

Albany Unitarian Universalist ANNUAL REPORT

Part I: Annual Meeting Materials



2024-2025

First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany

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A Welcoming Congregation

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ANNUAL MEETING
of the
First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany
Sunday, May 18, 2025

Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Words for Gathering
3. Appointments
 - Parliamentary
 - Timekeeper
 - Quorum/Vote Counters
4. Rules of Procedure
 - Review online and in-person
 - Adoption
5. Approval of Agenda
6. Approval of Annual Meeting Minutes (May 19, 2024)
7. Nominating Committee Report and Election
 - Motion and vote to approve Ballot for uncontested positions
 - Ballot collection
8. President's Report
9. Treasurer's Report and Presentation to Adopt the 2025-26 Budget
 - Motion and Vote to Approve Proposed Budget
10. New Business
 - Election results - Nominating Committee
 - Other new business
11. Adjournment

ALBANY UU POLICY ON CONGREGATIONAL MEETING RULES of PROCEDURE

Modified for Annual Meeting on May 18, 2025

I. Rules of Procedure

The meeting will be run using The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedures (formerly known as the Sturgis Code of Parliamentary Procedure.)

After the meeting has been called to order, the president shall appoint the following: quorum and vote counters, a parliamentarian, and a timekeeper.

Next, the Rules of Procedure shall be submitted for approval, after allowing amendments to the Rules from the floor or suspension of the Rules by a majority vote.

Next, the Agenda shall be submitted for approval.

A. Rules of Procedure for Presentation

- i. The person or committee that prepared a resolution or motion on the agenda for congregational vote shall make a supporting presentation limited to 10 minutes.
- ii. If there is a minority or dissenting opinion, the spokesperson for the opposition shall make a presentation, also limited to 10 minutes.
- iii. **Online:** Those wishing to speak shall indicate in the Chat, COMMENT or QUESTION, followed by their name. Anyone participating by phone shall press *9 to be recognized.

B. Rules of Procedure for Discussion In-Person and Online

- i. **In-person:** Those wishing to speak shall form a line behind either the PRO or CON microphone station, consistent with their views.
- ii. **Online:** Those wishing to speak shall indicate PRO or CON, followed by their name, in the Chat. Anyone participating by phone shall press *9.
- iii. The chair will recognize the speaker next in line, alternating from in-person to online.
- iv. No person may speak for more than 3 minutes on any one item.
- v. No one may speak more than once on an item as long as someone else is ahead in line.
- vi. When there are no speakers, the discussion may be closed.
- vii. After the initial presentation, the discussion time for each item requiring a vote shall be 15 minutes. After 15 minutes, a motion shall automatically be made: "Shall discussion be extended for fifteen minutes?"

C. Rules of Procedure for Motions Regarding the Budget

Motions to modify the budget must result in a balanced budget.

II. Pre-Meeting Educational Efforts

Resolutions, bylaws, budget changes, or other non-routine matters being brought to a congregational meeting shall be presented in writing in advance of the meeting and accompanied by brief explanations. A brief summary of opposing arguments shall also be given in writing if there is an opposing view.

Furthermore, there shall be ample opportunity to conduct pre-meeting discussions to educate the congregation and for congregation members to ask questions and seek clarification from the resolution authors. Such pre-vote meetings shall take place online, in person, or in brief sessions incorporated in regularly scheduled committee or team meetings.

Minutes of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany,
Annual Meeting – Sunday, May 19, 2024

President Molly Daniels called the meeting to order at 12:03 pm with 66 participants in attendance.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, our meeting was offered in a multi-platform arrangement. Those who were comfortable were welcome to attend in person and others were welcome attend via zoom meeting. A quorum of the members, Article II, Section 2 of the Bylaws (adopted January 10, 2016) provides that persons who are eligible to vote and hold office after signing the book and becoming active members.

Reverend Lynn Ashley opened the meeting with gathering words.

Appointments

Parliamentarian	Karen Kauffman
Time-Keeper	Randy Rosette
Quorum/Vote Counters	Chuck Manning

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Sandy Stone, seconded by Sharon Babala, passed.

Adoption/Rules of Procedure

Rules of Procedure governed by Albany UU’s Policy on Congregational Meetings. (Molly Daniels announced that #5 of the Rules of Procedure dealt with adopting Principle #8 which was from last year’s meeting.)

Molly Daniels made a motion to adopt the rules of procedure on Albany UU’s Congregational meetings as listed in the meeting materials. Motion made by Cathy DeMille, seconded by Steve Moscovitz, passed.

No voting by zoom this year so no need to review zoom voting procedure.

Nominating Committee Report presented by Reese Satin

Satin thanked the 10 people who stepped up to serve. Satin explained the high number of vacancies was due to people resigning, people choosing to not run for a second-year term, people being term limited and because one member will be vice president. Satin explained the rank choice voting. Satin pointed out that the democratic process requires 3 things: first, you need people willing to run, second, a committee willing to find the people, and third, you need a congregation willing to show up and vote.

President's Report to the Congregation

Molly Daniels provided a verbal presentation of the Board of Trustees, President's Report. The full text of the report is as follows-

Board of Trustees, President's Report

Officers:

Molly Daniels, President

Jan McCracken, Vice President

Maria Phillips, Treasurer

Laura Churchill, Secretary

Trustees: Mike Myers, Chuck Manning, Randy Rossette, Dawn Dana

Ex-Officio non-voting members: Revs. Linda Hoddy, Lynn Ashley, Ministers; Rev. Margret O'Neill, Contract Consultant on Transition

Our Vision, Our Touchstone

Three years ago, the congregation adopted the following vision:

Albany Unitarian Universalist will be an inclusive, welcoming congregation. Our sacred work is to lift hearts, broaden minds, and do justice in the world, in service of building beloved community.

The Albany UU vision statement guides the dialogue we undertake and the decisions we make as the Board of Trustees.

Eighth Principle

Two years ago, this congregation overwhelmingly approved adoption of the Eighth Principle. The Board continues to be committed to actively furthering the goal of dismantling racism and other oppressions within our institutions and ourselves. The BOT participated with the Inclusivity Team and the BIPOC Racial Healing Team to respond to concerns shared within the congregation regarding the handling of racist actions, words, and reactions. There is still much work to be done as leaders, individuals and as a congregation.

The BOT, Ministries and Operations Team (MOT) and Inclusivity Team agreed to do a common read of Mistakes and Miracles. The Inclusivity Team has agreed to sponsor the read, which will be open to the entire congregation. This book was a common read done by the Program for Children and Youth and was strongly recommended by them as they have found it very helpful in their work. We hope as many of you as possible will join us in this common read and small group discussions in Fall 2025 to really look at how we can move our congregation toward multiculturalism.

In addition, the BOT has engaged Hope for Us, a UUA consultative group that will be working with leaders in the congregation to address conflict and strengthen our skills in handling difficult situations in a more effective and healing manner.

Minister Transition

In January 2023 Sam Trumbore announced his retirement effective the end of the church year after 24 years of service as our minister. The Board set to work, notifying the UUA Transitions Office and starting the process of engaging an Interim Minister to serve for a two-year period after Sam's retirement while we do our search for a called minister. The Board of Trustees appointed an Interim Minister Search Team (Chair, Heidi Newberg and Jaye Holly, Mike Myers, Geoff Abbas, Paula Brewer) and charged them with the following:

Having considered and selected individuals to represent different experiences and perspectives within the congregation, the Board of Trustees charges the Interim Minister Search Committee with educating and communicating with the congregation and the board regarding the process of selecting an Interim Minister, creating and submitting a profile to the UUA that reflects who Albany UU is, what we are looking for in an interim minister and what our challenges and strengths are. The Interim Minister Search Committee is responsible for screening the matched Interim Minister candidates, interviewing preferred candidates, and completing references for any final candidates. The Committee is then tasked with making a recommendation to the Board of Trustees for hiring.

In May of 2023, at the emergency congregational meeting called by the Board of Trustees, the congregation unanimously authorized the Board of Trustees to engage an Interim Minister. The Interim Minister search through the UUA was not successful in finding a match last year. The Interim Minister Search Committee reviewed several contract minister applications and held interviews. Ultimately, the search committee and the Board of Trustees engaged the Interim Ministry Team of Reverend Linda Hoddy, Reverend Dr. Lynn Ashley and UUA Consultant, Reverend Dr. Margret O'Neill. We are grateful for Reverends Lynn and Linda for their willingness to come out of retirement to share the role of Interim Minister and to Rev. Margret for her work helping us organize and facilitate a strong Transition Team to help us through this transition time. We have been exposed to other ways of doing things, identified areas that need focus and started the work in restructuring how we get the work done to keep things moving smoothly.

The Board has worked with the Interim Minister Team to identify areas that need focus in our interim period to prepare us for the long-term goal of finding a called minister. The Board voted on and approved the Transition team members using the nominations collected by congregation members. The appointed team was: Ireta London, Betsey Miller, Jon Newell, Lea N'ko Ryman, Pascelle Saint Laurent (has since stepped down due to other priorities), Stephanie Saunders, Peggy Sherman, and Todd Thomas.

The congregation has engaged with the transition process by attending workshops led by Rev. O'Neill and the transition team and participating in the transition listening circles in small groups and providing online feedback. More than 115 members and friends participated in the listening circles, which included our Youth Group. Thank you to the transition team for the work you are doing to listen to, collect the information and report-out your findings.

With strong guidance by the Interim Transition Team, and support from the UUA Transition Office (Director Keith Kron), the decision to engage a two-year Interim Minister was made by the Board. They selected a new Interim Minister Search Team this spring. Heidi Newberg (Chair), Randy Rosette, Michael Hornsby, Zoe Hutchins, and Laurie Beberwyck. This Team asked for feedback from the congregation prior to submitting the application and the updated profile to the UUA for the Interim Search process. At the time of this report being distributed, the team has completed the process of interviewing candidates for the position. We hope to have an update at the Annual Meeting very soon regarding the outcome of the process this year. Thank you to the Interim Minister Search Team for their work on this process.

Governing Efficiency

The Board continues to clarify and differentiate the roles between the Board of Trustees (BOT) and Ministries and Operations Team (MOT) as we learn and grow into our commitment to the process of policy governance. The BOT and the MOT had a joint meeting this winter to continue our commitment of improving communication between the teams and working on ensuring transparency for the whole congregation. These efforts have improved coordination between the teams and decreased duplication of efforts and confusion in roles. The teams are committed to continuing these efforts in shared leadership.

Policy Book Work

The Policy Committee (appointed by the Board) has drafted and collected feedback on numerous policies for committees, teams and functions in the congregation. This foundation of work has been very helpful to the BOT as we review these drafts and make further revisions. We have approved a new personnel policy and have a prioritized list of other policies on the docket for review and approval.

The Pandemic Aftermath

The Board continues to be committed to keeping a multi-platform model for services and Board meetings. The Board authorized COVID Response Team continues to meet periodically as needed to provide

guidance and updates. We continue to provide two designated mask-only sections, one in the balcony and one on the main floor, for those who wish to attend in person but would like to maintain the added security that masking provides.

It has been heartwarming to gather virtually and in person and continue reconnecting with each other and start bringing back traditional activities. Our homecoming service in September of 2023, for example, had more than 200 in attendance!

Thank You

We are grateful to and thankful for Chuck Manning and Mike Myers who have agreed to continue on the Board for a second term. Having continuity with the work we are doing right now will be very helpful. Thank you to the whole BOT for your dedication and commitment to serving the congregation during this pivotal time of transition.

Respectfully submitted,

Molly Daniels, President

End of President's Report

Molly Daniels is ending her 3-year term as President. Jan McCracken thanked Molly Daniels for her leadership and Daniels received a standing ovation. McCracken reviewed Daniels' qualities as a leader including her open heart and open mind, listening with her heart and discerning with her mind. Reviewed some of Daniels' previous roles including teaching RE, RE council, RE council chair, and Secretary on BOT. Daniels was willing to jump from Secretary to President. She praised Daniels who guided us out of the pandemic, through chaos and fragmentation, losing our minister of 24 years, and negotiating for 3 interim ministers. McCracken stated that not only did Daniels keep cool and work well with everyone, but she did all of this as a head of HR at the Daughters of Sarah Nursing home. McCracken then gave gifts on behalf of the Board.

Interim Search Committee Report- by Heidi Newberg

Newberg expressed happiness at the fact that the search committee had found an interim minister. She thanked the members of the Interim Search Committee- Laurie Beberwyck, Zoë Hutchins, and Randy Rosette, for all of their work. The new interim minister is Reverend Ann Kadlecek. She was recently ordained in 2021 and got there by a long, circuitous path. She has previous jobs as a chemist, laboratory technician, patent attorney, patent agent, and substitute teacher for middle school science. In 2011, she started serving UU congregations as Director of Religious Education, Transitional Director of Faith Formation, Interim Director of Faith Formation, and Interim Minister of All Souls UU Congregation in New London, Connecticut. For the past three years she served as a Developmental Congregation Minister for Paint Brush UU Church in Hyattsville, Maryland. A Developmental Minister is an interim position

where you are trying to make a change in the congregation. Newberg was impressed with the outcome for the congregation.

Newberg read Reverend Kadlecek's words about her theology. The congregation then watched her introductory video. In response to questions, Newberg said that she should be arriving in August, and she will serve a 2-year term and can possibly serve a third year.

Stewardship Campaign Update by Chuck Manning

A budget was not prepared due to the recent uncertainty about the interim minister.

We have reached 93% of the goal and 60% of pledges "stretched". Manning encouraged 25 remaining pledges to respond. Budget will be finalized, and a special meeting will be held in June to review and approve the budget. Manning encouraged 25 remaining pledges to respond.

Proposed Article II Changes by Leah Purcell

Purcell explained that she has been selected by the Board to be a General Assembly Delegate. The other delegates are Mary Applegate, Chris Bystroff, Dick Dana, Michael Hornsby, Peggy Sherman, and Hillary Torres. The delegate's job is to represent Albany UU on business at the GA. Important changes are being considered to Article II. The delegates want to hear from the congregation about these proposed revisions. There will be 2 listening circles. The first will be held in-person after service on Sunday, June 2, 2024, and the second one will be held via Zoom on Monday, June 3rd at 5 PM. A video was shown with the proposed Article II changes illustrated and read.

New Business

No new business from the floor.

Questions from the Floor

Question by Sigrin Newell- are these principles replacing our current 8 principles and sources. Purcell explained that they would not be erased but the new principles will be what guides us and unites us. The new principles will replace the current Article II.

Someone asked if the new principles are different. Purcell replied that they are similar and different. Different in format and with more verbs in it.

In response to a question, the current Article II contains the 7 principles, 6 sources, statement about being non-creedal, and purpose of organization. Only the principles and sources will be changed.

In response to a question, this is the final version that has been in the works for the past few years. There have been many amendments proposed.

In response to a question, the core motivation to make this change. Purcell clarified that the bylaws require they be reviewed every 20 years. Purcell feels that part of the motivation is using a lens of anti-oppression and multi-cultural lens. The 6 sources focused on Christianity, Judaism and “other”.

In response to a question, Purcell clarified that we as a congregation can keep the 8 principles and 6 sources, and that Religious Educators are starting to work on curriculum based on the proposed Article II.

In response to Peggy Sherman asking about the 8th principle, Purcell clarified that the 8th principle was a congregation-level decision- not the entire UUA. Paula Cook Jones, who was involved in the 8th Principle Project was also on the team for the Article II changes.

Cathy DeMille googled and reported that there has been healthy controversy on all sides of the Article II changes. Purcell expanded that point that healthy controversy has historically been part of any changes to Article II.

Betsy Miller expressed concern about the new Article II is focused more on community than the interdependent web of existence and nature. Purcell asked that point to be raised at one of the listening circles.

Daniels thanked Purcell for leading the discussion of the proposed Article II changes.

Daniels reminded congregation that they can still sign up for the “Mistakes and Miracles” reading group. 4 copies of the book are left; please reach out to Jan McCracken for a book.

Nominating Committee Results Vote by Reese Satin

- note: Reese clarified post-election that there are 3 2-year vacancies, and 2 1- year vacancies.
- The election results are as follows:
 - Pam Collins and Vida Weherns will take the 2 one-year positions.
 - Jim Hutchins, Luis Torres and Anne Savage will serve the 3 two-year positions

Adjournment

Daniels adjoining the meeting (with a whoop of agreement from the congregation) at 1:47 PM.

Albany Unitarian Universalist ANNUAL REPORT

Part II: Year in Review



2024-2025

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You may notice a change in the organization of the reports that tell our story. We have tried to reflect the organization of our governance system by highlighting the five categories that make up Ministry and Operations. We hope this helps the reader see not only all that goes on here but how activities are interconnected.

YEAR IN REVIEW

Ministers Report 2024-2025

So much has happened this year, the first of our shared interim ministry, both within and beyond the congregation. We find ourselves in a very different world, and striving to discern who we are and how we will live our values in that new world. There are plenty of challenges, but this congregation and its people offer inspiration and hope. Albany UU is caring and resilient, and I am grateful for this time with you.

I. A Few Highlights

In no particular order:

Strong worship attendance – On recent Sundays, attendance (in person and online, combined) has been about 150. I consistently hear appreciation for the integration of elements, which is a direct result of the skill and collaborative spirit of professional staff and the many volunteers who tend to Sunday morning details.

AUU is growing – we welcomed 11 new members in March, and there are new children and youth as well. Continued interest in membership has led us to plan another ceremony in June. This says something both about the welcoming process and the congregation as a whole.

End Our Debt Campaign – The remarkable speed and success of the campaign to retire the building loan is indicative of people's commitment to this church and what we're capable of when we're organized, work together, think creatively and provide clear and consistent communication. Well done!

Staff – this year we welcomed two new staff members: Sophia Garder, Church Administrator, and Ben Warner, Tech Support Staff, were both hired in December. I know I speak for the congregation when I say that we are so grateful that both Sophia and Ben are here.

I also want to express my deep gratitude for all of the staff, each of whom has brought skill and enthusiasm and remarkable flexibility to their work this year. This congregation is fortunate in its staff team.

