

Church Council FY24-25 Annual Committee Reports

The Church Council is made up of committee chairs or their designees, along with the Board of Trustees and Rev. Heather. The Council provides cross-committee communication and collaboration on issues impacting the congregation. Responsibilities include promoting effective committees through sharing best practices, providing feedback to the Board of Trustees on important matters, sharing information about new activities and programs being planned, coordinating initiatives among committees, and sharing any concerns about the congregation. It meets quarterly or as needed.

Committees this year consisted of: Worship, 25th Anniversary Committee, Adult Faith Development, Child Faith Development, Committee on Congregational Life, Communications, Covenant Group Council, Fundraising-Craft Fair, Denominational Affairs, Executive Team, Finance, Governance Review Committee, Membership, Pastoral Care, Property Management, Safer Congregation Committee, Social Environmental Justice, UUSD Cares, Leadership Development Committee.

FY24-25 was a busy year for UUSD, as our congregation welcomed visitors almost every Sunday, added many new members, grew our vibrant CFE program, supported an array of community and interfaith efforts, and provided an even stronger voice for liberal religious values in Southern Delaware. Our pledge/finance team guided us throughout the year providing us with the resources to fuel future programs envisioned by the committees. Church Council members pondered challenges such as leadership succession, need for more paid staff, space limitations, and an array of means for how best to actualize the hopes and dreams that our leaders have for this Beloved Community.

It has been a privilege to work with these talented leaders. I am grateful for the dedication they show in keeping UUSD moving along and growing. They do it with humor, grit, humility, and grace.

Respectfully Submitted,
Carol Huckabee,
Chair, Church Council
May 4, 2025

Adult Faith Exploration (AFE) Committee

Current Members: Jean Charles, Chris Degnon, Mac Goekler, Kim King, Betty Kirk, Neil Shister, Rev. Heather

The AFE Committee is charged with developing yearly programs consistent with UUSD vision and mission to meet the spiritual needs of UUSD and those in the broader community. Our First Sunday Forums continue to be held from 11:15am to 12:30pm covering various topics including Loneliness/Solitude, Hindu Yamas and Niyamas, and Living Intentionally/Radical Acceptance. Over the last year, AFE has offered the following classes and events:

Title	Dates	Facilitator(s)	Number attending (approx..)
UU Tune-up	August	Kim King, Jean Charles, Rev. Heather	18
	October	See above	7
	March	See above	10
First Sunday Forums	Each month	Various volunteer facilitators	6 - 16
How to Know a Person	October	Betty Kirk, Mary Quigley	6
Our Living Tradition	December	Betty Kirk, Rev. Heather	10
The 4 Agreements	January	Kim King, Betty Kirk	14
Darwin Day	February	Betty Kirk	11
Transforming Hearts: Trans Acceptance in Congregations	February/March	Rev. Cathy Rion Starr, Eli Searce	30+

The AFE Committee continues to seek new members and a chair.

Children's Faith Exploration Committee

Committee Membership: Dr. Michele L Warch, Chair; Rev. Heather Rion-Star,

Minister; Dr. Heather Hamilton, CFE Director; Aela Mass; Cheri Garnet; Darlene Sellers; Elisa Berocal

Youth Participation:

The CFE committee recognizes over 50 children who are registered to participate in Children's Faith Exploration at UUSD. We average approximately 20 children per Sunday CFE offering. During this time, children are often split into groups appropriate to age, with the younger children having play and age appropriate activities and the older children participating in activities which reinforces the lesson of that day. Some example lessons that the children have participated in over the course of this fiscal year include:

1. Recognizing feelings
2. Being a superhero/confidence
3. Understanding and respecting differences among people
4. Being kind
5. Drumming
6. Butterflies and their life cycle
7. Building unity
8. Yoga
9. Passover
10. Kintsugi (fixing broken trust)

Often, lessons focus on fun, connection, and learning. Almost always, there is a craft/activity component to the lesson. The children have made superhero masks, planetary nightlights, paintings and pictures of all sorts, Valentine cards, keepsake Kintsugi boxes, and so much more. They helped to create the little free library box and have participated in property cleanup opportunities.

