee Chair: Don Eckerman

Memorials Fund Treasurer: Steve Brown

Accomplishments/Activities:

- Two individuals were placed in the Accotink Memorials.

Oliver Holmes Easterwood Marjorie E. Runge

- In November 2024 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.
- Made two appeals to the congregation for donations to the Memorial Fund to help ensure that the Fund remains adequate for its purpose of making the Accotink Memorials self-supporting.
- Proposed by-law amendment that was adopted at 2024 annual meeting. The by-law amendment established 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.
- With AUUC Board of Directors' concurrence, established a Memorial Fund account with the UU Common Endowment Fund. The bulk of the Memorial Fund assets were transferred to the UUCEF.
- Drafted a revised committee charter that has been submitted for Board approval.

Rentals

Mission/Purpose: The AUUC Rentals Advisor 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 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 Rentals Advisor. Note: As of 2024 the Rental Committee is no longer a “Committee,” but rather is represented by an Advisor.

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; 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

Accomplishments: The Office Administrator successfully negotiated a lease with a new tenant for 2024 -2025: the RJ Dance Company. For their business AUUC will gross an additional \$22,500 and net \$19,500 for the current year.

Current tenants (long term):

- AT&T cell tower
- Spring-Mar Cooperative Preschool
- Just Breathe Tai Chi Classes
- Peruvian Dance Group
- RJ Dance Co.

Rental Income 2021 - 2025 (approximate)

Source	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
AT&T Cell Tower (budgeted & actual)	\$ 23,805	\$ 23,805	\$ 23,805	\$23,805
Other rental income (budgeted)	\$22,000	\$22,000	\$22,000	\$22,000
Other rental income (actual)	\$22,000	\$ 24,399	\$ 22,789	\$25,877 (to date)

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

Mission/Purpose: Each year Sacred Wheel conducts 8 holiday rituals that revolve around the natural year's cycle of the seasons, upholding and celebrating the natural world - one of the pillars of our spiritual practice as UUs. With each seasonal ritual we strive to provide a meaningful connection with the natural world and with each other through three elements: education, meaning, and fun. We also present additional congregational services as requested by the minister.

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

- Litha (Summer Solstice), June 21
- Lammas/Lughnasadh, August 1
- Mabon (Fall Equinox), September 21
- Samhain (Halloween), October 31
- Yule (Winter Solstice), December 21
- Imbolc, February 1
- Ostara (Spring Equinox), March 21
- Beltane (May Day), May 1

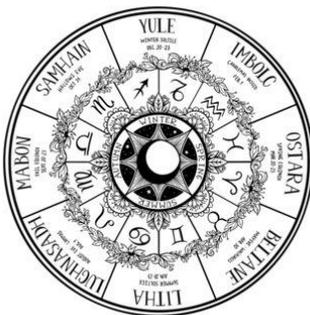


Facilitator: Nancy Melito, co-facilitator Sheilah Dols

Members: Sacred Wheel consists of one main and one co-Facilitator, and up to 30 members who are contacted through email and church announcements regarding upcoming events.

Accomplishments/Activities:

- For Sacred Wheel the church year begins with Litha and ends with Beltane, and starting with this past February, we also held monthly drumming circles in the sanctuary after service, generally on the third Sunday of the month.
 - Our monthly drum circles were successfully attended and are growing, with as many as 15 participants. We are drawing from the wider community as well as Accotink, being informal without any pressure to “be good at it.”
 - This year we presented a congregational Lammas service as well as congregational services for Samhain (Halloween) and Yule (Winter Solstice) as expected.
 - Lammas, as is now Sacred Wheel’s yearly activity, raised over \$200 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 a congregational service, as usual. During the service the children collected money for UNICEF, and all were invited after the service to a Trunk or Treat party outside 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! The Halloween/Samhain service and party was well received by the congregation.



- For the first time Sacred Wheel's 2024 Yule service featured a skit performed by the children and youth. It was so well received by the congregation that this coming Yule we plan to involve the children and youth again! This may represent a permanent change in Yule services.
- This year's Beltane (May Day) was the product of Sheilah Dols, Jenn Carlson and partner Eddie Pasa, and Whitney Purdy, held after the church service May 4th, and was held indoors due to rain, but still featured a Maypole.

Looking Forward: Sacred Wheel plans to continue presenting seasonal rituals open to all individuals and families, including people from outside of the church, and to provide the congregational services for Halloween and Yule. We also plan to continue our monthly drumming sessions.

Social Justice Committee

Mission/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.

Chairperson or POC: John Peterson

Members: Shelley Brosnan, Jenn Carlson, Pam Cox, Nancy Davis, Pete Fontneau, Kate Heilig, Ed Kringer, Mary Kringer, Jessica Larsen, Rev. Levwood, Warren McLaine, John Peterson, Liz Prescott, Suzy Porth, Dotty Smith, Joe Tuggle, Dean Wanderer, Elizabeth White, and Marsha White.