Governance – We've made progress with living into Albany UU's adaptation of policy governance. With a new organizational chart and more practice this year, leadership is gaining clarity about roles and responsibilities, and how this system can work. The next step is increased communication with the rest of the congregation about this system of governance and more practice throughout the congregation. As we settle into this approach to governance, there are also opportunities to clarify other roles and better connect church groups with each other and the overall purpose.

Safer Congregations Team – Under Jaye Holly's leadership, this team has begun to assess our physical safety on Sunday mornings and make improvements as needed.

Rites of Passage – we held memorial services for four members this year: Arlene Gilbert, Dave Brandon, RoseAnne Fogarty, and Thayer Heath. There were no weddings or child dedications.

II. Status of Minister Priorities

Last August, the Board and I set three priorities for my work this year: Worship, Administration and Transition & Conflict. Here are some of our collective accomplishments and challenges in these areas.

Worship

- Successfully offered multi-platform worship every Sunday, and began work on technical upgrades
- Strong worship attendance all year
- Increased collaboration between minister and staff, including greater integration of music
- Offered 6 intentionally multigenerational services, in collaboration with the religious educator and with additional supports for young people. The Director of Programs for Children and Youth also offered monthly Family Chapels, with a different type of worship experience that has been well received.
- Began a new Worship Associates program, and trained initial participants
- Standardized tech for worship with new hire
- Revised OOS
- Challenge: Recruitment of worship associates and Religious Services Team members
- Challenge: Project management for services when the minister is away (including summer services)
- Challenge: Greater diversity in guest preachers and lay worship leaders
- Challenge: upgrading sound and visuals so that microphones can be clearly heard and the slides can be seen throughout Community Hall
- Challenge: more opportunities for whole congregation worship experiences

Administration

- Hired Church Office Administrator and Tech Support Staff Person
- Revised organizational chart
- MOT has a greater sense of its role and processes, and there is improved communication with the Board
- Revised and Standardized job descriptions for existing and other needed staff
- Revised and implemented a staff evaluation process
- Created a background check policy for volunteers with children and youth
- Brought compensation more in line with UUA recommendations
- Instituted better processes for payroll, managing accruals, rentals and record-keeping (shout out to Sophia Garder for this one)
- Challenge: lack of backup for current Administrator
- Challenge: MOT/Board relationship still needs work, and the AUU version of policy governance is not yet widely understood
- Challenge: Internal Communication
- Challenge: Outward-facing presence (website, social media, marketing)
- Challenge: Greater clarity around roles, power and authority, including authority to represent the congregation and ministerial authority

Transition and Conflict

- The Board's decision to extend this intentional transitional period for a third year is allowing us the time to do some of the culture change work that the Board has identified.
- Through partnership with HOPE for Us, we're beginning to explore this congregation's approach to conflict, and some of the underlying factors that contribute to conflict. The Board's discussion of portions of Terasa Cooley's book *Transforming Conflict* is also yielding fruitful conversations.
- The Transition Team has focused on collectively exploring the purpose of this congregation (Why does the world need Albany UU?) in a variety of ways this year.

- Challenge: Increasing congregational understanding of, and engagement with, the Transition Team's work. There has been strong participation this year from a group that is primarily made up of the same long-time members, with less participation from newer members and parents of children and youth. This is valuable, but not representative of the congregation as a whole.
- Challenge: developing the skills and language for conflict management within a covenantal community, including how we treat each other and how we return to relationship when we mess up. This includes accountability, boundary setting and communication that is clear, kind and direct.
- Challenge: greater inclusivity for people with historically marginalized identities
- Challenge: integration of children, youth and families into the congregation as a whole

And, through it all, there was the overarching issue of finding our way in this changing world where so much is not as we would have it be. It is a difficult time, but this congregation is, for many, a good place to be in a difficult time. Whatever else we may change, let's hold on to that.

III. Other Priorities

In addition to the 3 minister priorities for this year, we also collectively tended to other aspects of congregational life:

Community – Albany UU's strong sense of community is rooted in a culture of caring for each other and enjoying being together and serving together. The Caring Network serves short-term physical needs (such as rides and meals, as well as cards). The Pastoral Care Associates provide spiritual care through deep listening. And there are many social events that provide connection, a respite from what is going on in the world, personal support, and collective joy. Community is one of the strengths of this congregation.

There is also room to grow in this area. There are ways in which our welcome is not as comprehensive as we might wish or believe. We have opportunities to become more multicultural, including more multigenerational. Because so much authority and responsibility is held informally (by individuals, rather than roles), and much of what is going on is communicated only through email lists to people already in the know, it can be difficult for people who are new here to become involved. I've also seen some long-time people who need to step back find themselves out of the loop and more isolated than they imagined. The Inclusivity Team's work with *Mistakes and Miracles* this year may help focus future efforts, and I look forward to some paid staff time to address communication issues (currently envisioned as a Congregational Life Coordinator).

Although this is not one of the minister priorities for this year, part of my role is always to provide pastoral care to members of this community. With everything else going on, and a congregation with such a large older demographic, it isn't possible to offer as much care as there is need. I am deeply grateful to the Pastoral Care Associates for their presence and care for our people.

Children, Youth and Families – Elizabeth Baldes (Director of Programs for Children and Youth) and the Programs for Children and Youth Council have overseen high quality age-appropriate programming for children and youth this year, that built community, connected young people to worship themes and explored Unitarian Universalist values. They are doing good work, and the program is growing.

And ... while children, youth and families have distinct needs, they are also part of this congregation as a whole. We can make this more of a reality, by intentionally incorporating the needs and aspirations of our families into our event planning, even if that means we make some changes in long-standing practices. We only touched on this in the past year – I hope it can be more of a focus in the next.

Social Justice – people in this congregation are involved in many justice activities, with energy and passion, and the time we live in certainly calls us to engagement. Part of our role as a congregation is to support and strengthen individuals for their work beyond the congregation. And, we are also here to engage in such work together, to use the power of our collective energy to make a greater difference. Engaging collectively, as a congregation, is our challenge.

IV. Gratitudes

This congregation moved into the future with grace this year, thanks to the love and dedication of so many people. Here are a few gratitudes:

First, the Albany UU staff: Elizabeth Baldes and Olga Martinez for reasons already stated; Sophia Garder for her organization, relational skills and remarkable grace under pressure; Ben Warner for his technical wisdom and flexibility; Paula Brewer for all she does for children and youth, and especially the way she quietly and capably filled in while Elizabeth was out for foot surgery; Adrian Cattell for his service to our youth; and Erik Von Hausen who, every Sunday, without fanfare, tends to the building details so this congregation be its best. All of you matter, and your contributions are appreciated.

I also want to lift up Amy Lent, who generously served as Church Administrator until Sophia was hired in December, and went above and beyond to facilitate the transition.

This year's Board was notable for its collaborative spirit and thoughtful decisions. You didn't always agree, but you shared your perspectives, deliberated with care and respect, and then moved forward as one. It has been a pleasure to be part of this group, and also to work closely with Board President Jan McCracken.

This year's Ministry and Operations Team (MOT) took on the challenge of doing the ministry and operations work of the congregation while simultaneously discerning what that work is and how to do it. This was not easy, but this group guided the MOT to a better place.

And that core group of especially dedicated and involved volunteers who accomplish so much for this congregation. One of our transitional tasks is to free you from some of the hats you wear with such love and commitment so that the work of the congregation is more sustainable. But that takes time, and I know I speak for the wider congregation when I say I am so grateful for all you have done and still do to make Albany UU the special community that the world needs it to be.

This has been a good year. As we move into our second year together, may we prioritize staying in relationship, taking care of ourselves and one another, being in community, and living our purpose, so we can move forward ever more as the congregation we seek to be.

In Faith and Gratitude,

Rev. Ann

Board of Trustees, President's Report



I'm partial to circles, in theory and practice. Almost a year ago, after a long and multi-faceted process, we joined with other members of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) in transforming our list of "Principles and Purposes" into a statement of shared values. The values are not new, but they are now boldly displayed in a circle with Love at the center. They are **Equity, Generosity, Interdependence, Justice, Pluralism, and Transformation**. I confidently report that your board has worked hard this year to keep weaving these values into our congregation's colorful tapestry of past, present and future.

I am almost halfway through my two-year term as President of the Board of Trustees. Perhaps it's my rite of passage after being part of this congregation for 65 years. Thank you for the opportunity to try on this form of leadership. It's going well. With my whole heart, I love this community where many circles join in being and doing together.

There is a lot of doing! The board continued their commitment to an annual retreat in August, which grounds us as a team and helps to start the church year with our goals in hand. Our interim minister, Rev. Ann and I started our new roles at the same time, coming from different directions with good alignment. I am fortunate to have her in my circle of mentors. The vitality of this interim period of ministry becomes apparent every Sunday when we join in worship. I feel moved and excited to be part of the leadership now.

This year's board consists of eight seasoned white people who give significant time and energy and show up with an unwavering commitment to Albany UU and our faith tradition. While more diversity of representation in our leadership continues to be aspirational, let's be thankful for those willing and able to give so much. Our monthly board agendas are full, and our meetings are not too brief! Several times this year, we have met to address special topics in between monthly meetings. Thank you, board members, for your open minds, hearts, intelligence, and integrity. Your life experience counts a lot, and your gift of time and energy is gratefully received.

The board whittled many potential goals to three this year, and we have made progress in focusing on them. The goals, simply stated, are:

- 1) Manage transition.
- 2) Assess the congregation's financial health and make recommendations for long-term sustainability (10 – 15 years).
- 3) Create a framework for transforming how we engage with conflict in our congregation.

Objectives achieved in the first two goals are noted in different sections of the Annual Report, particularly in the information provided by the Treasurer, Finance Committee, and Transition Team.

We are meeting the third goal through a partnership with Hope for Us. We are working with a team of their specialized coaches who are well-trained in processes for conflict management and restorative

practices. This activity will continue into 2025-26 when the congregation will be invited to engage in this transformational work. Developing our relationship muscles is connected to everything we do, especially critical in this time of transitional ministry and change. Relationship-building skills will help serve our mission and more intently grow and develop our strength in diversity. We need to understand and work well with each other, for our individual peace, and together, as we encounter the reality and chaos of our world. While I experience and never doubt the depth of our compassion, we still need a bigger toolbox of skills to do our relational work.

To learn more about HOPE for Us, here is a link.

<https://www.uua.org/offices/staff/congregational-life/hope-for-us>

The Board is also nearing completion of reading and discussing the book, *Transforming Conflict, the Blessings of Congregational Turmoil* by Teresa Cooley. It is recommended to all; a few copies can be found in the Joy library for lending.

Two other significant areas of focus for this year's board work have been:

- Policy development
- Governance structure

Policy development is ongoing with focus on clarifying lines of authority and decision-making processes. Policies ought to specify who is responsible for making decisions close to the action at hand. The board's job is not to manage daily work but to clarify the congregation's goals and values and to shape its future. Please be patient as we develop policy that will be shaped into good practices and empower one another to do so with trust.

This year, the board wrote, revised, and approved several policies. We anticipate continuing to assess "old" policies, revising, and developing new ones, as needed. Hot off this year's press are policies for:

- Building Use and Rental
- Religious Services Committee
- Programs for Children and Youth
- Background Check for Staff and Volunteers with Children and Youth
- Service Animals
- Financial policy:
 - Designated Funds
 - Procurement Process
 - Targeted donations (in draft)

What's coming? Next year, policy development priorities will likely fall into the categories of Safety and Communications. We have a Safer Congregation Team assessing our safety needs from many angles, finding the gaps and making plans. Policy addressing communications will be a big, long lift, as it will determine and address needs ranging from our public communication to working with our internal information and communication systems. The Board's job is to put good policy in place that can be nimbly transferred into procedures, which brings up the final topic of governance structure, and highlights one of our core values: INTERDEPENDENCE.

This value is derived from our scientific understanding of the interconnected nature of all things and is also relevant to the microcosm of our congregation. Some people snicker at organizational charts and may wonder why precious time and energy were spent this past year making our chart more accurate. The

org chart is a tool for our framework, and it relies on our interdependence to keep it current and real. Seeing the relationships between all our functional areas helps produce the clarity and communication we need between the Board of Trustees, the Ministries and Operations Team, and ultimately the whole congregation. Stability in our structure builds more capacity for accomplishing our purpose and mission.

Through the partnership of the Board of Trustees (BOT) and the Ministries and Operations Team (MOT), we focus on accountability in all areas of governance and ministry. A quick and broad definition extracted from Dan Hotchkiss's work comes in handy when considering the different roles and responsibilities of the BOT and the MOT.

Governance holds the whole institution and its work in trust, voicing its intentions, and taking responsibility for its performance. (BOT)

Ministry is the rest of a congregation's daily work of building community, managing resources, and transforming lives. (MOT)

Your BOT and MOT are working together to ensure our resources are used to serve our purpose, mission and vision. I have watched and participated in the growth and development of our policy governance system for the past seven years. (We were one “operational board” in the past.) We keep learning and progressing – there are a lot of moving parts!

I close this loop of words with Love and gratitude for this place I call my home away from home, using the last line of our congregational covenant my summary to this report:

*We entrust ourselves to each other in beloved community,
to embolden personal and congregational growth and transformation.*

Board of Trustees

Officers:

Jan McCracken, President

Jon Newell, Vice President

Maria Phillips, Treasurer

Laura Churchill, Secretary

Trustees:

Dawn Dana

Chuck Manning

Mike Myers

Randy Rosette

Ex-officio member: Rev Ann Kadlecak

Treasurer's Report for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

Background: Because our Annual Meeting is held in May and our fiscal year (FY) ends in June, the timeframe for the Treasurer's report can only include information through about three quarters of our current FY, from July 1, 2024, to April 30, 2025.

Highlights: *Budget Approval* When we approved the budget at a special meeting in June of 2024, we were still in transition, after working with two contract ministers and a consultant during FY 23/24. We were matched with Rev. Ann Kadlecek, who would begin her Interim Ministry in August 2024. Budget approval was delayed from May until June to ensure the costs for our new Interim Minister were appropriately covered in the FY 24/25 budget. A balanced budget of \$606,697, a five percent increase over the previous year, was approved.

Board of Trustees Financial Sustainability Goal At their retreat in August 2024, the Board of Trustees (BOT) developed three goals for the year. One of these goals was to review and make recommendations to improve the congregation's long-term financial sustainability. The BOT recruited Heidi Newberg and, working with Maria Phillips and Chuck Manning, the ***End Our Debt*** fundraising campaign was approved and executed, with great success. The working group reviewed the past 10 years of budget income and expenses and determined that including roughly \$50K per year in the operating budget to pay back the building loan would not support other financial needs. Several meetings were held with members, with a goal of raising about \$370,000 to pay off the loan. By removing the building loan payment from the annual operating budget, unsustainable sources of income should not be needed in future budgets.

End Our Debt Campaign The campaign began on January 12th and was concluded on January 30th. In that short period of time, pledges were received from 37 pledging units amounting to \$470,000. To date, \$192,401.31 has been received. The current building loan balance is \$217,064.21. Funds received after the building loan has been retired will be deposited in the Endowment Trust (ET) Operations Trust.

Capital Reserve We continue to contribute to the ET Capital Reserve Fund and the Capital Reserve Designated Fund. As of April, we have contributed \$119,375 to the ET fund and \$33,497 to the Designated Fund. There is about \$128K in the Capital Reserve fund. Please see the table below for more information about the use and funding for the congregation's Capital Projects.

Accumulated Surplus

Because projected expenses for FY 24/25 were expected to be greater than the amount we could allocate from projected income, a sum of \$8,800 was budgeted from our "accumulated cash surplus" to compensate for continued loss of income from rentals and in-person fundraisers. The accumulated surplus is available due to years during which we expended less than we took in.

Financial Policy

Pieces of the financial policy have been written and approved by the BOT. The policy is expected to be completed in the next few months. These areas were approved:

- Designated Funds
- Procurement Decision-making

A policy governing "Targeted Donations" is currently drafted.

Capital Reserve April 30, 2025						
Designated Fund Capital Reserve	Owner	Balance July 1, 2024	Year to Date			Ending Balance
			Income	Expenses	Net Change	
Capital Reserve	Treasurer	\$ 119,655.85	\$ 33,497.90	\$ 24,852.40	\$ 8,645.50	\$ 128,301.35

Capital Reserve Cash			
QB Account	Source	Account Type	Balance
1030 - MM	Capital Reserve	MM *8723	\$ 88,301.35
1055 - CD*		CD *6224	\$ 40,000.00

*CDs listed at initial funding level

Cash from ET Capital Reserve Fund**	
June 2023 Grant	\$ 1,196.24
June 2024 Grant	\$ 3,017.92
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$ 4,214.16</i>

**Rolling grant which equals 3% of the Capital Reserve Fund Balance on June 30 of each FY.

Capital Reserve Projects FY 23/24 and FY 24/25		
Approved Project Description	Approved Amount	Expenses since 4/1/23
Removal of Fire Escape Stairs	\$ 5,500.00	\$ 5,500.00
Stove and dishwasher Replacement	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,161.00
Exterior Camera Installation	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 12,565.00
RE Building Window Replacement	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 16,829.40
Fence around front garden	\$ 6,240.00	\$ 6,240.00
Channing Windows	\$ 3,586.00	\$ 1,793.00

Financial Status Summary as of April 30, 2025

Operations Financial Status A summary of our operations' financial position, 83% of the way through our fiscal year, is summarized here and in the tables below.

At the end of April, we held about \$119,633 in our checking account, Operations money market (MM) and CD accounts. In addition, our Designated Fund (DF) MMs and CDs held about \$172,809. The table to the right shows how these funds were allocated. It shows that we held \$119,633 in Operations bank accounts, and we had about \$156,004 in outstanding budgeted expenses, leaving us with a need of about \$36,371 to meet our operational obligations. If we collect the \$120,629 of anticipated budgeted income and appropriately fund the Designated Fund accounts, we will end the fiscal year with a cash balance of about \$75K. There is uncertainty, of course, as to whether we would spend and collect these amounts. We will not know how the fiscal year ends until sometime in August.