Additional opportunities exist for families to be involved through the Family Covenant Group, led by Rev. Heather with volunteers to work with the children coordinated by Dr. Heather over the course of the school year. During that time, families and children have participated in communal dinners, game nights, movie nights, and more activities where the adults loosely follow the Soul Matters curriculum.

Accomplishments:

The growth of participation in the program has been a wonderful event! We have a variety of children from 18 months to 15 years of age, currently, registered to

participate. Over the course of this year, we count these things among our accomplishments:

1. Created a youth cubby in the gathering area which is stocked with books of interest to our older youth (12-17 years of age)
2. Increased CFE to 3 Sundays a month
3. Navigated CFE Light into something more structured and engaging rather than a free-play only opportunity
4. Increased our volunteer base with several regular volunteers (THANK YOU!)

Future Focus:

With the significant growth of child participation and with the growing numbers of children in the 12+ age group, we are working to organize a split into 3 separate groups each Sunday (0-5, 6-10, 11+). This split would, of course, consider each child's ability and interest levels. This means that we are in need of volunteers and space to offer meaningful opportunities for all of our youth to engage in CFE. We are exploring options for programming for our older youth, and will continue to offer high-quality content to our younger participants.

We sincerely appreciate the support of the Board in recognizing this growth and assisting us to navigate the new needs that are presented as a result. As everyone is aware, space is a significant challenge for our ministry and the youth that participate.

Respectfully submitted,
Michele L Warch, Ed.D., M.C.C.

Committee on Congregational Life

Members : Deanna Duby, Jon Bartels, Martha McLaren, Rev. Heather Rion-Starr,
David Hantman, Pat Murdock, Jim Lesko
Board Liaison: Carol Huckabee

The Committee on Congregational had a very enlightening and active year and we believe that the overall health of "congregational life" on our ever changing, beloved UUSD is good.

- The analysis and distribution of information from the February, 2024 all congregational survey was very time intensive. Raw data was shared with the board and then the cross-tab analysis was compiled, reviewed and

analyzed several times. Marj Shannon's expertise was invaluable to aid in this process. On Oct 13th, a presentation of the highlights of the Survey results was given to the congregation. Individual committee specific reports were sent to all committee chairs and teams. All data was made available in Google Workspace to members for further exploration. CCL was able to share survey experiences with the SFTF team.

- Responding to requests from the Minister, the Board of Trustees or directly from members, CCL dealt with one conflict situation that is resolved at this time. The committee continues to monitor one potential conflict situation. These matters are done with strict confidentiality and all parties involved are treated with respect and have opportunities to be heard.
- As a result of information from the 2024 survey, CCL is working to better inform the congregation of our purpose and process used in resolving conflict. One step in that effort was an informative Beacon article written by Carol Huckabee. As part of the May 11th service, we will be introducing a Kudos and Comments box. Thank you to Jon Bartels for donating his beautiful handcrafted box. This will provide an easy way for congregants to share their thoughts, concerns and questions with CCL. CCL will monitor the box and redirect comments to staff and/or committees to whom the topic is most relevant. This will be an ongoing opportunity to facilitate better communications and thereby reduce possible areas of misunderstanding and conflict. In an effort to equip more members with conflict resolution skills CCL is planning a 4-hour workshop on September 28th on Compassionate Communication and Conflict Management presented by Rick Grear & Joseph Anastasio.
- CCL Membership has undergone several changes. David Hantman, a relatively new UUSD member, joined in August 2024 and Steve Holtz resigned in September 2024. Deanna Duby stepped down as chair in September after three years of outstanding work and resigned from the committee in January 2025 for health reasons. Pat Murdock, a longtime active member of UUSD, joined CCL in April of 2025 and founding member Jim Lesko joined in May. Marty McLaren agreed to be acting chair until October.