Accomplishments/Activities:

- Social Justice supported and participated in protests and boycotts to counter the many cruel and often illegal initiatives of the Trump Administration. This activity, known as **Accotink Takes Action**, is spearheaded by two long-term SJ activists who announce actions and organize transportation and meetup locations for protests in this area. The April 5th Hands-Off protest included over 30 Accotinkers; 22 folks were in the Accotink Takes Action group.
- In collaboration with AUUC youth, the Committee continued to collect food and other items for **Food Justice DMV** to distribute to immigrants in need. We also discussed federal and state advocacy related to immigration. The youth are still enthusiastic about collecting sanitary supplies and continued the collection beyond the original end date.
- By the conclusion of the church year, the Social Justice Committee will have 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)**. As of 2/28/2025, \$326,167.65 has been donated to community organizations that support our UU values with current monthly collections averaging \$1,701, an increase of \$108/month from last year.
- Throughout the church year, the Social Justice Committee and AUUC congregants supported **Halley Elementary School** in Lorton, VA through the *No Child Goes Hungry/Accotink* meal pack program by providing weekly meal packs delivered by Halley counselors to 35 students who are food insecure (items included: juice, milk, breakfast bar, oatmeal, tuna or chicken salad, canned pasta, dried pasta, salty snack, fruit, and ramen noodles). This church year we held 10 monthly meal pack assemblies, from August through May, assembling about 140 packs each month. This is a direct hands-on multigenerational service activity for the whole church and is much beloved by us and greatly appreciated by our partner school. NCGH/Accotink began in the 2017-18 school year. Additional support to Halley Elementary included hand-knit hats, gently used books from our spring book drive, and mentors for at-risk children.



- Throughout the church year, members of the church, sponsored by the Social Justice Committee, 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. Our BH liaisons attend liaison meetings to keep up-to-date with BH programs and needs.
- In 2024-25, the Racial Justice Committee merged its meetings and activities back into the Social Justice Committee, while maintaining racial justice as a key focus area. The committee supported the church's Get-Out-the-Vote efforts by sending postcards to marginalized communities with lower voter turnout. It backed the September 29 **VOICE Youth & Family Behavioral Health Assembly** and publicized the event with the Fairfax County NAACP. The committee will again participate in the Fairfax NAACP's annual June cleanup of a historic African American cemetery at Bull Run Regional Park in preparation for the Juneteenth celebration to be held there. We supported UUSJ in advocating for Voting Rights Advancement and Environmental Justice for All.
- The committee sponsored an outreach collection for **Mamatoto Village**, raising \$1,833.36. Lastly, we prepared a discussion for a movie night with True Accotink Colors featuring The Wiz, which was postponed due to weather and will take place in the next church year.
- For the 22nd year, AUUC partnered with the **Burke/Fairfax CROP Hunger Walk** on discussion for a movie night with True Accotink Colors featuring The Wiz, which was postponed due to weather and will take place in the next church year.
- This year, the annual observance of the **Season for Non-Violence** was held. Accotink's youth read aloud pre-selected quotes at the chalice lighting during the beginning of Sunday services during February, March, and early April.
- Accotink UU Church was privileged to help host 40 members of the **Transylvanian Unitarian Youth Choir** in the Washington DC area from April 11th - April 15, 2025. Choir members and their adult chaperones were picked up at Dulles IAP and stayed in area UU church members' and friends' homes in Northern Virginia, DC, and Maryland. AUUC members and youth hosted a game night and pizza party at AUUC for half of the group (the other half were hosted by Cedar Lane UUC). Some Accotinkers attended the group's area concert and dinner at the UU Church of Arlington and a few youth joined the choir on their visit to the African American Museum in DC. AUUC member and Director at the UUA Global Connections Office, Rev. Morgan McLean, co-organized the trip (which included many more stops on the east coast for the choir to sing and visit while staying with members of UU churches
- AUUC participated in the CROP Walk on November 3. Eighteen faith communities and community organizations including 265 walkers started at Burke Presbyterian Church, walked to Knollwood Community Church and returned. Accotink's contingent included 17 people, one dog and one teddy bear; together they raised \$1,410 of the total of \$29,534 and contributed food to ECHO to support individuals with food insecurity here and abroad. Church World Service, CROP walk's national sponsor, has been severely impacted by Trump Administration U.S. AID funding cuts. Planning for the November 2, 2025 walk is underway and the team sign-up is open. Early contributions will help keep CWS's work ongoing.
- For the 14th year, the Social Justice Committee supported Fairfax County by hosting a **hypothermia shelter** (two weeks this year) where we provided home-cooked dinners, snacks, hats, gloves, toiletries, and other amenities, as well as a warm/dry place to stay. Our



children created welcome signs and kids ages 10 and up were able to assist in serving guests.