At the end of April, we held about \$172,809 in Designated Fund MM and CD accounts, and we had allocated about \$172,830 to these DFs. The table shows we have allocated about \$20 less than we hold in our accounts for DFs. These overages and shortfalls are periodically rebalanced to ensure funds are appropriately allocated.

The last line on this table displays our current indebtedness, which is **\$217,064.21**. There is another payment of \$10,700 to make this year for the building loan. This will be the last payment to be made from the operating budget.

FUUSA Cash Accounts as of April 30, 2025			
(Totals may not equal sums due to rounding)			
Bank Accounts			AUU Allocations
QB Account	Source	Account Type	Balance
1000 - Checking	Operations	Checking *1970	\$ 12,134.28
1001 - MM		MM *7264	\$ 67,498.77
1020 - CD*		CD *7495	\$ 40,000.00
Operations Subtotal			\$ 119,633.05
1040 - MM	Other DFs	MM *9811	\$ 112,809.90
1045 - CD*		CD *9911	\$ 30,000.00
1060 - CD*		CD *1993	\$ 30,000.00
Designated Fund Subtotal			\$ 172,809.90
Total Cash			\$ 292,442.95
Notes: *CDs listed at initial funding level 1 and 4 - From Budget vs. Actual Report 2 and 3 - From Designated Fund Report			
Indebtedness as of April 30, 2025			
QB Account 2046	ET Loan (0%)	\$	217,064.21
Funds Received for End Our Debt Campaign		\$	194,401.31

Endowment Trust Financial Status as of April 30, 2025 The table below shows how the **\$1,244,341** in total assets (including the \$217,064 building loan) under the control of the Endowment Trust is invested and allocated among the various trusts. Note that the funds collected for the **End Our Debt** campaign are shown separately.

Endowment Trust Holdings as of April 30, 2025			
Asset		Balance	% of Holdings
Vanguard Investments:			
By Investment Type	Equities	\$ 576,158.97	58.87%
	Fixed Income	\$ 402,304.27	41.11%
	Settlement Fund	\$ 223.72	0.02%
By Trust Allocation	Special Projects Trust	\$ 603,195.08	61.63%
	Operations Trust	\$ 53,698.47	5.49%
	Capital Reserve Fund**	\$ 135,111.81	13.81%
	End Our Debt	\$ 172,639.72	17.64%
	Stott restricted gift	\$ 11,509.93	1.18%
	Wright restricted gift	\$ 2,531.94	0.26%
Total Vanguard Investment (Total Return= 9.73%; Annualized Return= 2.24%)		\$ 978,686.96	78.7%
ET Building Loan (0%)		\$ 217,064.21	17.44%
Endowment MM *9108 (0.02%)		\$ 1,121.64	0.09%
Misc Cash		\$ 2,168.37	0.17%
End Our Debt and Operations Trust Donations Cash		\$ 15,300.00	1.23%
Loan to Community Loan Fund (1.75%)		\$ 30,000.00	2.41%
Total Assets		\$ 1,244,341.18	100%
** Total building loan repayment paid into Capital Reserve Fund = \$119,375			

Conclusion The financial outlook for the coming fiscal year will be challenging, even as we develop a balanced budget that does not contain a building loan payment OR income from unsustainable sources. The uncertain economic environment and changing membership needs will drive the decisions we make about the priorities for using our financial resources.

There is much to be enthusiastic about. Pledged income remains strong, fundraisers & rentals are improving. The membership answered the call to end our debt, leading to a higher likelihood of future financial sustainability. We can take pride that through your continued support our community enjoys good financial health. We can envision a bright future with reasonable assurance that we will have the financial resources to achieve it.

Submitted by Maria Phillips, Treasurer

Endowment Trust Report for July 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025

Members: Steven Moskowitz, Chair; Jeff English; Barbara Manning; Zack Metzger; Lee Newberg and Maria Phillips, Treasurer (non-voting ex-officio member)

Purpose: The purpose of the Endowment Trust is to invest and manage gifts and bequests made to the Society by its members and other individuals or entities. We work to assure donors that their bequests will

be honored and administered so that income from gifts will always be available to assist the Society in furthering its purposes.

Trust Notes: Please note that the following financial report is only for part of the fiscal year (July 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025) and does not specify interest accrued or market valuation changes during 2024/2025.

Financial Status Report:

Five separate funds are managed by the Endowment Trust. They are: Special Projects, Capital Reserve, Stott Lounge, Nigel Wright Peace Fund, and Operations Trust. The table below shows the balance of each fund between 6/30/24 and 3/31/25. It also indicates the changes in each fund during the reporting period. Lastly, there may be some pending internal allocation changes at this point in the fiscal year.

	Special Projects	Capital Reserve	Stott Lounge	Nigel Wright Peace Fund	Operations Trust	Total
6/30/2024 balance	\$1,069,514	\$100,597	\$11,144	\$2,451	\$49,434	\$1,233,140
Gifts received	\$525				\$2,500	\$3,025
Grants awarded	(\$10,494)				(\$1,483)	(\$11,977)
Grants not yet disbursed	\$5,190				\$1,483	\$6,673
Capital Reserve agreement	(\$32,100)	\$32,100				\$0
Community Loan Fund interest	\$526					\$526
12/2024 contribution					\$258	\$258
Estimated Vanguard earnings	\$19,543	\$2,463	\$369	\$82	\$1,515	23,973
3/31/2025 balance	\$1,040,004	\$124,460	\$11,513	\$2,533	\$64,407	\$1,242,918

Investments: The largest part of the Endowment investment was a \$575,000 interest free Building Loan to Albany UU made in 2006. As of March 31, 2025, the balance was \$231,739.21. Due to a very

successful fund drive and the great generosity of the congregation, enough money was collected and pledged to retire the entire outstanding loan by the end of 2026. So successful was the End Our Debt Campaign, that the surplus raised will be deposited in the Operating Reserve Fund.

The Endowment Trust Board takes this opportunity to publicly thank its 2024-2026 End our Debt Campaign organizers, pledgers and contributors.

Most of the liquid assets of the endowment are invested in mutual funds managed by two Vanguard Funds. These are index funds that make investments only in socially responsible companies and institutions. The trustees rebalance those funds on a periodic basis as appropriate.

The endowment has also, many years ago, loaned interest-bearing funds totaling \$30,000 to the Community Loan Fund, a regional nonprofit financial institution that provides training, technical assistance, funding, & space for BIPOC and women-owned businesses.

One responsibility of the Endowment Trust is to attend to the long-term financial health of Albany UU. In the past, the Endowment Trust Board agreed to set aside the re-payments of the Building Loan into the Capital Reserve Trust fund to help meet this need. It is anticipated that this fund will have reached the goal of \$150,000 and will be transferred to the Endowment Trust's Operations Trust.

Accrued interest and gains after the \$150,000 is transferred will still be held in the Capital Reserve Fund, along with any future designated donations for Albany UU's benefit.

Disbursements: At the beginning of each fiscal year, as soon as data is available, the annual grant making capacity of the Special Projects Trust is calculated for the coming year. The 2024/25 Special Projects Trust grant capacity was \$18,831.70.

The following projects received grants: Ministerial Transition \$5,304 and Buddhist Association meditation convocation attendance \$490. At our April 2025 meeting, the following grants were awarded: Inclusivity Conference hosting \$300, GA Delegate supplement \$2,730, Hearing Aids purchase and Sound Improvements to Community Hall \$1,470.

Gifts: During the July 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025 period, a total of \$3,025 in gifts was added to the Trust. Your contributions to the Trust are greatly appreciated and have been invested carefully to support the mission of Albany UU.

John Cross Legacy Society: The John Cross Legacy Society (JCLS) was established in 2017 to recognize members of Albany UU who have included the Society in their estate plans and to encourage others to do so. At the end of 2025, JCLS members are: Mary Applegate, Sharon Babala, Patricia Bailey, Elizabeth Berberian, Ann Brandon, Loren Broc, Tom Chulak, John Cooley, Albert De Salvo, Jeffrey English, Lois Griffin, Katharine Harris, Cindee Herrick, Amie Jamieson, Chris Jensen, Barbara Manning, Chuck Manning, Jan McCracken, Meredith Mercer, Thomas Mercer, Betsey Miller, Paula Moskowitz, Steven Moskowitz, David Musser, Martha Musser, Jon Newell, Sigrin Newell, Rick Piet, Randy Rosette, Reese Satin, John Sherman, Margaret Sherman, Todd Thomas, Sam Trumbore, Nancy Wagner, Linda Way, Arlen Westbrook, and Nancy Willie-Schiff.

Our Impact: The Endowment Trust has an impact on our community in several ways. The trustees hold the trust of those who contributed by learning about and applying investment practices that honor gifts as well as promoting giving and granting opportunities. Members of Albany UU are encouraged to use the Trust to create a legacy, allowing their values to continue into the future.

Stewardship Committee and Donor Report

Chair: Chuck Manning

Members: A successful campaign requires the assistance of many. We had two testimonials during Sunday services. The speakers were Julie Shaw and Brian Frank. Recruiting volunteers during a Sunday service was effective with over 25 people agreeing to help with the Stewardship Campaign. A mailing was sent out to all members and friends. Volunteers who made follow-up calls and emails: Peggy Sherman, John Sherman, Linda Way, Jan McCracken, Nancy Willie-Schiff, Dick Dana, Dawn Dana, and Jon Newell. Allison Hart helped with the preparation of letters. And, we had excellent office support from Sophia Garder.

Purpose: The Stewardship Team plans and implements the stewardship campaign each year. A successful fundraising effort is essential to keep our congregation healthy and growing. We must pay our minister and staff, heat, cool, and pay for our building, support the causes and programs we embrace, and pay for our building. We will also have additional expenses to support the hiring of an interim minister.

Albany UU exists because we all support it with our time, talents, and treasure. The campaign also represents an opportunity for members and friends to consider what Albany UU means to them and to determine how they want to support it financially.

Accomplishments: The theme this year was “Helping Hope Grow”. This year each pledging unit was asked to increase their pledge if they could based on their current financial condition.

Our campaign goal for 2025-26 was \$520,000 and we reached 95 % of that goal. We identified the following priorities for the campaign:

- Preparing for a ministerial transition
- Providing Pay Increases for our Staff
- Providing all staff with the same benefits

Albany UU uses a modified version of the Unitarian Universalist Association recommended giving guide that accounts for different income levels. The guide recognizes four levels of giving – Supporter, Sustainer, Visionary, and “10-Percenter”. We encourage donors with higher incomes to give a greater percentage than those with lower incomes. By following the guide, all of us have the opportunity to be visionaries, regardless of income. For example, a retiree on a fixed income, a dual income family, or a college student could all be visionaries.

A Special Thank You: We extend our heartfelt thanks to the congregation for continuing to support Albany UU as we go through a transitional period. We thank all of you in recognizing the importance of keeping Albany UU strong and committing your personal treasure to its support.

BOARD APPOINTED COMMITTEES

Finance Committee's Report

Committee Members:

Jim Chicoine, Chair

Chuck Manning

Maria Phillips, Treasurer (elected)

Karen Kaufmann, Assistant Treasurer (elected)

Paul Fisk, Insurance (leaving the Committee in June 2025)

Andrea Nix, Insurance

Heidi Newberg, Capital Reserve Planning

Kathy Harris

Purpose of group: Is to ensure financial support for our efforts at being an inclusive and welcoming community that lifts hearts, broadens minds and does justice in this world.

Accomplishments in 2024/25:

- Continued to monitor the financial health and activities of the congregation.
- Prepared a yearly budget in cooperation with Board of Trustees, the Ministries & Operations Team (MOT) and stakeholders.
- Several Finance Committee members completed an analysis in conjunction with Board of Trustee's Financial Sustainability Goal. This analysis led to the End Our Debt Campaign.
- Reviewed and updated the 30-year capital reserve plan and incorporated recommendations into the budget.
- Reviewed insurance needs and policies. Used an experienced insurance broker to get additional quotes.
- Evaluated proposed projects and provided financial information for the projects.
- Provided the Board of Trustees with information and input concerning rentals and designated funds.
- To encourage involvement by the congregation, continued to advertise the Committee's meetings and responded to questions that were sent through the Finance Committee webpage on the Church's website.

Plans for Next Year:

- As preached and practiced over many past years, continue to carefully monitor the financial health of Albany UU. Monitor cash flow and recommend adjustments to the budget as necessary.
- Continue to monitor the capital reserve plan and make adjustments where necessary. Report to the Board and others any significant changes.

Nominating Committee's Report

2026 Members: Nellson Jacobs-Moore (Chair), Anne Savage (Secretary), Vida Wehren, Jim Hutchins, Luis Torres, Pam Collins (Resigned)

Purpose: The Nominating Committee is responsible for the recruitment and selection of candidates for all elected offices: President; Vice President; Secretary; Treasurer; Assistant Treasurer; Board of Trustees members; Endowment Trustees and Nominating Committee members

2024-25 Activities: Due to the Albany UU Board's decision to postpone the search for a settled minister for three years, we halted our work at forming a Search Committee. In January we began our search for candidates to fill upcoming open positions. The Committee announced and published its call for nominations for six weeks beginning February 14 through March 21, listing open positions. It also began inquiring if all eligible incumbents intended to run for a second term. The Committee took pains to recruit new members who, though active, have not previously held leadership roles. We were pleased that we have a growing diversity of race, age, gender and ability in the congregation. By the end of March, the Committee had identified all necessary candidates, set up two Meet the Candidates events, developed a ballot and is currently in the process of fulfilling all Bylaws requirements leading to the election in May.

Accomplishments: The newly elected Nominating Committee has worked to find candidates for one contested election: Nominating Committee, where there are three seats to fill. The current slate of candidates is as follows:

- Treasurer: Maria Phillips
- Secretary: John Sherman
- Board of Trustees: Randy Rosette
- Endowment Trustees: Hillary Torres
- Nominating Committee: Luanne Baker, Zoe Hutchins, Nellson Jacobs-Moore, Kate Pierce Nimz, Manuel Bert Suarez, Vida Wehren.

Our committee is pleased with our slate of candidates. We are pleased with the growth of our congregation. We look forward to the continuing work of spiritual development, growing, diversifying, and connecting our congregation to our community, city, state, country and world.

Personnel Committee's Report

Chairperson/Convener: Karen Kaufmann/Molly Daniels

Members: July 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024: Karen Kaufmann (Chair), Jan McCracken (Board liaison), Elizabeth Berberian and Linda Way. As Assistant Treasurer, Karen served as liaison to the Finance Committee.

January 1, 2025, to June 30, 2025: Molly Daniels (Chair), Dawn Dana (Board liaison), Elizabeth Berberian, and Linda Way.

As Head of Staff, Interim Minister Rev. Ann Kadlecek attended all Committee meetings.

Purpose: The Committee implements personnel policies of the Society, facilitates communication between members of the Society and staff members, oversees performance, salaries, benefits and working conditions of staff, and provides for annual performance evaluations.

Accomplishments: In the summer and early fall of 2024, the Personnel Committee (PC) was primarily concerned with refining the job descriptions for Church Administrator and Congregational Life Coordinator and filling the position of Administrator. A target date for installing a new Administrator was set for October first. We are grateful that Interim Administrator Amy Lent agreed to remain on the job until the position was filled and she could provide training. Completing a job description for the multi-faceted Administrator position took many hours of the PC's work, as did the newly re-envisioned Congregational Life Coordinator. These documents were approved by the Board of Trustees on September 3, 2024.

An Administrator search team was formed and aided by the participation of Molly Daniels, who works as a human resource professional. The lengthy job description had to be condensed for posting on Indeed, many candidates screened for qualifications and Interim Minister Rev. Ann Kadlecsek contributed a skills checklist to help assess candidates. The other members of the search team were PC Chair Karen Kaufmann and members Elizabeth Berberian and Linda Way, as well as Randy Rosette, John Sherman, and Board liaison Jan McCracken. Several promising candidates were identified and interviewed and, after a second interview with Rev. Ann, the position was offered to and accepted by Sophia Garder, who commenced work on December 2nd, 2024.

With Xanthe Plymale's resignation from the Administrative Assistant and then the MMT Coordinator position, it was determined that Albany UU should create and fill the new part-time position of Tech Support Staff to take over the audio-visual function at Sunday services from the rotating team of members known as Multimedia Technicians (MMTs), and to prepare the necessary technical material (slides, etc.) for each service. The search team for this position again included Rev. Ann, Karen, Linda, and Elizabeth, as well as Chuck Manning, who was supervising the MMTs, and Dawn Dana, chair of the Religious Services team. We were fortunate that our Indeed posting connected us with a candidate who could meet the requirements of this unusual position, and Benjamin Warner was hired and commenced work on December 2nd, 2024.

The PC considers these to both be highly successful hires based on their performance to date.

On December 31, 2024, Chair Karen Kaufmann resigned from the PC after 8 years on the PC, and Molly Daniels took over as Chair. We are thankful to Karen for her leadership of the PC and for all the work she has done with many changes and staff transitions over those 8 years.

Beginning in January, the PC standardized the formatting of the AUU job descriptions and updating the Sexton and Youth Assistant job descriptions to reflect current responsibilities.

Rev. Ann shared an evaluation tool she has used in previous congregations. The PC agreed that this tool was extremely helpful and worked to copy the job duties from the newly updated job descriptions into the tool to be ready for the annual evaluation process.

The PC spent the bulk of the late winter and early spring working on a proposed budget for Personnel to submit to the Finance Committee and Board of Trustees. We are lucky to have the talent of our current staff and therefore we presented a budget that reflects our goal of retention. We are thankful for the support of the Board of Trustees of the identified priorities to ensure success for the upcoming church year and our future. We are hopeful that the congregation will support these priorities as well.

Upon approval of the budget, The PC will create letters that will be issued annually for each staff which will outline the compensation, hours, and benefit package for the upcoming fiscal year.

We thank Elizabeth Berberian for her six years of service on the PC through the many transitions and the related work over that time.