In keeping with our charge to “advise the Board of Trustees on the overall congregational health, support and encourage congregational engagement, and support efforts to address identified problems”, CCL has a busy future agenda. In the coming year we hope to plan and present a workshop, monitor the Kudos and Comments box, revise the Disruptive Behavior Policy from 2012, review the Covenant of Good Relations, monitor congregational health and work to resolve conflicts.

Respectfully Submitted,
Committee on Congregational Life
Marty McLaren, Acting Chair

Communications Committee

MEMBERS:

Core: Aela Mass (Chair); Alice Casey; Anita Gossett; MaryDiane Hausman; Ronnie Smith

Ad Hoc: Shirley Bautista (Web Support); Alleane Brown (In Retirement Limbo, Web Support)

RETIRED:

David DeWitt

SUPPORTED BY:

Board Liaison: Donna Davis

Rev. Heather Rion Starr is a nonvoting/ex-officio member

COMMITTEE PURPOSE: To coordinate and develop all communication vehicles that inform the congregation and the larger community about UUSD’s vision, mission, and activities.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Inter-Committee Collaboration: The Communications Committee was especially committed this year in breaking down the otherwise “siloed” approach to committee work. Working directly with other committees to streamline processes for all and to share information, we met and collaborated directly with: Leadership Development; Membership; Covenant Council; Executive Team; Children’s Faith

Exploration; FUNdraising, specifically the Auction Team; Social and Environmental Justice; UUSD Cares; and Worship. We are appreciative of those committees for their openness and willingness to collaborate. We look forward to expanding our collaborative efforts with all committees in 2025-26.

WEBSITE: The website, uusd.org, provides information primarily for two audiences: the public in general and UUSD members and friends. For the public audience, the website provides visitors with information about UUSD, its organization, the congregation, and activities. Sections of the website also provide information for the congregation and serve as a UUSD “library,” including the calendar, board of trustees meeting minutes and documents, volunteer opportunities, online giving, committee charges and contacts, policies, and forms.

The website administrator is Aela Mass, with continued support from retired committee member Alleane Taylor, and with web support from team member Anita Gossett and ad hoc member, Shirley Bautista. Over the past year, site content has been updated, with pages added as needed. Major accomplishments include improved site speed and the migration of the website to a more efficient and more affordable host, Techno Goober. Deep disappointments include incomplete website analytics for FY24-25 due to plugin error of Site Kit by Google and an ongoing glitch in photo displays that administrators continue to troubleshoot.

PUBLICATIONS: UUSD’s newsletter, *Beacon at the Beach*, is published on a weekly basis via Canva and is distributed on a weekly basis via MailChimp. Currently, it’s distributed to 791 email subscribers (up from 561 in FY23/24), including members, friends, staff, visitors, and others who have signed up for the eNews from our website. Aela Mass prepares and disseminates these publications. MaryDiane Hausman copyedits the issues. The open rate is 51.2%. This is above Campaign Monitor’s benchmark rating for email marketing of up to 40%, and well above the average open rate across the board of about 15% to 25%. While Jean Charles’s *Sunday Updates* are not a publication of the Communications Committee, our committee streamlined the distribution of those eblasts by merging the contacts of that list with Communications’ contact lists and providing Jean with access to Communications’ MailChimp account, so that all eblasts are “under the same roof.”

SOCIAL MEDIA: The social media team plays a crucial role in building community through engagement and providing information about UUSD activities and events. Ronnie Smith is the lead for the social media team, which includes Aela Mass as backup. The data for the UUSD Facebook page for the period of July 1, 2024 to April 11, 2025 (date of report) is as follows.