- Each year, the Social Justice Committee provides 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, encouraging participation, and receiving the schools' recipient names and information. A fourth AUUC member was added to the team serving as SPA representatives to three high schools. Fairfax County is unique in recognizing peace-making at the high school level through this program. 28 of the 30 schools announced Peace Award recipients this school year. Accotink is one of the original (from 2007) sponsors, and is now one of the 18 sponsors - local nonprofits that support the Student Peace Awards with an annual financial contribution. This year AUUC's reps mounted a display about the Peace Awards in the public display case at Burke Centre Public Library.
- From June through mid-September, our congregation was encouraged by the Social Justice Committee to support the **Mawlat Upper Primary School** in northeast India's Khasi Hills by sponsoring their students. Our donations gives Mawlat students school supplies and books, and also helps defray the costs of a protein at 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.
- In addition to these direct educational and service activities, the Social Justice Committee 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 and contacted numerous legislators/staffers promoting our UU values by writing letters & emails, making phone calls, and participating in virtual meetings.
- AUUC volunteers have written over 10,000 postcards over the past five years. To support Voting Rights, AUUC volunteers wrote 2,916 Get Out the Vote postcards through **Reclaim our Vote**. We wrote to people in Florida, North Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia's Prince Williams County.
- Other advocacy activities included:
 - Providing opportunities for witnessing, such as monthly demonstrations at the NRA, and other venues.
 - Providing recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month (April) with an outdoor display of pinwheels and a sign in the nearly native garden and publicity in This Week at Accotink.
- The Social Justice Committee is integrated into other areas of the church as well:
 - A SJC member serves on the Children and Youth Spiritual Development Committee (CYSDC) to coordinate plans and welcome our youth/children into our various social justice activities. The SJC member has worked closely with the DSD to organize the children's book collection according to UU values and make them accessible to AUUC members, friends, and families. This year, we supported the youth's nomination of a 2025-26 outreach collection recipient.
 - The SJC chair regularly attends the Program Council meetings.

Looking forward: Work closely with the CYSDC to support their interests and collaborate on social justice activities.

True Accotink Colors

Mission/Purpose:

- Provide opportunities for church members and friends to advocate for, support, and celebrate LGBTQ+ organizations and individuals
- Fulfill all requirements and actions needed to annually renew AUUC's welcoming congregation status with the UUA
- Facilitate LGBTQ+-related educational opportunities and discussions for our congregation

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

Accomplishments:

- Successfully completed our committee charter and elected officers for the upcoming church year
- Renewed our Welcoming Congregation status with the UUA by completing the necessary annual requirements
- Led a Sunday Service honoring National Coming Out Day and sharing our experiences of being seen
- Hosted LGBTQ+ movie night events and facilitated after-movie discussions
- Led an after-service discussion about pronouns
- Provided congregation with pride flags and larger, more visible pronoun pins
- 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
- With Racial Justice Committee, co-hosted monthly Banned Book Club discussions
- Hosted AUUC's annual Pride Picnic ("Come Together" 1960s theme)
- Continued AUUC's annual Friendsgiving tradition
- Invited congregation members to attend our local Transgender Day of Remembrance event with small group of congregation members; provided some refreshments as well as heart-shaped transgender flag stickers to all in attendance
- Worked with and financially supported Transgender Education Association (TGEA) including hosting an annual, successful Pie-Off fundraiser event
- Added books to the church libraries and maintained the adult library to handle the cataloging of new donations and regularly rotating featured books
- Supported the church by offering two items and two events in the annual services auction, holding a raffle at the Pride Picnic, and soliciting donations during other events
- Organized a group of walkers to join with those from other UUs to participate in the World Pride Parade in Washington, DC



Looking Forward: We are committed to:

- Continuing the work to maintain our annual Welcoming Congregation status with UUA
- Hosting seasonal movie nights, social events, and discussions
- Maintaining the church adult library
- Continuing and expanding our relationship with TGEA
- Leading at least one Sunday service each year

Worship Associates

Mission/Purpose: 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 the congregation.

Members: Jenn Carlson (Chair), Connie Diamant, Sheilah Dols, Charli Hernandez-White, Wren Kahle, Paulette Lichtman Panzer, Warren McLaine, Nancy Melito, Milton Nash, Moira Paz Paa, Judy Robison, Kristina Watts

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



Accomplishments:

- Worship Associates continued to innovate and support a variety of services and styles with lay and other ministers. We have held eight services led by the congregation, five pulpit swaps with guest ministers and three services led by Sacred Wheel.
- 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 committee includes four youth members who regularly contribute.
- Our Zoom Worship Managers have run each service with aplomb, fearlessly adapting to the technology and demands of ever-changing services, videos, and formats.
- Every month members meet to discuss how to keep services fresh and troubleshoot concerns. This time is also used for personal and group development of our capacity to deliver worship to our congregation.

Looking forward:

- The Worship 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.