Plans for the upcoming fiscal year: The PC will be focusing on the hiring and onboarding of a new Congregational Life Coordinator. This position's hiring was put on hold while we hired, acclimated the new Church Administrator, and proposed a budget that would also support this position.

After almost two years of experience with the recently reworked Personnel Manual, the PC will re-review the document to ensure compliance with updated laws and reflect the changes involved with our evolution as we move through this transitional time. Regular reviews of these manuals are considered best practice.

Sophia Garder, our new Church Administrator, has already begun the work of reviewing practices and procedures to ensure compliance and to improve efficiency in the office. The PC plans to support these efforts over the next year.

Transition Team Report

Co-chairs: Peggy Sherman and Betsey Miller

Members: Ireta London, Jon Newell, Léa N'ko Ryman, Stephanie Saunders, Todd Thomas and Kate Pierce-Nimz (new)

Our Team was appointed in September of 2023, there was one person who stepped down, Pascelle Saint-Laurent, and one new person added in the current year, Kate Pierce-Nimz. Our team meets monthly unless there is a major project we are working on and then it is every two weeks or as needed

Our first step in the new year was to release a report on the Transition Listening Circles that were completed in the prior year. Next, we met with the new Interim Minister Rev. Ann Kadlecsek to discuss our focus for the year. Together we concluded we would delve into what is the purpose of Albany UU today in this current world and environment. At the same time, we were discussing this issue the Board was exploring whether they wanted to hire a developmental minister, go to a settled minister or extend Ann's contract for a year. The TT did not want to move forward until that decision was made because it could change what our next step should be.

Once the decision was made in December to extend Ann's contract the Board asked TT to help with congregational conversations on the extended ministry for Ann. At the same time, we were scheduling sessions to follow Ann's Feb 2nd sermon on purpose.. TT held two sessions on purpose and two sessions on the extended ministry. Then the Team gathered to discuss the output of these four sessions and decide our next steps. We concluded, based on our discussions the prior year and in the current year we had a good idea what the congregation thought about its purpose. Peggy drafted an initial statement. After input from the TT and the Board we had a final statement to show the congregation. Before doing a full roll-out to the entire congregation we wanted to test the statement with two smaller groups. We met with about 25 people after a service in April and had a second meeting on zoom later in the week. Reviewing the results from the two meetings, TT decided to move forward in two directions. First to have additional meetings with the groups that have not been well represented in earlier meetings, Families and Teachers in the PCYC and newer members and folks who are considering membership. The second focus is to

gather information on the activities that are currently being done at Albany UU that connect the three main purposes. These purposes are :

- Community—Sustaining us to live well in the world as it is and modeling the world we seek.
- Justice Equity and Compassion—Inspiring and equipping us to make the world a better place.
- Spiritual and Personal Development—Supporting individuals of all ages in exploring and developing spiritual and ethical values and practices.

The Transition Team also worked with the Board President on [this](#) Interim Ministry Appraisal which was submitted to the UUA.

Safe Congregation Team Report

In these uncertain times, it is important to pay closer attention to the safety of our church community. The Safer Congregations Team has been working to take a broad and thorough look at potential safety concerns so that we can strengthen our readiness to deal with them when they arise. We recently asked the Albany Police Department to do a safety walk-through of the building, and they were impressed with many of the things that we have already done to promote safety and security. Encouraged by their assessment, we are eager to continue making improvements. Working with other Albany UU teams, we will be updating procedures and improving our ability to respond to a wide variety of emergencies, from medical events to evacuation scenarios to possible intruders. While our goal is to have a well-formulated plan, our hope is that we will never have to use it.

If you have questions or thoughts to share about the Safer Congregations Team, feel free to email Jaye Holly.

MINISTRY AND OPERATIONS

Ministry and Operations Team Report

Members: Rev. Ann Kadlecek, Jaye Holly, Michele Derosiers, Bob Franklin, and Mary Applegate.

Their role is to foster connections among the other congregational teams, councils, and committees, with the aim of strengthening collaboration and minimizing duplication of efforts. Among the groups the MOT has worked with this year are Social Justice Team, Inclusivity, Programs for Children and Youth, Building & Grounds, and Finance

The MOT's work has become increasingly important as the congregation has grown as have the number of urgent issues that face our local and world communities.

WORSHIP AND FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Religious Services Committee Report

Chairperson: Dawn Dana

Members: Rev. Ann Kadlecsek, Debbie Brown, Peter Brown, Alison Hart, Peter Meixner, Randy Rosette, Linda Way, Olga Martinez, Elizabeth Baldes

Purpose: The Religious Services Team (RST) helps plan Sunday services with pulpit guests, arranges for our annual This I Believe service, and coordinates services during the summer. We support and assist the Worship Associate/Service Assistant corps, and maintain and update instructions and scripts for many service roles. We assist pulpit guests in coordinating their service planning with the Worship Associate, PCY Director, Music Director, and Albany UU office staff. The RST provides input on service logistics and flow. We provide support to the minister in shaping our service year. An overarching goal is services that are of high quality and welcoming to all.

Service Planning and Logistics: With the arrival of our Interim Minister, Rev. Ann Kadlecsek, this has been another year of transition. We have worked closely with Rev. Ann to plan the service year and assess service rituals and logistics. Among the areas where RST has provided input and helped to implement changes are:

- Announcements
- Joys & Sorrows
- Congregational Greeting
- Attendance monitoring and recording
- Order of Service (OOS) format and content
- OOS online accessibility
- Access to service rituals on Zoom

Worship Leadership: A key area of effort this year has been upgrading and refreshing the Worship Leadership program. There had been no training provided for lay service roles since before the pandemic. An objective was to open service roles to a wider group of congregants, and to expand opportunity for an active role in service planning, including the chance to offer spoken reflections on the service topic. In preparation for training, RST developed a comprehensive Worship Leadership Manual, building upon and customizing for AUU materials that Rev. Ann had used in prior congregations. We worked with Rev. Ann to prepare training agendas and resources for interested congregants. The program was rolled out with an after-service information session in late January, followed by two training sessions in early February. We have been pleased with the response to the training. The service roles are now structured so that participants can choose the more expansive role of Worship Associate, or the more limited role of Service Assistant. The program also incorporates, within either role, the duties of Project Manager for services where there is a guest in the pulpit. This acknowledges the need to facilitate communications among everyone involved in the service, and to ensure that service planning is thorough and accessible. We will review how the program is functioning in the coming months, and particularly during the summer period when there is a guest in the pulpit most weeks. We hope to be able to offer training on a regular basis.

Team Policy and Functioning: With the implementation of a policy governance structure in the congregation a few years ago, there has been a congregation-wide effort to develop a formal policy statement, as well as documented practices and procedures, for each team and committee. The policy statement for the Religious Services Team has been through several iterations during this period, as we struggled with how to properly reflect the role of the Team vis-à-vis the Minister and to avoid misalignment between the Minister's authority and responsibility. RST submitted a proposed policy statement to the Board of Trustees in November 2024, and the policy was subsequently approved by the Board.

All policy statements for the congregation must include provisions governing team/committee structure and setting term limits. Since RST's membership has been largely static for a number of years, we are working to come into compliance with these policy terms. Recruitment and relevant training for serving on the RST was included in Worship Leadership training, as it is desirable to have substantial overlap among these roles. RST has added several new members in recent months and will continue efforts toward transition and retirement of long-standing members.

Pulpit Guests and Special Services: Pulpit guests this year have included Revs. David Weissbard, Tom Chulak, and Chris Antal. Congregants Nellson Moore, Anny Lapinski, Chris Bystroff, and Tom Mercer have offered Sunday services. A poetry service was coordinated by Anny Lapinski and John Cooley in March. Several congregants, including Brian Frank and Jaye Holly have collaborated with Rev. Ann to present services. Rev. Ann and Olga Martinez led a contemplative evening service on the Sunday before the November election. Our annual This I Believe service was held on March 30. Deidre Quail, Zoe Hutchins, and Paula Moskowitz shared their faith journeys in thoughtful presentations.

Summer Services: RST was pleased with response to and attendance at our eleven summer services in 2024. Ilene Kane served successfully as our Summer Services Coordinator.

RST has been working in recent weeks to plan a full schedule of 2025 summer services, running from June 22 through August 31. We are considering how to manage service coordination, and whether to search for a new Summer Services Coordinator. Summer pulpit guests will include Reverends Julie-Anne Silberman-Bunn, Amanda Poppei, and Steve Anderson, and community guest Diane Cameron. Rev. Ann will offer a service in August, and congregants Nellson Jacobs-Moore and Sigrin Newell are scheduled to present services. We plan to livestream the Sunday service from General Assembly on June 22.

Programs for Children and Youth

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Programs for Children and Youth Council (formerly Religious Education Council) **Report**

Staff: Elizabeth Baldes, Director of Programs for Children and Youth

Paula Brewer, Program Assistant

Adrian Cattell, Lead Youth Group Advisor

Programs for Children & Youth Council Co-Chairs: Brian Frank & Karen Strong

Programs for Children & Youth Council Members: Isidora Carrera (Youth Rep), Lois Bailey, Jennifer Berkun, Patti Jo Newell, Valerie Plamondon, Pascelle Saint-Laurent, Luis Torres, Kevin Yeh.

Weekly Program for Children & Youth Volunteers

Ann Von Linden	Kristen Tibbitts
Brian Frank	Laurel Matthews
Britany Orlebeke	Leah Purcell
Cathy Vaughan	Liz Richards Hart
Christine Carrera	Mary Fellows
Dana Kowalchyk	Nellson Jacobs-Moore
Danielle Ricard	Nigel Isaac
Doug Matthews	Sandy Stone
Hillary Torres	Sarah Stanwicks
Jeffrey Wright	Stephanie Saunders
Jen Quail	Winston Hagborg

Purpose: Albany UU's Programs for Children & Youth (PCY) offered dynamic Sunday morning programming for infants to high school seniors and their families this year, with community building and connection continuing as our guiding priorities. Specific programming across five major age ranges included childcare and community building for 3 and under, close engagement with the Article II values adopted by the Unitarian Universalist Association in June 2024 for the elementary age group, Neighboring Religions curriculum for middle school, Coming of Age for 9th grade, and Youth Group for high school. Groups were lively and the younger demographic in particular grew robustly throughout the church year, with new participants also welcomed in the middle school cohort. Youth Group took on some new projects this year, supporting Community Breakfast guests with their Second Meal project and fundraiser, fulfilling various roles at the monthly Family Chapel services, and growing their beloved series of Dungeons and Dragons games.

Programming across generations included the annual park gathering in September, monthly Family Chapel and multigeneration services in Community Hall, Halloween-themed Coffee Hour, and support for congregational potlucks and other events. Families are encouraged to stay connected with Albany UU congregational life via monthly emails from the Director, Family Chapel announcements, newcomer outreach, and other promotional and invitational efforts. The PCY Director made an intentional effort to increase accessibility during social time on Sunday mornings which supported outreach to newer families. Efforts continued to establish a children's circulation collection with Joy Library to support at-

home UU identity exploration, and that project is now on track for a Fall 2026 debut. Pastoral care was provided as needed.

With profound gratitude for the massive amount of volunteer time and effort that makes our programming possible, PCY provided support to guides and helpers in the form of in-person and remote training sessions, online resources, and weekly communication. Director of Music Ministry Olga Martinez and volunteer Lois Bailey worked closely with Elizabeth to create meaningful monthly Family Chapel services, and their support was instrumental in covering her absence for medical reasons in February and March. Olga and Elizabeth also worked with Interim Minister Rev. Ann Kadlecek and other service presenters to create thoughtful and intentional traditional and multigenerational services that include opportunities for children and youth to participate, and to engage with the service as it unfolds.

Community partnerships this year included Grassroots Givers, The Baby Institute, Unirondack, and Big Gay Market which supports the Queer Youth Advocacy Retreat. Within the church there were collaborations with the Social Justice Team, Inclusivity, Green Sanctuary, and Community Breakfast.

In 2025-26 the PCY staff looks forward to trying new ways of supporting children, youth, their grownups and volunteers; building community and UU identity; and supporting the learning, growth, and spiritual development of the PCY community. Creating new connections, and maintaining existing ones, within the larger Albany UU community for everyone our programs serve will remain a top priority.

Programs for Children & Youth Council Annual Report

Programs for Children & Youth Council's Vision & Mission:

Albany UU Programs for Children and Youth is a vibrant, inclusive, and multigenerational community where children and youth are an integral, valued, and active part of our congregation. By working in covenant the PCY community-- children, youth, families, staff, and volunteers--can be their true selves while they learn, participate, and cultivate lifelong commitments to our shared Unitarian Universalist values of justice, interdependence, equity, transformation, pluralism and generosity, which are guided by the love that connects us.

The mission of Albany UU's Programs for Children and Youth is to empower the next generation to live our shared Unitarian Universalist values in the world by practicing those values in a welcoming community that nurtures spiritual growth, and encourages meaningful connections within and across generations.

The Council spent a lot of time on governance this year, updating their policy, mission, and vision, along with member and co-chair job descriptions after an enlightening summer retreat that helped identify key PCY strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results. They also worked on practical matters, such as establishing their use of groups.io for communication and document storage.

To implement their newly-adopted mission and vision to build connections within and across generations, Councilors regularly staffed the "RE Office Window" on Sunday mornings as PCY greeters, hosted the annual PCY park gathering in September as well as Coffee Hour at Halloween and after the Christmas pageant, sent HUUGS (Huge UU Greetings) to Albany UU's fledgling young adults, and made an effort to interact regularly with the congregation on behalf of PCY.

PCYC also worked to understand and support change in the congregation and our communities, taking time to reflect on the challenges specific to families at this moment in time. This work was guided by the Unitarian Universalist Association's "Thriving in Religious Education" initiative.

Work within the congregation included re-sharing the findings of the 2022 “White Supremacy Culture Audit” with the Inclusivity Team, and having a conversation with the Interim Minister, Rev. Ann Kadlecek, about the Council’s work and possibilities. Members supported the church-wide read of “Mistakes and Miracles” by Karen Lin and Nancy Palmer Jones, which the PCYC read as a group last church year, adopting its “multigenerational is multicultural” concept as an important guideline in Council work and congregational life. This support included holding a book discussion at Silver Bay and the sermon for our The Hope Within service.

The Programs for Children & Youth Council has continued to check in with the priorities identified in the 2022 [final report](#) by Interim Religious Education Consultant, Michele Townsend Grove, and will do so next year as well. We look forward to building on the strong foundations established in recent years and growing in community with each other, the PCY community, and Albany UU as a whole.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Baldes

Music Ministry Report

Director of Music Ministry: Olga Martinez

Music Associates: Randy Rosette and Chris Jensen

Music Librarians: Cathy DeMille and Zoe Hutchins

Collaborative Pianist: Chris Milkins, Veronica Allen

Purpose: Music Ministry at First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany is an integral part of the worship experience on Sunday mornings and throughout the Albany UU experience. The Music Ministry's work is to deepen the connection of internal and external community, and uplift the newly adopted UU values through music. Our program this year stretched and experimented to deepen these connections and uplift these principles while making music, sharing music and experiencing music. Music ministry continues to be a stable yet fluid current of support through a changing and growing church environment as AUU grows to meet its needs in the present and future.

Service Music: The Director of Music Ministry is responsible for planning and providing music for every Sunday service during the church year. Music selection is done with extensive collaboration and long term planning. Olga meets weekly with the Minister and Director of Programs for Children and Youth to plan and ensure that all the music in any service is integrated to support the message and arc of the service. The music is chosen to, not only to inspire, but to comfort and to provoke thought among other things.

Olga has collaborated on services with Reverend Ann Kadleck, guest ministers Tom Chulak, Chris Antal, David Weissbard, Jim D'Aloisio, and Matt Meyer. In addition she has collaborated on services with Congregation members, Worship Associates, Youth Group, This I Believe, Green Sanctuary, the Black, Indigenous, People of Color Team, and Pastoral Care Associates.

Albany UU Choir: AUU adult, mixed-voice choir, is continuing to grow as a contributor to the spiritual life of Albany UU. This year we have new members who have been warmly welcomed into our singing ministry. The choir rehearses every Wednesday night. This year the choir has joyfully sung at about twenty services not including our small ensemble and solo work.

The choir strives to perform at the highest level possible with the hope of connecting with and inspiring congregants. If you were to come to rehearsal early or were to stay late, you might hear

the sounds of Olga running parts with choir members or small group ensembles practicing. The choir has the challenge of learning pieces quickly and of being flexible when there are changes to service plans. They always rise to the occasion! The choir also sings, when needed, at memorial services. This is a singing task unlike no other as it is often for a beloved congregant. The choir members take this tender responsibility to heart.

Once again, the choir participated in the Hudson Mohawk Unitarian Universalist Cluster service. The Choir's participation may have been especially impactful this year as many felt a strong need to come together in the larger UU community. The Albany UU choir sang with choirs from the Schenectady, Saratoga, Glens Falls, and Catskill UU churches. It was moving to join our voices singing powerful music with these choirs and to share it with their congregations.

In addition to rehearsing and singing at Sunday services, they share time together at their annual December Holiday Dinner hosted by the Music Ministry and at their annual Summer Picnic hosted by Peter and Debbie Brown.