Facebook:

Number of followers – Total number of followers on our Facebook page (as of April 11, 2024): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 65+: female – 38%, male 10.% • Age 55-64: female – 16%, male 4% • Age 45-54: female – 12%, male 2% • Age 35-44: female – 9%, male 3% • Age 25-34: female – 5%, male 2% • Age 18-24 or younger: female – 0.6%, male .1% 	1,000 (milestone!)
Top 10 cities	Lewes - 10% Rehoboth Beach - 8% Milton - 8% Harbeson - 5% Milford - 4% Long Neck - 3% Wilmington - 2% Millsboro - 2% Georgetown - 2% Dover - 2%
Facebook Reach – This metric counts reach from the organic distribution of our Facebook content, including posts, videos, and stories. It also includes reach from other sources, such as tags, check-ins, and page or profile visits.	17.4K (Increased 119.5% from previous year)
Total views - The number of times our content was played or displayed. Content includes videos, posts, and stories	141.4K, 100% organic (Increased 250% from previous year)

Instagram:

Followers	83 (up from 24)
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Demographics unavailable for reporting until 100 followers is reached	
Instagram Reach - This metric counts reach from the organic distribution of our Instagram content, including posts, videos, and stories.	244 (up 495% from same period last year)
Total Views - The number of times our content was played or displayed. Content includes reels, posts, and stories	5.8K

PUBLICITY: The purpose of the publicity team is to effectively communicate information about UUSD’s vision, mission, activities, and events across diverse communities to foster understanding and connections. Alice Casey develops press releases and calendar postings for local media and online channels, as well as public service announcements. Google Alerts tracks when UUSD shows up on the web, and Communications has received 67 alerts for our press releases and Sunday Service PSAs.

Public Service Announcements:

Alice Casey and Cindy Arno (PSA support while Alice Casey is absent) prepared 52 weekly public service announcements for Sunday services with the date, time, and sermon topic.

Press Releases:

Date	Title of Article	Committee
August 2024	Emergency Preparedness Seminar by Sussex County Department of Public Safety	Safer Congregation
September 2024	Emma’s Revolution - UUSD 25th Anniversary Celebration	25th Anniversary
February 2025	Film Screening: Traces of the Trade	Social and Environmental Justice
February 2025	Roy Parks Memorial Social Justice Fund	Social and Environmental Justice

March 2025	Boycott Forum	Social and Environmental
March 2025	Banned Together Film Screening	Social and Environmental

Media outlets included:

Media Outlet	Media Outlet
Delaware Online Calendar	Delaware State News Calendar
Delaware Online Press Release	Coast Press – (Bethany, Fenwick, Millville, and Selbyville)
Delaware Online News desk	Radio Station – The Talk of Delmarva
Gannett USA – (publisher of News Journal)	Cape Gazette – (Lewes and Rehoboth Beach)
Delaware State News – (Dover, Milford, and other community publications)	Seaford Star – (Western Sussex)
Delaware Retirees	

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photo Team

Core: Sue Brown (Photo Team Lead); Randy Davidson (Directory Photos); Warren Bouton; Justin Scaber; Darlene Sellers; Alleane Taylor; Richard Wheeler

Ad Hoc Photographers: Cheryl Garnet; Gail Hecky; Sarah Raymond

The UUSD photo team plays a vital role in visually documenting the life of the congregation, informing members and the wider community, and preserving memories for years to come. To highlight UUSD's progress toward its mission and vision, the photo team captures images at services, activities, and events for use in communications media materials.

The team has expanded the use of an online workflow system using Google Workspace. The capture team takes photos and uploads them to a shared drive on Google Workspace. The post-processing team prepares the photos for use in media products, and the team lead moves the photo files to a shared drive where they can be uploaded to the Photo Gallery on the website and posted on Facebook and Instagram. Committee members and staff have access to the photos for use in their projects.

In collaboration with the 25th Anniversary Committee, photos were prepared for display boards telling the stories of the years at UUSD's current location and sharing interviews with UUSD elder members. The team also documented the Emma's Revolution concert in celebration of UUSD's anniversary and provided photos for UUSD's Anniversary Cookbook.