Adult Choir Members:

- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| ● Scott Allen | ● Kathy Harris | ● Astrid Pettersen |
| ● Lois Bailey | ● Tanya Hotalen | ● Annika Pfluger |
| ● Pat Bailey | ● Linda Hunt | ● Debbie Reep MacLeod |
| ● Peter Brown | ● Zoe Hutchins | ● Neil Rice |
| ● Carol Butt | ● Chris Jensen | ● Deborah Rodriguez |
| ● Chris Bystroff | ● David MacLeod | ● Randy Rosette |
| ● Michael Crowell | ● Liza McKinley | ● Lea N'ko Ryman |
| ● Dick Dana | ● Barbara Metz | ● Ruth Samuels Russell |
| ● Cindy Dean | ● David Metz | ● Barbara Spink |
| ● Cathy DeMille | ● Jon Newell | ● Nancy Wagner |
| ● Melissa Fleck | ● Sigrin Newell | ● Patricia Zima |
| ● Tina Haq | ● Threasa Pasquale | |

Musicians: Congregation and community member participation in music making at our church is a joy to facilitate and collaborate on; not only at Sunday services but throughout our community activities. The Music Ministry would like to thank the youth and adults who have contributed to our music making in many different ways:

Albany UU Musicians:

- Andrew Eck
- Anna Baldes
- Olger Rivera
- Kathy Harris
- Tanya Hotalen
- Nicholee Froese
- Chris Bystroff
- Michael Crowell
- Nellson Jacobs-Moore
- Chris Jensen
- Ireta London
- Zoe Hutchins
- Randy Rosette
- Vincent O'Neil
- Charlotte Baldes

Guest Musicians:

- Rich Baldes
- Mark Evans
- Matt Vilmany
- Dan Gerken
- Ben Warner
- Albany Voices of Pride
- Rev. Chris Antal

Collaborative Pianist The music ministry is grateful to have talented pianists to work with. These pianists have brought an invaluable element to the music ministry program. The conductor and pianist work in concert to bring a piece of music to life. This involves an interactive dialogue in preparing and practicing the music in advance of the services. When working with such a pianist, Olga has been able to direct the choir with complete attention, not just her eyebrows. Olga is also able to contribute fully to Family Chapel when there is a collaborative pianist in community hall during the service. Our hope is to retain a regular, collaborative pianist for AUU.

Family Chapel -In collaboration with Programs for Children and Youth The Director of Music Ministry is a collaborative partner in planning and delivery of Family Chapel. During family chapel we include beloved traditions, the UU principles, and much-loved UU music. We do this so the youth feel a deeper connection to each other and the church community. Whenever possible we work to integrate the themes, music and guest musicians between the youth and adult services to deepen the connections between the adults and the youth.

Christmas Pageant We experienced a truly intergenerational, musical, Christmas pageant adventure this year at Albany UU. Congregants, young and old, donned costumes as the story progressed. Everyone sang out with the choir and the room was filled with spontaneous sounds and joy as people of all ages stepped up to fill the many roles. Trumpeters, Veronica Allen and Drew Eck, sounded from the balcony to help draw the glorious pageant to a close.

Christmas Caroling -In collaboration with Randy Rosette Randy Rosette led choir and congregation members to Parkland Gardens, and to the homes of congregants to spread holiday cheer and song. This is an

annual tradition led by the AUU choir. It feeds the spirit of the carolers as well as the recipients. One of the UUs visited mentioned, “It warmed her heart and it was truly healing”.

Christmas Music Jam- In partnership with Ann Marie Haber This annual event is a welcoming space where every musician can participate in creating holiday joy. Channing Hall is filled with activity while holiday music is played on a range of instruments from strings to brass, percussion to harmonicas. The room is buzzing with busy children, people singing along with songs they recognize, cookie crumbs and smiles.

Organ Repair Project In December 2023, Olga informed the MOT that the organ in the sanctuary was in need of serious repair. The MOT tasked Olga and the Organ Study Group with obtaining repair quotes and a historical report justifying the use of funds to repair it. Upon receiving these reports, the MOT agreed to let the organ repairs move forward. Fundraisers were conducted and a designated fund was created. Once the funds needed were raised, a repair contract was signed with Carlson Organs on April 10, 2025. Repairs are scheduled to start in May 2025. Thank you to everyone who donated, to the MOT, the BOT, and to everyone on the Organ Repair Project! Special thanks to Mary Applegate, Peter Brown, Bob Franklin, Annika Pfluger, and Carolyn Stetson.

Professional Development Association for Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries (AUUMM)

The Director of Music Ministry is a proud member of the AUUMM. This is a professional organization of Unitarian Universalist music directors and associated professionals. The formal workshops and informal interactions foster an exchange of music and ideas that consistently enhance our AUU music experience. This year Olga was appointed by the AUUMM board to be on the Nominating Committee to help choose their next board of directors.

Collaborative Mentoring Music Librarian Cathy DeMille’s position as music librarian has evolved. With training, she is now collaborating with Olga on expanding the project of digitizing the music database. Our goal is to have the choral, vocal, and instrumental pieces linkable by score, text, composer, publisher, audio file, purchase receipt, physical inventory location, etc. Cathy is also learning how to research potential service music with attention to context, theme integration, and genre.

Respectfully submitted,
Olga Martinez, Director of Music Ministry

Mindfulness Meditation Report

Chair: Anny Lapinski

The Sunday morning meditation group continued to meet on zoom 3 mornings a month and in person on the second Sunday of the month. The group met all summer on zoom. We have solid participation every week of about 12 and have had some new people join us this year. Sharon Babala continues to provide back-up when Anny is unavailable. Anny did a service focusing on the Buddhist principle of equanimity on the first Sunday in November, two days before the presidential election. It was well received. Using grant money from the endowment trust, Anny was able to attend the biennial conference of the UU Buddhist Association to gain new learning to bring back to Albany UU. We hope to do more next year including possibly bringing in a speaker who would be co-hosted by other groups in the area.

Small Group Ministry Report

Co-Chairs: John Sherman Christy Mabry-Ferlito:

Members: Kathy Hodges, Christy Mabry-Ferlito, John Sherman, Manny Suarez

Accomplishments: Ours is the last surviving Small Group at Albany UU, having been initially facilitated by Patsy Patrick. . We were unsuccessful in attracting new members to sustain our group and have ceased meeting.

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ADVOCACY

Social Justice Team Report

Members: Mary Applegate, Michael Braunstein, Carol Butt, Joyce Chicoine, Matthew Colins, Larry Gambino, Anne Marie Haber, Winston Hagborg, Ed Hancock, Marty Hotvet, Karen Kaufmann, Martha Musser, Lee Newberg, Jean Poppei, Sandy Steubing, Ann von Linden, Deborah Vogel, Vida Wehren. This represents an increase of 4 people since last year.

Our monthly meetings are held on the 4th Tuesday of the month via zoom at 6:45p until about 8pm or so. Anyone is welcomed to attend.

Objectives: The Social Justice Team--originally referred to as the Social Responsibilities Council (SRC) was created to “guide and coordinate education and action in the realm of social issues of moral and ethical significance.” The SJT may issue statements of public support and endorsement *if* they are consistent with the positions of First UU Society of Albany (AlbanyUU) and/or the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (UUA). Please note that the SJT does not speak for the congregation, but only for itself.

We are given an annual budget by the congregation so that we may “initiate and encourage activities that promote social justice.” Across the church year, the SJT can request five **give-away-the-plates** for groups we feel are promoting social justice in the wider community. We generally ask someone from the selected group to come to church to address the congregation for 2 minutes to explain the important work that they do. This year, we again selected Sidewalk Warriors, Troy for one of the five giveaways. Sidewalk Warriors is a “dedicated grassroots 501© (3) organization. Their mission is to “provide compassionate support to those in need, offering hearty meals, essential supplies, and a sense of community, building lasting connections and fostering a supportive environment where everyone can thrive.” They are able to do this with a large group of volunteers. Recent immigrants have especially found this helpful as they struggle to create a home for their families in a new country.

Another **give-away-the-plate** was directed toward RAPP, which stands for *Release Aging People in Prison*. This group is dedicated to “expanding release opportunities, promoting racial justice and ending mass incarceration.” As of February 25, 2025, Rapp received \$1,132 in February; Sidewalk Warriors received \$1,070 in January, and Focus Food Pantries (collected monthly on the 4th Sunday) had received \$912 (a typical monthly amount)

The Social Justice Team is not doing any further **give-away-the plates** this church year to support Peggy Sherman’s 3-month experiment, beginning in April, with **Share-the-Plate**, designed to

increase generosity at AlbanyUU and support worthy causes. While the SJT Give-Away-the-Plate means that all money collected will go a particular group, Share-the-Plate, which many UU congregations participate in, means that half of what is collected each week will go to the group selected while the other half goes to AUU. The Social Justice Team worked with Peggy to choose the three groups we will support: Pink Haven, supporting transpeople, RISSE, supporting refugees and immigrants, and finally, Focus Food Pantry, providing nourishing food to those in need. Information about these three selections is provided in an insert to the order-of-service.

The Social Justice Team can also sponsor a limited number of reduced or even free rental space for groups that might not be able to hold their event otherwise—researched carefully by SJT to make sure they fit our guidelines. SJT did fewer this year: just three or four. However, SJT strongly promoted The Baby Institute for free or reduced rental, as a number of us were familiar with their work. The Baby Institute works with (mostly new) parents helping them learn vital parenting skills. This is an excellent example of the importance of reaching out to support our wider community. The Baby Institute now has free rental space at AUU for its Saturday program, with the requirement that they pay for a door host (unless someone from the congregation volunteers to serve in that capacity)

SJT regards the Inclusivity Team (IT) as a close partner and some of the SJT members are also on that team. A common project is to rekindle the Wayside Pulpit with inspirational messages, once we've come up with a consistent plan. In addition, the Black Lives Matter/Anti-Racism vigil held on Saturday mornings in Delmar and Troy are joint enterprises of SJT and IT.

Accomplishments: In keeping with our mandate to “guide and coordinate education and action in the realm of social issues of moral and ethical significance,” Winston Hagborg arranged a forum in February for RAPP (Release Aging People in Prison) to show a film and lead a discussion after the church service. A good number of people attended.

Earlier in the year, SJT joined with PCY (Program for Children & Youth) to ask congregants to contribute “undies” of all sizes for Grassroots Givers, an organization that serves those in need. People were generous with their donations.

In November, SJT was excited to work with member Peggy Sherman to facilitate the NYUUIJ (New York UU Justice) presentation at AlbanyUU, which included a worship service in the morning, lunch, and 4 workshop possibilities in the afternoon: an amazing event!

Karen Kaufmann organized a drive to support our local USCRI after the new administration cut their funding and forced firing of many employees. This was to help provide refugees and asylum seekers with basic necessities that would ordinarily be supplied by USCRI. Again, people were incredibly generous with all sorts of household supplies as well as with gift cards that allowed Karen to purchase at the end of our drive a large number of bed frames for child/youth beds which would otherwise have been just mattresses on the floor.

SJT allocated \$200 from our budget to support the monthly Community Breakfast, run by Carol Butt (one of our SJT members) and Eric VonHausen. It is truly a wonderful community outreach for people who are often unhoused or living in shelters and who enjoy being our guests as we enjoy learning about them, offering resources, suggestions or just a listening ear. Often there are scarves, gloves, protein bars, etc. for our guests to take with them when they leave.

Finally, in April, SJT was pleased to be able to assist the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Oxford, Mississippi in a Faithify fundraiser to support their plan to bring OWL (Our Whole Lives) to their church community as well as to the larger Oxford, MS community. We sent \$400 from our budget.

Community Breakfast Report

Convener: Carol Butt

Chefs: Erik vonHausen, Sandy Stone, Jeffrey Wright-Sedam, and Robbin Dzembo

The free Community Breakfast at Albany UU was started prior to the pandemic in response to the question to “How can we be a good neighbor?”. It has continued on the second Saturday of each month from 9AM to 11AM. There are over forty Albany UU members and friends who receive the information regularly on the breakfast in the group email. We send publicity out to libraries, homeless shelters, food pantries, the local schools, refugee and immigrant aid organizations and other local social service agencies and continue to reach out to additional sources.

Publicity is sent out electronically within the 2 weeks prior to the breakfast. A team sets up Channing Hall prior to Saturday as the church calendar of events allows. The number of volunteers from Albany UU on a given Saturday varies from about 10 to 20. Numerous people provide fruit and/make baked goods that we put out for our guests and visitors.

We typically range anywhere from 20 to 40 guests (with the number growing) who come in who have seen our invitations at one of the sites above mentioned. We try to have a member of our church community sit with each of our guests who might desire some company.

We serve eggs, pancakes, waffles, sausage, bacon, oatmeal, French toast, prunes, etc. and an assortment of other fruits and pastries, along with orange juice, coffee, and tea and water. We sometimes have a social service representative attending as often as she can who provides resources. In addition, we have some helpful written material from Equinox and other sources to provide to our guests. We have heard from some of our guests that they are challenged with unemployment, addiction issues, homelessness, and other adverse situations. We refer them to our materials and our social worker when she is attending the breakfast.

Our guests often complete the papers that we leave on the tables asking for their feedback. They seem to really appreciate the loving attention and the kindness that we show them.

The donated items from the blanket box and the additional packs of food and supplies provided by our youth this past year have been very welcomed bonuses for our guests to take with them when they leave. The Community Breakfast team and the Youth of our church have also had very successful events to generate revenue to help pay for the cost of the breakfasts and gifts we offer them when they leave. The church community, including the youth, has been very generous and supportive of the community breakfast both in participation and financial contributions.

Green Sanctuary Team Report

Members:

Chuck Manning, Chair

Barbara Spink, Recording Secretary

David Musser and Barbara Spink, Webpage Administrators

Carol Butt and Chris Bystroff, Social Justice Team Liaisons

Marty Hotvet, Religious Education Council Liaison

Members: We keep in touch with over 60 Albany UU members and friends about environmental issues. Refer to the GST email list. We average 12 members for our meetings every month, except for the summer when we have one meeting/picnic.

Purpose: Our goal is to preserve the global environment on which all life depends by working to make the Earth sustainable and by addressing climate change, consistent with our Unitarian 7th principle, which is respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Accomplishments: GST continues to recycle a number of items in the cloakroom. These are listed on our [website](#) link, with new updates on places to recycle items.

David Musser continued to work closely with SHARE and the Renewable Capitol Act. Members voted to support several organizational sign-on letters in support of environmental legislation and rallies.

Members lobbied for the environment in the NY legislature or attended rallies and demonstrations in support of the environment: the NY HEAT Act, the Renewable Capitol Act (SHARE), the Green Amendment, Fridays for the Future, Third Act Upstate, the Plastic Reduction Act, Better Bottle Bill Act (Beyond Plastics) as well as the [Fund Climate Campaign](#) of NY Renews. GST wrote a letter, and members made calls to the Governor in support of the Climate Change Superfund Act, which was eventually signed by the Governor. Members attended and spoke at the Superfund sit-in at the Capitol urging the Governor to sign.

Chris Bystroff and Hugh Johnson continued to monitor voting practices in NY State. Many GST members participated in UU the Vote and other postcarding groups to encourage non-partisan voting in the November election.

Hugh Johnson arranged for GST to enjoy biking outings together.

Members collaborated with People of Albany United for Safe Energy, Smart Elections, Rivers and Mountains Green Faith Circle, Solarize Albany, Beyond Plastics, NYRenews, NYSERDA, Buy Local Grow Local, Nature Bus, and Capital Region Interfaith Creation Care Coalition (See [Partners](#)).

Members picked up trash along the Hudson River in Albany (Riversweep) for Earth Day in 2024 and 2025.

GST sponsored coffee hours and postcard-signings at coffee hour and the Earth Day service.

Carol Butt worked with the Community Breakfast to have a clothes for the community offering, thereby reusing donated.

GST-sponsored Forums:

- 2024-3-23 GST sponsored the Zero Waste Community Dance Fund Raiser for the proposed Capital Region Reuse Center. [Flyer](#).
- 2024-12-11 GST sponsored a forum on creating a Reuse Center in the Capital District, which would recycle electronic, construction materials, collect food scraps, and host a repair café, among other things. [Flyer](#).
- 2024-11-16 NYUU Justice Convocation (all-day event), which included a workshop on Climate Justice with Michael Richardson of Third Act Upstate NY along with other Justice issues.

Member's Articles and Letters to the Editor:

- 2025-02-10
- Paul Fisk *'Arguably worst time' for Trump as climate change-fueled disasters worsen*
[Letter to the Editor](#) published in the *Times Union*
- 2025-01-27
Sandy Steubing *Hochul making smart moves addressing climate change*
[Letter to the Editor](#) published in the *Times Union*
- 2024-11-18
Paul Fisk *Climate crisis needs state, local, individual action now*
[Letter to the Editor](#) published in the *Times Union*

Upcoming Activities: GST will plan and participate in the Service for Earth Day, April 27, 2025. The speaker will be Jim D'Aloisio, a leader of the Syracuse congregation, and he will speak on the UU response to Climate Change.

There will be an Earth Day clean-up at the Watervliet parking area of the Mohawk Hudson Bike Trail on April 19.

GST will continue working with [our partner organizations](#), attend rallies, lobby, write letters, work with our Youth, present forums, recycle, have postcards at coffee hour, and practice sustainability.

Sheridan Preparatory Academy Volunteers Report

Reporter: Martha Musser

Supporting our neighborhood school is an important social justice activity at Albany UU. The relationship between the school and Albany UU, however, has changed since the beginning of the pandemic. The coronavirus and growing neighborhood violence still affect Sheridan Prep. The enrollment has declined from over 400 to around 265. Many children lost academic ground during the pandemic. Pre-school children lost the opportunity to participate in groups outside the home, leaving them unprepared for kindergarten.

The coronavirus affected volunteering also. Before the pandemic, we have had as many as 10 UUs each year who volunteered in classrooms and helped with school events. Because of the risk of getting Covid-19, no

UUs volunteered during 2021-22 and 2022-23. Three volunteers returned to the classroom last year. This year, the number of volunteers has increased significantly.

Purpose: Albany UU members seek to support a neighborhood school which serves children of color from low-income families. We support the school by volunteering in the classroom and in other school activities and by providing financial support for the playground, field trips, and other events. Our collaboration with Sheridan Prep contributes to fulfilling every part of the church's vision. Generosity lifts the hearts of volunteers who contribute time or money and broadens their minds by giving them a better understanding of poverty and racial disparity.

Accomplishments: This year, the number of approved volunteers for classrooms has increased to eight. Other UUs have helped with school activities outside the classroom. Sheridan Prep enrolls a significant number of Spanish-speaking students, who are in the early stages of learning English. Three of our new classroom volunteers are bilingual and their assistance is especially needed at Sheridan Prep.

Our important effort, led by Chuck Manning, has been focused on acquiring additional outdoor space. In 2020, the Albany County Land Trust transferred without cost the vacant lot at 129 Sherman Street to the school district. Funds donated by Albany UUs were used to pay the closing costs. This year, we were able to purchase the adjoining lot at 131 Sherman Street and transfer it to the school district. The purchases of 129 and 131 Sherman provide the school with a space 33' wide and 165' long to use for outdoor learning and play. Before we begin to create the desired outdoor learning space, we need an approved plan and the necessary funds. The designated fund for Sheridan Prep now contains over \$5,000 donated by individual UUs and will be collecting more funds to make the needed improvements to the lots.

Sheridan Preparatory Academy celebrated Read Across America week in March and asked for volunteers to be guest readers in the classroom. More UUs volunteered to be guest readers than the school needed. Those who read to students reported that it was a great experience.

With the assistance of Marc Daniels, beginning last school year, Sheridan Prep has a Trout in the Classroom release program. This nationwide environmental education program brings a tank of baby trout to the classroom to teach students about the lifespan development of trout. Finally, students release the trout into local waters, teaching them about watersheds. It fosters a new generation of advocates for trout and the watersheds in which they live.

The Albany UU operational budget allocated \$2,664 to Sheridan Prep for field trips. Many families cannot afford the cost of taking their children to sites around the Albany area. Albany UU help is critical to ensuring that students have access to opportunities that middle-class children enjoy routinely. All grades, except first, took at least one field trip. With our help, the fifth grade is taking an end-of-year trip to the Bronx Zoo, an experience that many Sheridan Prep families could not afford for their children.

Plans for next year: We hope to bring more volunteers to the classroom. The Albany UU operational budget will again provide funds for field trips. Our most important effort will be focused on ensuring that the necessary improvements are made to the Sherman Street lots to provide space for outdoor learning and play.

End of Life Choice Task Force Report

Co-Chairs: Nancy Willie-Schiff, Dave Munro

In keeping with UU values and a 1988 UUA General Assembly Resolution on Death with Dignity, and as part of the Social Justice Team of Albany UU, the Task Force continued its efforts to advance personal autonomy at the end of life through education and advocacy for New York's Medical Aid in Dying (MAID) Act. Our actions included:

- Welcoming new members to the AlbanyUU End-of-Life Choice e-mail group;
- Partnering with New York UU Justice (NYUUI) to involve the entire New York State UU community in advocating for passage of the Medical Aid in Dying (MAID) Act and participating in the first ever NYUUI Justice Convocation at Albany UU on November 16, 2024;
- Participating in frequent events at the Capitol to advocate for MAID, including a special UU Advocacy Day on March 28, 2025, in partnership with Compassion and Choices New York: and
- Using WINDOWS WEEKLY to encourage all Albany UUs to contact lawmakers about MAID and to publicize opportunities for education about end-of-life issues.

FOCUS Food Pantry Report

FOCUS is an alliance of downtown Albany churches and faith affiliates (including Albany UU) that operates, among other services, the Interfaith Food Pantry at the Emmanuel Baptist Church on State Street. For many years, Albany UU has designated the fourth Sunday of each month for a service collection in support of the Food Pantry. Albany UU members and visitors can donate to the Pantry via collection envelopes placed in the offering plate at the Sunday service, or by mailing checks or making contributions online at the Albany UU website.

The FOCUS donation program is overseen by a volunteer from the Social Justice Team, Karen Kaufmann, in cooperation with the chair of the Religious Services Team, Dawn Dana, who ensures that donation envelopes are included in the Order of Service provided to attendees at the service on the designated Sundays.

About two weeks after the collection is taken, the Treasurer cuts a check to FOCUS for the total of cash, online contributions, and "pass-through" checks made out to Albany UU. This check and any checks that donors have made out directly to FOCUS are then mailed to FOCUS. Albany UU donations have totaled many thousands of dollars over the years and amounted to \$5,152.62 in calendar year 2024.

The FOCUS Interfaith Food Pantry serves a vital need among our downtown neighbors that continues to grow. Our support is needed more than ever.

Inclusivity Team Report

Chairperson: Joyce Chicoine

Active Members: Ann von Linden, Anne Marie Haber, Deborah Vogel, Dick Dana, Jean Poppei, Joyce Chicoine, Karen Kaufmann, Lee Newberg, Linda Hunt, Mary Baker, Michael Hornsby, Pam Collins, Sorrel Harrow

Purpose: To build a diverse, multicultural beloved community and dismantle racism and other oppressions within our congregation.

Accomplishments: The Inclusivity Team organized discussion groups related to a group reading of *Mistakes and Miracles*. Four separate groups met for four sessions to respond to questions related to our congregation's anti-racism work as it relates to the congregations described in the book. Members of the Inclusivity team then spent several weeks reviewing and summarizing the notes from those discussion groups. A final condensed summary is being submitted to Ministerial and Operations Team, so it can be added to their May 2025 agenda.

The Team identified two goals to guide our antiracism work going forward. (They are included in the *Mistakes and Miracles* final report.) The team concluded that congregational leaders need to receive training about the best way to prevent or respond to microaggressions. Microaggressions are often unintended slights that are directed at members of marginalized groups. The cumulative effect of microaggressions can have lasting harmful effects if not dealt with properly. The second goal relates to the Inclusivity team hearing from members of marginalized groups, so that the Inclusivity team can effectively advocate for them.

Another major project for the inclusivity team in 2024-2025 has been organizing and hosting our first annual Building Beloved Community Beyond the Binary conference. As this was our first year and planning time was limited, we mainly focused on being a remote host for the conference, which originated in the First UU Society of Syracuse. Three members of our congregation (Joyce Chicoine, Sorrel Harrow, and Leah Purcell) participated in mandatory training from the UUA in order to qualify as a remote host. The day of the conference, we viewed the workshops and keynote speaker that were available to us via Zoom. In addition, we hosted a live panel discussion about Polyamory, since a significant number of people from the trans / non-binary community also happen to be polyamorous.

Plans for next year:

- Plan activities related to the LGBTQ+ Pride Day celebration in our community.
- Identify or develop training regarding microaggressions to offer to leaders of our congregation in the coming year.
- Identify ways to make persons with disabilities feel more comfortable while participating in congregational activities.
- Build trust with persons from marginalized groups, so that they will feel comfortable relating their experiences of discrimination to members of the Inclusivity team.
- Collaborate with other teams and committees in our congregation to offer more opportunities for people to get to know others who are different from them.

Octavia Butler Book Group Report

Organizer: Anne Marie Haber

Facilitator: Karen Strong

The Octavia Butler Book Club at Albany UU was started by Rev. Sam Trumbore in the Fall of 2021, growing out of the Racial Healing Workgroup.

The first four books we read (Parable of the Sower, Parable of Talents, Wild Seed, and Mind of My Mind) were guided by Octavia's Parables, a podcast by adrienne maree brown and Toshi Reagon. Toshi summarized the chapters each week and adrienne posted deep discussion questions, digging into the texts,

what it means, how it reflects on what is happening in the world now, and how it relates to our own lives and communities.

The podcast ended after *Mind of My Mind*, and we decided to continue the book group, with the podcast-style questions (as best we could). We continued to enjoy the conversations, if not the book, and completed the *Patternmaster* series.

In April 2024, the Octavia Butler Book Group continued in a new branch of Afrofuturism with N.K. Jemisin's *The City We Became*, followed by the second in the duology, *The World We Make*.

In spring 2025, we've returned to Octavia Butler, re-engaging with the parables, with the added dimension of the newly-published graphic novels, with artwork by John Jennings.

New members are welcome to join the group at any time. We meet Sunday evenings, on Zoom, 7:00~8:30 pm, and we discuss 1-2 chapters per meeting. We skip the second Sunday, so that people can participate in both Walker Book Club and Octavia Butler Book Group.

When we have more than approximately 8 members present, we separate into breakout rooms to discuss the dystopian events that occur in the novels and that are mirrored in our recent and current events. We've talked about characters, racism, capitalism, feelings, dreams, surviving, community, planning for the future, and more.

Karen Strong is the group's organizer and facilitation is shared each week.

Black Lives Matter Troy Vigil Report

The Troy Antiracism Vigil started in the summer of 2020. Since July 11, 2020, the vigil has taken place weekly. In the past year, the group has held the vigil at the intersection of Fulton, Third, and River Streets in Downtown Troy, 10:30-11:15 am spring through fall and 10:30-11:00 am in the winter months.

The vigil has regular attendees and many people who come occasionally. Unaffiliated people and guests have also joined-in spontaneously. The weekly attendance varies in size from 5-15 people. The vigil was canceled a few times for dangerous weather, including smoke, cold, and heat warnings.

The purpose of the group is twofold: 1) to express that Black Lives Matter and, 2) to inspire passersby to act against racism.

The notice about the vigil appears in *Windows Weekly* and occasional messages to an email group of participants. The vigil is recommended by Albany UU Social Justice Team (SJT).

The response from the public to the vigil has ranged from very enthusiastically positive to the voicing of obscenities.

To ensure safety as much as we can, we are working under these agreements as a provisional covenant: We carry signs with the same message: "Black Lives Matter," "Stand Against Racism," or "Act Against Racism." We limit our positive responses to a thumbs-up or a wave. We do not respond to any negative reactions, such as heckling. One person will be designated to take photos of license plates of anyone who is inappropriate. We all leave at the end of the vigil, and people leave together.

If friends join us, we advise them of the measures above.

If you can't or don't want to join, standing or sitting (bring your own chair), you are invited to drive by and wave or honk encouragement.

In the past year, after the vigil, many participants have met for refreshments and participated in a regular gathering that has become somewhat of an informal salon: a time to talk about ideas, current events, and social justice matters. One matter that is ongoing is the idea of sponsoring CDTA Navigator cards to help meet the transportation needs of poor individuals and families. Navigator cards can be used for traveling to work, medical visits, pharmacy, and grocery store, among other destinations.

Currently, there are approximately 20 sponsored cards. Sidewalk Warriors has become a collaborative partner for distribution of the cards. Executive Director, Robin Fontanelli, gives the cards to guests that she knows who utilize the bus and need such assistance. This initiative has potential to expand, and Paula Brewer, Marty Hotvet, Ann VonLinden, and Anne Marie Haber will be working on expanding and continuing to grow the relationship with Sidewalk Warriors. This action has a clear relationship to the vigil, as we stand directly across from the busiest bus stop in Troy. Many of the bus patrons and bus drivers are People of Color.

Archie, the original antiracism vigilist, often said, "Just pick one thing and do it." In that spirit, we continue

DENOMINATIONAL RELATIONS

New York Unitarian Universalist Justice (NYUUI) Report

Chairperson/Convener: Peggy Sherman serves as treasurer and board member of this state-wide organization.

Purpose: To build a strong network of Unitarian Universalist congregations in New York State that will work together to advocate for a just New York. NYUUI is the UU successor to Interfaith Impact of New York State, which forged a record as a progressive moral voice in Albany with support and leadership from Albany UUs.

Accomplishments: Focus issues for the year continued to be climate justice, criminal/legal reform, housing justice and medical aid in dying. We also advocated for the NYS Equal Rights Amendment, adopted by voters in the November election.

NYUUI held its first ever statewide meeting at Albany UU on Saturday, November 16, 2024! The Justice Convocation drew about 90 participants, both in Albany and online, representing 24 UU congregations. The day featured worship, workshops to learn about social justice issues and opportunities to connect with UU from across the state.

Members of Albany UU continue to be the leading participants in advocacy days at the Capitol and provided essential volunteer support for the Justice Convocation. Albany UU continues to support NYUUI financially and by serving as its fiscal sponsor, for which NYUUI is grateful.

Plans for next year: We have scheduled the second Justice Convocation for Saturday November 15, 2025 at Albany UU and hope to involve and connect more New York UUs in their justice work.

UU Connections Team (UUA, GA, NYSCU, CER) Report

Chair: Dawn Dana

Purpose: This team was created to promote, support and coordinate Albany UU's active participation in the Unitarian Universalist Association, as well as its connections with UUA member congregations and affiliated organizations. A primary function is to organize and coordinate congregant participation in UUA General Assembly and to recruit and credential the congregation's General Assembly delegates. We also monitor and disseminate regional (Central East Region) offerings and encourage attendance at relevant trainings and conferences.

Accomplishments: An all-virtual General Assembly took place in June 2024. We filled our full delegate slate of seven, including Jan McCracken, Peggy Sherman, Hillary Torres, Chris Bystroff, Michael Hornsby, Dick Dana, and Leah Purcell, with Leah leading the group as delegate convener. A key issue of business was the final approval of the amended Bylaws Article II Purposes and Covenant. We held congregational conversations to discuss Article II and get congregant input on the proposed amendments, which were subsequently adopted. General Assembly 2025 will be held in Baltimore, MD in June. We have assembled a delegate team, pending Board approval at their April meeting. The proposed slate includes Mary Applegate, Dawn Dana, Dick Dana, Molly Daniels, Jan McCracken, Jean Poppei, and Leah Purcell. Leah will again serve as delegate convener.

UU Weekend at Silver Bay Report

UU Weekend is an inter-congregational and intergenerational retreat which takes place at Silver Bay Conference and Family Retreat Center located on the shores of beautiful Lake George, New York. This retreat provides an opportunity for UUs and friends to come together to enjoy the beautiful Fall foliage and to participate in spiritual, physical, and fun-filled activities.

Last October (2024—the 31st annual gathering!) 284 people from 8 congregations (Albany, Schenectady, Saratoga Springs, Glens Falls, Oneonta, Binghamton, Burlington, and Chicago) and 6 states (New York, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Jersey, Ohio and Illinois) attended this event that had over 60 program offerings. Since this was a 3-day holiday weekend, 135 participants opted to stay the extra night. There were thought-provoking workshops such as What Does Being in a Religious Community Mean to Us, Crafts for Fun and Mindfulness, Affirming Female Sexuality, Lighting the Chalice at Home, and book discussions. Many participants also enjoyed fun workshops like Star Island Bead Making, tarot readings, star gazing, sound bath, nature and bird walks, photography, drawing, croquet, guided meditation, yoga, hikes, disc golf, shuffleboard, archery, kayaking, rock wall, pickleball, boat rides, campfires, and many more. There was a large selection of programs for children and youth. Some of these activities included a haunted house, pumpkin carving, kite making, pizza making, capture the flag, and making fairy houses. Our keynote speaker was Rev Barbara Becker. Her presentation was titled “How to Lead a Life, Well Lived: The Art of Living with the End in Mind”. Our Sunday worship service was led by Pam Collins. The documentary “Benedict Arnold: Hero Betrayed” followed by a lively discussion with the writer was enjoyed by many. “Searching for Timbuctoo” was also viewed and discussed. All of these wonderful programs and events were made possible due to the hard work of over 150 volunteers.

Food and Entertainment were abundant. There is a store on the property for gifts, ice cream, pizza, and a variety of snacks. Meals were served buffet style in the new dining room that caters to a variety of dietary needs. The Saturday afternoon Social gave participants a chance to mingle, snack, enjoy beverages, and to

meet new people. The silent auction during the social helped raise funds for future programming and scholarships for others to attend. Evening entertainment included campfires, with music and s'mores, open mic, puzzles, games, a Spontaneous Melodrama, and music and dancing.

2025 dates: Come join us on October 10-12 & optional 13th for another inspiring weekend. Thus far 130 people have registered, of which 65 will spend the extra night. We are excited to offer a late Sunday afternoon cruise on the lake for those that opt to stay the extra night. The retreat will be a lot of fun with many programming options including spiritual, personal growth, informational, and challenging programs and activities. What a great way to spend a Fall weekend with the mountains and lake in peak color. For more information including a registration form and a copy of the current schedule please look on the Albany UU website. <https://albanyuu.org/blog/uu-silver-bay-weekend-2025/>

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Congregational Life Team Report Report

Reports to: Ministry & Operations Team (MOT)

Members: Amy Lent, Barb Manning, Sharon Babala, John Sherman, Anne Savage, Dick Dana, and Ilene Kane. Michele Desrosiers is the liaison from the Ministry and Operations Team (MOT).

The Congregational Life Team is comprised of several different “sub-teams”: Social Events, Membership, Sunday Volunteer Opportunities, and Communication. Each of these teams is led by a member of the Congregational Life Team.

Social Events Team Members: Bob Franklin, Randy Rosette, Paula Moskowitz, Trish Zima, Sharon Babala, Pat Bailey, John Sherman, Mary Ann Jablonowski

Welcome Team Members: Amy Lent, Elizabeth Berberian, Barb Manning, John Sherman. Greeters: Jan Mc Cracken, Robbin Dzembo, Kelli Smith, Debbie Brown, Barb Metz, Amie Jamieson. We welcome two new Greeters who are just starting this month: Shellie Petrie and Mary Applegate.

Communication Team Members: Amy Lent, Sharon Babala, Ilene Kane, Dick Dana and assistance with bulletin boards from Bree Perry and Elena Reynolds.

Sunday Volunteers Team: John Sherman

This has been an exciting and fun year for the Congregational Life Team! We have been a very busy group and have accomplished a lot this year. The Social Events Team has sponsored a number of congregation-wide potluck suppers and tried to add some form of entertainment after each one. The most popular one has been the Potluck and Talent Show that was held in March. Over 80 people attended this event. Thanks to Peter Brown who coordinated the talent show. Other potlucks have had attendance from 30 (on a snowy night in January) to 60 people. These are enjoyed by all who attend.

Other social events include Circle Dinners, an annual church-wide social event and participating in Albany's “First Friday”. John and Peggy Sherman continue to coordinate the monthly Circle Dinners and attendance is continuing to increase at these. For the second year, the Social Events Team is planning a church-wide special event, the Blossom Bash, on Saturday, June 7th. This will be a chance for members and friends to

have fun together with food, music and entertainment. We will continue to increase social event offerings as needed. Ilene Kane and Dick Dana have been organizing art exhibits and entertainment for Albany's First Fridays each month. An art exhibit opening reception plus live entertainment have drawn some people from outside of our congregation during these events, as well as members of our congregation.

Rev. Ann, Jan McCracken, Sharon Babala and Barb Manning worked together to create and present a new Getting to Know Unitarian Universalism (GTKUU). A three-session program, it was offered in February for the first time. These sessions are for anyone who is interested in learning more about Unitarian Universalism, Albany UU's history and governance as well as the path to membership. Roughly a dozen people attended each session. This will be offered again in the fall.

In March, twelve new members signed the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany's Membership Book. We recognized these people in a service on March 16th. We will be holding another New Member Recognition Sunday on June 1st.

The Society's membership, as reported to the UUA, was 307, as of January 2025. This is basically the same as last year's number. As happens every year, we lost some members to death, a few resigned and others moved away and new ones joined. However, we have been seeing a definite increase in the number of new families coming through our doors and lots of little children running around the building. More people are saying that Albany UU is what they have been looking for. We need to publicize about us more and this is something we are working on for the 2025/26 year.

The Congregational Life Team is making communication (both inwardly and outwardly) a focus of our work for 2025/26. We want to update information on the website, as well as our "in-house" brochures and find ways to communicate better to our members and friends. This also includes updating and revamping all of the bulletin boards in Channing Hall. Some work has started on that already with Jan McCracken and Bree Perry working on the bulletin board showing our governance structure and who are our leaders. Sharon Babala, Amy Lent & Elena Reynolds have begun work on the Congregational Life Bulletin Board as well. More to come.

We are a fun group of people to work with. If any of these areas are of interest to you, please reach out to Sharon Babala or Barb Manning.

Finally, we want to give a heart-felt thank you to Don Odell and Kathy Hodges for their many years of service with the welcoming and membership teams.

Growth Through Service Team Report

Chair: Dick Dana

Purpose: The Growth Through Service (GTS) program is designed to connect congregation members with opportunities that foster personal growth, new friendships, and greater connection with the church community. GTS is also about creating connections among members of our congregation through serving a higher purpose, something greater than our own individual needs. A key premise of the program is that part of being a UU is serving others and each other, and that by serving, one grows as a person.

Goals: The primary role of GTS is to hold a conversation with each member of the congregation. The purpose of these conversations is to learn about their aspirations, to explore what opportunities here at Albany UU might best fulfill those aspirations, and how they might take advantage of the opportunities here to participate in the life of the congregation.

Some members find connection simply by attending the service once a week, but may be interested in exploring other opportunities in future. Wherever you are in your journey, the Conversation Leaders want to hear about it.

A second role of the GTS Team is to maintain an up-to-date collection of descriptions of every service opportunity at Albany UU, no matter how small, and to post that information on our Website for all to see. We have heard many new members use the term “overwhelming” to describe the process of learning how they might fit into our community and where the best opportunities are for them to contribute. Making these descriptions available to all takes some of the mystery out of who we are and what we do together as a congregation.

Accomplishments: We continue to hold conversations with members of our church community, with special emphasis on new members, working towards the goal of conversations with every willing member of our community.

We continue to provide recommendations of possible volunteers for open positions to our ministers, to the Ministries and Operations Team, to team leaders and especially to the Nominating Committee, based on what we have learned from our conversations.

Our goals for the next church year are:

- To rebuild our team; and
- to eliminate the backlog of existing members yet to have a conversation.

Reception Coordinators Report

The Receptions Team has provided five memorial service receptions since the beginning of May, 2024. We provided memorial receptions for Lois Thomson (5/4/2024), David Brandon (10/19/2024), Arlene Gilbert (11/9/2024), RoseAnne Fogarty (4/12/2025) and Thayer Heath (4/27/2025).

Each reception provided food and beverages for attendees. As Lead Coordinator, we talk to family, the attending minister and Church Administrator (Sophia Garder) to find out what a family wants for a reception and to coordinate putting that together. Our other reception volunteers helped with providing some of the food, set up, clean up and prepping food donations brought by the rest of our church community.

Sandy Stone and Barb Manning have shared the role of Reception Coordinator, taking turns leading each reception, for a number of years. Sandy has decided to stay on the Receptions Team, but step down as Co-Chair. Fortunately, Maryann Jablonowski has stepped up to take Sandy’s place! I want to personally thank Sandy for her many years working alongside me to co-lead this team. I also want to welcome Maryann as the new co-leader. Maryann needs big shoes to follow in Sandy’s footsteps, but she has shown that she is more than capable of doing that! We are glad that Sandy has agreed to stay on the team and we are glad that Maryann has taken her place.

We would be happy to have more people willing to be Lead Coordinators as well as volunteers to assist with receptions, so if you would like to join us in one of these roles, please reach out to me, Barb Manning, or Maryann Jablonowski to learn more about what is involved. We have a good crew of volunteers who all work well together and have fun. In addition, we want to thank all of the Reception Team volunteers who helped all year long!

Submitted by Barb Manning, Reception Team

Coffee Hour Report

Convener: John Sherman

Purpose: Coffee Hour Hosting helps sustain Albany UU by welcoming people and encouraging them to stay and socialize after attending services. Providing snacks and beverages also gives committees and teams at Albany UU the opportunity to promote their activities, raise awareness, and recruit new participants.

Accomplishments: Numerous Albany UU committees and teams have generously stepped forward to host and our Coffee Hours have promoted our goal of welcoming everyone and strengthening our connections with one another. Special thanks to Erik Von Hausen for supporting the Coffee Hour Hosts.

Plans for next year: We look forward to involving more Albany UUs at Coffee Hour.

Circle Dinners Report

Conveners: John and Peggy Sherman

Purpose: Developing personal connections among Albany UUs and newcomers makes our church community strong. Circle Dinners are a great opportunity to socialize and get better acquainted with fellow members and friends. As well as giving members the opportunity to strengthen their connections with Albany UU and contribute to a vital, nurturing religious community, the dinners provide an extraordinary opportunity for newcomers to appreciate Albany UU.

Accomplishments: Regular dinners were held in members' homes on 6 evenings, and 79 people participated in one or more of the dinners. A 7th evening is planned for May.

Thanks to our generous hosts Sharon and Mike Babala, Dawn and Dick Dana, Cindy and Chris Edwardson, Linda Hunt and Larry Gambino, Martha and David Musser, Astrid Pettersen and Neil Rice, Maria Phillips and Brad Workman, Chieko and Bruce Reed, Julie Shaw, and Reese Satin.

Plans for next year: We look forward to more convivial gatherings!

Projects and Quilts (Ps & Qs) Report

Members: Joan Ekengren, Virginia Hammer, Abby Sugarman, Nancy Wagner, Annika Pfluger, Jay Englishbee, Betsy Wright, Barb Manning and assorted visitors.

We meet every Wednesday from 10 am until 12:30pm in Room B-8. Many members bring individual knitting or other hand-work projects. While we work, we share stories and solve the world's problems. At noon we eat our bag lunches that we each brought, drink tea and eat chocolate. Tea and chocolate are provided by the group.

We welcome any other new members and, if you like to sew, we can teach you how to quilt. If you would like to learn to knit, we can also teach you that. We are offering to teach beginning knitting to anyone who wants to learn. We start with a pair of fingerless mittens, so it is easy and you have something useful when finished. We also welcome crocheters! Contact Barb Manning for further information.

Philosophy Group Report

Reporter: Carol Butt

The philosophy group is a democratically functioning entity that meets each Tuesday morning from 10:15 to 12:00 noon on zoom. It pretty much operates without any one person being the point person. Each week we solicit ideas for the next week in the last 15 minutes and have an informal vote on the suggestions. The person whose topic we agree upon is the moderator for the next week. The person whose topic is voted on for the following week is encouraged to send the topic to our church administrator for the weekly newsletter.

Walker Book Group Report

Reporter: Martha Musser

The Walker Book Group meets monthly to discuss a book selected by participants. The group is open to all Albany UU members and friends. Newcomers are always welcome. This informal book group has existed for many years and is named in memory of a treasured, deceased Albany UU member.

Participants decided on a combination of Zoom and in-person meetings. In the months of November through March, we will meet on Zoom at 6:30pm. In the remaining months, we will meet in person in Channing Hall at 5pm for a potluck supper. We do not meet in July and August. The book discussion will begin at 6:15pm and those not able to meet in Channing can join by Zoom.

Purpose: The group searches for UU truth and meaning by reading and discussing a wide range of literature, both fiction and nonfiction. Many of our selections explore life in other cultures or current issues. Participants expand their reading horizons and develop a deeper sense of community and stronger connections with other Albany UUs. We select books for each month's discussion by voting. Suggested books must have been read recently and be available at low cost and/or be easily available from the public library.

Books discussed from September 2024 through June 2025: The group read and discussed five novels, two memoirs, and a nonfiction book. We read the following: *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride; *The Vulnerables* by Sigrin Nunez; *The Flag, the Cross, and the Station Wagon* by Bill McKibben; *Eve in Hollywood* by Amor Towles; *James* by Percival Everett; *Man of Two Faces: A Memoir, a History, a Memorial* by Viet Thanh Nguyen; *Absolution* by Alice McDermott; and *We Who Believe in Freedom* by Alice Green. Generally, we read a classic book in May and short stories in June. In May, instead of a classic book, we will discuss three short stories by John Cheever. In June, we will discuss the short stories in Claire Deegan's *Antarctica*.

Accomplishments: Despite competition from various other activities and busy schedules, the group continues to thrive and generate interest in reading and discussing literary works of fiction and nonfiction. We welcomed new individuals during the year.

Plans for next year: The group will continue to search for UU truth and meaning by reading and discussing various books.

Building Connections Auction 2025

Reporter: Martha Musser

The auction is our biggest fundraiser of the year! Not only is the auction an essential fundraiser, it is an important way to build community. The social events, dinners, garden walks, hikes, etc., give Albany UU members a chance to socialize and get to know each other better. Services and food items give busy families the opportunity to buy an item that will save valuable time. There are always a variety of interesting and affordable items available, so everyone can participate.

Before the pandemic, Albany UU held an in-person auction during which members and friends could bid on donated items. Since 2022, we have conducted our auction online, using 32auctions.com. All items are fixed price. As the dangers of the pandemic have eased, we have continued the online auction. Many people prefer the convenience and flexibility of the on-line auction.

Purpose: The auction raises funds to meet Albany UU's expenses and provides opportunities for members and friends to interact and know each other better.

Accomplishments: In 2025, members and friends generously donated 95 items. These donations included dinners and other social events; services, such as gardening; vacations; and objects, such as a vintage Abruzzi blanket. On the first day of the auction, we raised over \$11,000, a record for the on-line auction. We have the potential to raise about \$20,000 by the end of the two-week auction period.

Plans for next year: We will continue with the online auction using 32auctions.com. We hope each year to increase the number of donations and the funds raised.

Holiday Bazaar, December 2024

Planning Team: Anny Lapinski, Barb Manning, Sigrin Newell, Randy Rosette, Sandy Stone

Participants: Barb Manning and Sandy Stone chaired the Pies, Randy Rosette chaired the Soups and Fudge, Sigrin Newell, and Anny Lapinski chaired the crafts. Karen Kaufman recruited the AUU vendors. We will definitely need more leaders to join us next year.

About twenty Albany UU members worked on baking pies, making soups, and creating crafts. Several of them worked on more than one part of the Bazaar. Kudos for their extra effort.

Purpose: Provide a fun activity to honor the winter holidays and raise funds for Albany UU while sharing the products of our creativity and cooking skills.

Accomplishments: The 2024 Bazaar and Craft Fair was held in Channing Hall. The Soups and Fudge team made a record \$2355.

The 2024 grand total was **\$4608 (netting \$4,301 after expenses)** compared with the Holiday Bazaar average from the past five years - \$3820, which includes low receipts during the pandemic years. We made \$4.00 more than in 2023 = \$4608 vs. \$4604. On the Saturday before the sale, Nancy Willie-Schiff and Jeffrey Sedam and others arranged the crafts and set up tables for soups, fudge and pies.

Crafts: Many people helped with the crafts project. Crafters made items such as hats and scarves, catnip mice, jewelry, holiday decorations, applesauce, jams, and other gift items. All crafters contributed their materials. Things that didn't sell were returned to their makers or donated to Grassroots Givers. Crafters

were: Izzy Carrera, Ann Marie Haber, Virginia Hammer, Tanya Hotalen, Anny Lapinski, Ireta London, Barb Manning, Sigrin Newell, Laura Paris, Reese Satin, and Abby Sugarman.

Vendors: Eight vendors had tables with a larger numbers of items and items of greater value. They contributed 15% of their profits to the bazaar. Special thanks go to Annika Pfluger who donated all of her vendor receipts. Vendors were: Carol Butt, Olivia Dunn and Caroline Corrigan, Ken Meyers, Patti Jo Newell, Sandy Stone, Annika Pfluger, and Alyssa Yeager.

For the **Tiny Treasures** table people were asked to contribute small items for “name your own price” sale. It brought in \$154, not a lot, but it added to the excitement of the sale. Also, it was a good place for children to get gifts for friends and family. This aspect should be publicized better next year.

Soups: With Randy Rosette’s capable guidance, fifteen contributors made a wide variety of soups, chili, and hot fudge with the goal of meeting dietary needs of all kinds. Contributors contributed the cost of the ingredients, Soups, in quart and pint containers, were sold for two Sundays. Randy provided recipes for each kind of soup. After the sale, empty containers were returned to Randy for recycling. Soup makers were: Sharon Babala, Pat Bailey, Debbie Brown, Dawn Dana, Cindy Dean, Carole Dorfman, Robbin Dzembo, Kathy Harris, Linda Hunt, Barb Manning, Donna Meixner, Barb Metz, Paula Moskowitz, Sigrin Newell, Randy Rosette, and Deborah Vogel.

Pies: Pie sales this year totaled \$1,214. Costs were \$324.39. The Net Income from pie sales was \$886.61.

Pie crusts were made ahead of time by Sharon Babala, Mary Fellows, Cindee Herrick, Maryann Jablonowski, Barb Manning and Sandy Stone. On Election Day, workers peeled, cored and cut up 3 bushels of apples: Carol Butt, Sharon Babala, Laura Churchill, Dawn Dana, Paula Moskowitz, Chuck Manning, Sigrin Newell, Darnell Rohrbaugh, Barb Spink, Deborah Vogel, and Trish Zima.

Sandy Stone and Barb Manning coordinated the assembling of the apple and apple-cranberry pies for a total of 54 pies. Cindee Herrick, Barb Manning and Sandy Stone made the pumpkin pie filling and assembled 30 pumpkin pies.

Barb and Chuck Manning donated applesauce made from additional apples. This was sold during the Craft Fair for \$5 per pint or \$9.00 for 2 pints. Twelve pints jars were donated. The profit from these is included in the Craft Fair income.

Treasurer: Andrea Nix kept her cool as she collected and recorded money from all the happy buyers.

Publicity: Bazaar activities were publicized via email, Windows Weekly and Sunday announcements. At the end of October we posted messages encouraging people to make crafts. The chairs of each group sent emails to all participants from 2023 encouraging them to donate again in 2024. AUU vendors were encouraged to plan ahead to have a table again in 2024.

The organizing committee is grateful to all who helped make crafts, soups, fudge, or pies, as well as all those who helped in the complicated process of setting up and selling at the Bazaar. This fund raising activity would not be successful without willing workers.

Plans for next year: We plan to do the craft fair again. Having the sale in Channing is a good community-builder. We need many more volunteers – come join us.

TOTAL SALES

Soups and fudge	\$ 2355
Pies	\$ 887
Crafts	\$ 518
Vendors	\$ 387
Tiny Treasures	\$ 154

GRAND TOTAL

\$4,301 Net Sales after Expenses

Wine and Cheese Tasting April 2025

Co-Chairs: John Sherman and Al DeSalvo

Wineaux: Marc Daniel, Al DeSalvo, Chris and Cindy Edwardson, Betsy Kuzia, Annika Pfluger, Peggy and John Sherman, Rick Whitebread

Accomplishments: Sixty people attended the very successful 20th Wine and Cheese Tasting on March 29, 2025. We featured wines crafted and produced by women and minorities accompanied by cheeses selected and presented by Mary Rizzo from the Cheese Traveler, and chocolates specially crafted by Annika Pfluger! The event raised \$2,772 including the very generous matching grant from Rick and Dorothy Whitebread.

Special thanks to the Honest Weight Food Coop for contributing most of the accompaniments.

Plans for next year: We are looking forward to holding the 21st Wine and Cheese Tasting in 2025.

Caring Network Report

Coordinator: Toni Daniel

The Caring Network (CN) is a group of FUUSA volunteers who provide encouragement and short-term support to fellow FUUSAns and friends of the congregation with phone calls, rides, meals, visits, and similar services. Membership in the CN is open to all FUUSAns, and members are as active as they feel able. Members of the Pastoral Care Associates team are also members of the CN so that they may determine any needs for pastoral care.

Requests for assistance are generally relayed from the church office to the CN coordinator who passes them along to the group.

Since the portion of our Sunday service where members' Joys & Sorrows are shared in person has been discontinued, the Pastoral Care Associates relay the previously submitted and reviewed Joys & Sorrows to the CN coordinator, who then passes them on to the CN. For the most part, this mostly works.

Lois Bailey continues to write and send greeting cards to congregants on a weekly basis. Many, many thanks to Lois for this kind service and for reaching out on behalf of the CN.

In addition to providing meals and transportation for FUUSAns and friends, over the past year the Caring Network gathered for several outreach projects:

- In December 2024 Sandy Stone, Barb Manning, Linda Way, Sharon Babala, Tanya Hotalen, Deborah Rodriguez, Anny Lapinski, and I gathered in Channing Hall and assembled holiday gift bags and addressed charming cards created by the RE youth for 39 congregants and the ministerial, office, maintenance, and RE staff. Sigrin Newell and Elizabeth Berberian could not attend but sent donations for the gift bags.

- Barb Manning, Linda Way, Sharon Babala, Betsy Wright, Tanya Hotalen, Sandy Stone, Anny Lapinski, Elizabeth Berberian, Marty Hotvet, and I signed up to deliver the gift bags and hopefully have a friendly visit.

- In February Sandy Stone and I met and wrote Valentine's Day cards to 32 congregants and friends. The CN Spring Project (potting plants and writing cards and delivering both) was canceled this year because it requires more volunteers than were available.

The Caring Network is grateful for the opportunity to be of service to the congregation and looks forward to another successful year of kind deeds.

Pastoral Care Associates Report

PCA's: Randy Rosette, Sharon Babala, Donna Meixner, Alice Sage, Jim Chicoine, Debbie Rodriguez, Laura Paris, Anny Lapinski

The pastoral care associates (PCA) team had a busy year this year. In addition to connecting with congregants on an individual basis, here is some of what we did: We welcomed two new members to our team, Jim Chicoine and Debbie Rodriguez. We all participated in listening training including a video that Rev. Ann shared with us. Rev Ann helped with revising our script to be shorter and reflect more of what we want to say. We continued our monthly meeting format as a group but also added individual meetings on a monthly basis with Rev. Ann to discuss our roles as PCA's. We organized listening sessions in response to the felt need for those in our congregation to share life's challenges. In May, we all participated in planning a service focused on the topic of listening and Sharon Babala led a session on listening after the service.

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Racial Healing Group Report

Interim Coordinator: Ireta London

Members: Jaye Holly, Lea Nko Ryman, Luis Torres, Pascelle St. Laurent, and Nellson Moore

Introduction The BIPOC Team within our religious organization has been instrumental in fostering inclusive and equitable environments. Our mission is to ensure that all members feel valued and respected, recognizing the unique experiences and perspectives of BIPOC individuals.

Mission Statement Our mission focused on community outreach, cultural engagement, and hands-on activities that support organizations promoting and creating welcoming inclusive spaces where BIPOC individuals feel safe.

Leadership Transition This year, Michael Hornsby stepped down from his position as team coordinator. During this transition period, Ireta London is currently serving as the interim coordinator.

Meetings The BIPOC Team met once a month at Albany UU or on Zoom to discuss initiatives, plan events, and address concerns related to our mission.

Activities and Achievements

- **Community Outreach:** Organized food drives, educational workshops, and health fairs. Collaborated with local organizations to provide resources and support to BIPOC individuals.
- **Cultural Engagement:** Hosted cultural events celebrating diverse backgrounds, including music, dance, and art exhibitions. Conducted seminars on cultural heritage and its impact on faith and community.
- **Hands-On Activities:** Participated in volunteer activities supporting organizations that promote inclusivity and safety for BIPOC individuals. Engaged in community service projects such as neighborhood clean-ups and mentoring programs for youth.

Collaborations

- **Free Food Fridge Albany:** Provides fresh foods, fruits, produce, low-intervention foods, and ready-to-eat meals to food-insecure neighborhoods and marginalized communities.
- **Youth FX:** Works with young people of color in Albany, NY, providing training in digital media technology and enabling them to create documentary and short fiction films.
- **Church of Bethsaida:** Focuses on religion-related, spiritual development causes, specifically Protestant. Contributions to this organization are tax-deductible.
- **Letters Against Isolation (LAI):** Fights senior loneliness through handwritten messages of love, hope, and joy, improving seniors' mental and physical health.
- **Albany UU Juneteenth Celebration:** Education information and red commemorative freedom bracelets.

Leadership and Decision-Making By actively including BIPOC individuals in leadership, ministry, and decision-making, we strive to address historical injustices and promote racial reconciliation.

Financials The financial health of the BIPOC Team is crucial for sustaining our activities and initiatives. Here is a summary of our financials for the year:

- **Expenses:** Major expenses included costs for organizing events and community outreach.
- **Budget Allocation:** Funds (\$275.00) were allocated to various initiatives such as community outreach, cultural engagement, and hands-on activities.

Future Goals

- Expand outreach programs to reach more BIPOC communities.
- Increase collaboration with other organizations to amplify our impact.
- Develop new initiatives focused on mental health and wellness for BIPOC individuals.
- Strengthen our commitment to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all members.

Men's Group Report

Reporter: Chuck Manning

Monday Men's Group: This group started has four members. We have meetings about twice a month but they are not always on Monday. The current group is Chuck Manning, Phil Rich, Fred Barker, and Jerry Deighan. We have all of our meetings on zoom because Phil has moved to Glens Falls. At our meetings we provide mutual support and share the opportunities and challenges we are facing.

OPERATIONS AND ADMINISTRATION

Church Administrator's Report

Staff list:

- **Minister:** Rev. Ann Kadlecek
- **Director of Programs for Children and Youth:** Elizabeth Baldes
- **Director of Music Ministry:** Olga Martinez
- **Church Administrator:** Sophia Garder
- **Technician Support:** Ben Warner
- **Sexton:** Erik vonHausen
- **PCY Program Assistant:** Paula Brewer
- **PCY Lead Youth Group Advisor:** Adrian Cattell
- **Building Hosts, Dishwashers, and Multi-Media Technicians:** Ilene Kane, Tim Kane, Erik von Hausen, Cindee Herrick, Chris Jensen, Kate Pierce-Nimz, Molly Daniels

On Monday morning, December 2, 2024, I walked into the AUU Church Administrator office and was greeted warmly and enthusiastically by Amy Lent with a huge hug, and I felt so welcome, appreciated, calm, and comfortable on a "first day of a new job." Amy and I became fast friends, and she spent the better part of December putting off her retirement to show me the ropes and pass down (as much as she could) her decades of institutional knowledge. The time came for Amy to ride off into the sunset (so to speak) and I will always appreciate everything she taught me, her humor, warmth, and guidance. I am eternally grateful to her for a smooth transition and look forward to her weekly visits as she waters the AUU plants.

As I become more comfortable in my new role as administrator, it has been a pleasure getting to know the people in the congregation, as well as working closely with (and learning a great deal from) Jan McCracken, Maria Phillips, Karen Kaufmann, Chuck & Barb Manning, Al De Salvo and the rest of the Facilities Management Team. Everyone in the congregation has been so warm and welcoming and I feel blessed to be here. I also have the pleasure of working alongside a terrific, knowledgeable, collaborative team of co-workers in Elizabeth, Olga, Paula, and Ben. And working with and for Rev. Ann is the icing on the cake! I appreciate her knowledge, kindness, flexibility, fairness, and warm spirit.

In the five months that I have been at Albany UU, I have been working on digitizing and restructuring the rental process. I format and print each Sunday's Order of Service, collect submissions and create the Windows Weekly newsletter, assist with the Stewardship campaign mailing, compile this Annual Report, and perform other administrative tasks too many to name. In my time here I have also watched the "face" of the building change with new windows, and we updated our alarm system and now have two "panic buttons"

for increased safety. After many years of contracting with J&D Cleaning Services, we made a change very recently and began a new janitorial contract with Daigle Cleaning Service.

In the coming year, I plan to have rentals fully operational, will continue to digitize office procedures, hope to give the newsletter a bit of a revamp, will create a “AUU Administrator Procedural Manual”, and look forward to many new learning opportunities.

Respectfully submitted,
Sophia Garder

Building and Grounds Team Report

Chair: Albert De Salvo

Albany Unitarian Universalist Society’s physical facility plays a major role in the Society’s mission. It is a place for worship, fellowship and community. It is a place that is open to the community. It houses many support groups, other worship groups and a free community breakfast.

Without a good functioning physical plant, worship, social functions, meetings and service to the community and special groups that use our space would not be possible.

The maintenance and repair of our physical plant is the **second major function of our operating budget**. This year was particularly active as there were a number of long- and short-term maintenance and repair projects that challenged us. Although, too numerous to mention, listed are some of the key items:

- New Window Installation in Admin/PCY Building:
 - Preparation work: pulling A/C’s
 - Removing Blinds and other office equipment and furniture
 - Rehabbing window openings-scraping old glue, painting sills and window trim
- Rehabbing Minister’s office including :
 - Desk refinishing
 - Cabinet Refinishing
 - Replacing carpet with new vinyl flooring
 - Complete painting
- Testing for allergens and dust in admin office and minister’s office
- Total Building complex cleanout : storage area/basement/closets and rearrangement of committees’ storage spaces
- Community Room Floor Polyeurethane
- Channing hall Polyeurethane
- Exterior “Security Cage” at Community Room well
- Building Safety Analysis with Albany Police Department
- HVAC Analysis/Adjustment/Repair
- Engaging plumbing, heating and electrical professionals for on-call assistance
- Total kitchen rehab including new shelving, cabinet rearrangement with additional cabinetry added new electric stove purchase (??-last FY?) painting
- Historical Analysis of energy savings
- Sanctuary Pillars Rehab (?? Last FY?)
- New light installation in Wayside Pulpit

- Replacing Exterior Door Sweeps preventing air leaks and mice incursions
- Repair of Community Room door finishes
- Repair of Administrative Office cabinet doors
- Removal of Large Conifer in Triangle area
- Limb removal on Washington Avenue trees for safety and security

Many smaller day-to-day tasks were also undertaken and completed. The next year will be filled with more major and minor projects some of which will be noticeable by the community and many which will be accomplished by our dedicated Facilities Management Team. Here are some planned projects:

- Installation of New Front Bay Windows in Channing Hall
- Rebuilding of West Street “Caps” to prevent sidewalk icing
- Implementation of security measures
- Repair of 405 Steps/handicap ramp landing/Sanctuary landing and threshold
- Repair/possible replacement of HVAC equipment based on earlier analysis
- Analysis of Basement Drainage issues/possible solutions
- Pressure Cleaning bottom 5+ layers of brick on Sanctuary building
- Cleaning the “Beacon Window” and high windows over the stage in Community Hall

The team has expanded significantly during the past year and now includes around 15 active members. Part of the increase was the result of a coffee hour hosting undertaken in the late winter.

Submitted by Albert De Salvo, Chair, Facilities Management

Art & Aesthetics Team / First Fridays Report

Chair: Dick Dana

Members: Leah Akins, Paula Brewer, Ilene Kane, Peter Meixner, Carolyn Stetson, Brad Workman

The newly reconstituted (3 years ago) Team continues, as stated in our charge, to work to “make our spaces more attractive and welcoming.” Of the six goals set forth in last year’s report, five were accomplished, and include:

- hanging a Black Lives Matter banner and the Progressive Gay Pride banner, generously donated by Nellson Jacobs-Moore, between the columns outside the Sanctuary;
- creating plaques for the artworks on our walls, each including a QR code to access more detailed information; to date there are four installed with many more in the works;
- designing and framing a permanent display in our front lobby of our Mission, Vision, and Covenant. (A newcomer was observed reading it recently, as we had hoped!)
- A display cabinet for our community’s awards and honors, designed and built for us by Brad Workman, will be installed in the Community Hall first floor lobby by the end of May, well before you read this;

- New wall wash ceiling lights have been ordered for the hall down to the Community Hall lobby, and should be installed in the next two months.

Other accomplishments include:

- Working closely with the Facilities Management Team, we chose a color for repainting the minister's office, and the color and style for the new plank flooring for the office.
- With framed vision-mission-covenant installed next to the four-foot diameter flaming chalice, the wall behind it, faded and worn, did not do justice to these new additions to our front lobby. We chose a color, slightly lighter, to highlight the two most important walls for newcomers to notice, and worked with the Facilities Management Team on the arduous task of painting the nubby jute wall fabric, an all-day tedious task for four.
- We helped the Facilities Management Team choose a design for the 21 new energy efficient windows now installed in the RE wing. The windows now have muntins, a much more appropriate design for our brick façade than the original windows. The new windows echo nicely the SUNY Downtown campus windows across the street.
- The two easels used for publicity in the front lobby, a clear trip hazard on crowded Sundays and aesthetically a non-starter, have been replaced by creative bulletin boards, a design thought up by Amy Lent, which mimics the racks used to hang orders in restaurant kitchens.

Our efforts to hold First Friday events here at Albany UU every month during the church year have had their ups and downs. Because there is no money exchanged or contract involved, performers and artists have canceled at the last minute, leaving the 1st Friday Team – Dick Dana, Ilene Kane, and Amy Lent – scrambling for a replacement. Sometimes we were successful and sometimes not. Turnout has been modest but consistent. This can be attributed in part to late publicity, the result of performers and artists being late with their submissions, and the fact that we are far from the center of 1st Friday activities out here on the west side of Washington Park. We are actively looking for someone to be in charge of lining up performers each month.

In the past year, there has been some turnover in the role of Art Wall Coordinator. Recently, Ilene Kane stepped into that role and things have stabilized. Exhibits have been well received, and artists have appreciated the opportunity to have their art displayed, and to sell their art.

Goals for next year include:

- Completely revamp the front lobby art, to be more attractive and welcoming to marginalized communities.
- Complete research into all art in the congregation's possession, and use the information for plaques for each of the artworks;
- Design and create a "Harvey Milk slept here" display somewhere in our building. Our research confirmed the rumor that when a student at New York Teacher's college in the late 1940's and early 1950's, he rented an apartment where Albany UU buildings now stand. As San Francisco supervisor, he was one of the first openly gay elected officials in the country. As a pioneering gay rights activist, Milk called for a symbol of hope and unity, which led to the creation of one of the most enduring symbols of LGBTQ+ identity and pride, the Pride Flag. When a junior, he resided in an apartment where the RE wing now stands; the following year he moved next door to an apartment where we later constructed Community Hall.
- Stabilize and repair several art works on our walls;

- Create a more aesthetically pleasing display of the plants beneath our beacon window in Community Hall by purchasing attractive pots, plus rolling carts for easier cleaning;
- Complete an art acquisition policy.

Gardening Team Report

Coordinator: Open position.

Members: Many dedicated volunteers who volunteer once or multiple times over the growing season.

Purpose: The Gardening Team tends the gardens surrounding our buildings and maintains the welcoming appearance of Albany UU. This provides a benefit for our members as well as our neighbors. We offer a combination of "one shot" and ongoing seasonal volunteer opportunities, allowing all experience levels to participate and work alongside other members and friends.

Accomplishments: Our four garden areas were well maintained last year by our dedicated volunteers. We had a great turnout of gardeners for our fall clean-up and spring clean-up days, and we had fairly good coverage throughout the gardening season. We mulched the gardens in the spring which helped maintain moisture and reduce weeds.

Plans for next year: We will mulch the gardens this May or June. Mulching helps retain moisture and suppress weeds. We will also work with Building and Grounds to replace the brick pad in the Heron Garden (behind the ramp) with stamped concrete. Gardening will provide \$1200 and B & G will add this project to the concrete work they are planning for the Washington Ave. entrance and steps.

Flower Committee Report

Chair: Cindee Herrick

The small team provided flowers for Sunday services, memorial services, and memorial receptions throughout the church year. Each floral arrangement considered the preferences of the donor or family, working with specified color palettes and favorite flowers. For the Christmas Eve service, the team, assisted by some hard-working elves and hearty woodsmen, decorated the Sanctuary with swags, window arrangements and a stunning tree for Channing. The Flowers Committee is always open to new members, and it provides gentle mentoring and financial reimbursement for any materials costs accrued.

History and Archives Report

Chair: Patricia Bailey

Goals: The goals remain to continue to keep the archives in good order, to preserve our history and to make records accessible to all FUUSA members as well organizing, systematizing and updating the archives as needed. We continue to work on adding new items donated by members while striving to maintain only one copy of most materials. We have an alpha list of the files along with a list of the location of items of interest and value.

Responsibilities: Maintaining the History & Archives of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany. The archives contain many records going back to the beginning of the Universalist Society in 1830's and

continuing with the First Unitarian Church in 1940's to date. Some of these records are irreplaceable. The Archives also contain many items saved by members and later turned over to us for preservation. The originals of some of our records are stored in the New York State Library and the Trustees also keep microfilms in Stone Mountain Storage Inc. - as per Board approval. Copies of most of these documents are kept in the archives. Also, due to space we are only able to archive one of every valuable item, such as copies of past publications (Oriel, Windows, etc.). It is our hope that we will be able to continue to store important records along with much interesting data in this manner and for long into the future.

Plans for next year: We hope to maintain the files for easier access to many documents and FUUSA related items. We gratefully accept archival items for safekeeping, and we especially appreciate having **dates, including the year and names** (especially in photographs) of each item & photo and, if appropriate, the name of the person donating the items. We now protect valuable books with archival papers for better, safer storage.

Thank you to those who continue to help preserve our story.

Joy Library Report

Chair: Mary Fellows

Members: Melanie Axel-Lute, Linda Way, Kathy Harris, Cassie Artale (ex-officio)

Purpose: The Joy Library supports the mission of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany by selectively collecting and facilitating access to resources for adults that are in keeping with Albany Unitarian Universalist Society (AUU)'s mission and with the Unitarian Universalist Principles. The Library's first priority is to collect resources on the UU faith tradition and its current developments. Beyond Unitarian Universalism, the Library's collection will emphasize world religions, especially liberal theology and spirituality, and ethical and social justice issues. While UU and UU history is valued, Joy Library's collection supports exploration more than research. Members and friends are eligible to borrow books; guests and newcomers will be accommodated on an individual basis.

Accomplishments: The focus of the Library Committee this year has been a continuation of a deep weeding and creating face-out displays. The "new look" has garnered praise and interest. We've seen checkouts rise slightly.

We purchased new titles this year including the Common Read and reviewed donations from the minister's collection.

The Joy Library page of our website was updated with the help of AUU's web guru, Hillary Torres.

The Library Team sponsored a coffee hour and promoted the library in the service and afterwards.

We continue to provide encouragement and offer assistance for the youth book project, currently in the hands of our busy Children, Youth and Families colleagues.

Incidental work accomplished includes responding to member questions, fielding regular donations, cataloging new additions, and withdrawing from the catalog weeded items.

Respectfully submitted, Mary Fellows

Website Team Report

Convenor: Bob Franklin

Members: Dick Dana, Amy Lent, David Musser, Anika Pfluger, and Barb Spink with some initial consultation by Michele Derossiers

The website team maintains the information on the website, and keeps the day-to-day updates current. The team has embarked on a full review of all website pages in an effort toward content standardization and determining what group/entity is responsible for that content. Better communication will facilitate future updates and improvements. The team will also undertake a look at the future of the website and it's role in providing information within and beyond our congregation.