Team members also provided photos to share the stories and messages of UUSD through the work of various committees:

- Children's Faith Exploration – Photos of children and youth participating in classes, intergenerational services in the sanctuary (blessing of the backpacks), and special events (Easter Egg Hunt)
- Fundraising – Photos of auction items for the catalog
- Leadership Development – Photos of committee work at featured tables, candidate photos for LDC and BOT positions
- Membership – Online directory photos of members and friends taken at the Pop-Up Photo Studio, images for New Member Profiles
- Property Management – Photos of Volunteer Workday, repairs to the roof,
- Safer Congregation – Photos of the Emergency Preparedness Seminar and evacuation drill
- Social and Environmental Justice – Photos of UUSD's postcard writing in support of voting, the Trans Day of Remembrance service, vigil for transgender people lost to violence, Share the Plate speakers and recipients, Rise Against Hunger food packing, and backpack assembly for people leaving prison
- UUSD Cares – Photos of potlucks (Spooky Dinner, Chili Cookoff), picnics, and other events (holiday sing-along)
- Worship – Photos of worship services and annual events (water ceremony, blessing of the animals, remembrance service, flower Sunday, Christmas Eve service) throughout the year
- Other – Photos of the summer and winter solstice services, drum circle celebrating the spring equinox, and UUSD participation in the Lewes Doo-Dah Parade.

GRAPHICS: The graphics team creates visually attractive materials to effectively communicate messages and promote engagement. To advertise activities and events, Aela Mass worked with UUSD committees to create flyers, posters, logos,

brochures, advertisements, and special projects for the *The Beacon*, website, social media, and print media. There were a total of 87 graphics created this year. 2024-25 was the first year UUSD completed each of the graphics in-house, saving UUSD the cost of paying an outside graphic designer.

COPYEDITING: The copyediting team serves the important purpose of ensuring that written materials produced by the Communications Committee are clear, accurate, consistent, and engaging. The team assures that written materials adhere to the Chicago Manual of Style Guidelines and that copyrighted materials are not used without the permission of the copyright owner. The Communications Committee's sole, designated copyeditor retired from the committee to pursue other volunteer avenues at UUSD.

Submitted by Aela Mass, Communications Chair, April 28, 2025

Covenant Group Council

ACHIEVEMENTS

Continued quarterly meetings with covenant group coordinators to discuss any issues, thoughts, concerns, suggestions about ongoing covenant groups. Currently at

Covenant Groups: 13

Affinity Groups: 10

Of these 13 covenant groups, four are currently open. Affinity groups are always open to new members.

Many covenant groups were actively involved in some service project, from stuffing Easter eggs (upwards of 700 eggs!) to buying gift cards to doing gift baskets for ILYA youth and back packs for Cape kids, to cooking for folks at the Red Mill Inn for Toni Short's program, Angels with Broken Wings.

CHALLENGES

Within covenant groups, the ongoing challenges continue to be consistent attendance; active, respectful listening; and overtalking. None of these issues is currently pressing in any group.

Helping people understand the difference between covenant and affinity groups is ongoing.

FUTURE PLANS

Two new covenant groups will be starting: a Pagan group in September and a 'standard' group that will meet monthly at church in the evenings, possibly starting in June.

The text on the website will be revised to reflect current covenant groups and affinity groups.

Bi-annual articles will be put in the Beacon to generate interest in covenant and affinity groups.

Send out an email to covenant group coordinators inviting them to think as a group what kind of auction event they might want to offer for this year's auction.

Ruth Lamothe, Chair, Covenant Group Council

Denominational Affairs Committee

The Board of Trustees approved and established the Denominational Affairs Committee (DAC) in July 2010. Our primary purpose is to help and encourage the involvement and education of UUSD members in denominational affairs issues, activities, and projects.

There are currently two members on the committee: Mac Goekler (Chair) and Nancy Commisso.

This past year, the committee's key accomplishments included promoting and maintaining UUSD's involvement in the 2024 UUA annual General Assembly, which was virtual. Six UUSD members participated in the General Assembly serving as delegates, Rev. Heather is an automatic delegate, Jane Miller, Gary Schmit, Don Peterson, Susan Goekler, and Mac Goekler.

DAC also has two Board appointed representatives to the Delmarva Cluster group, Mac Goekler and Rev. Heather Rion Starr. Again, our Mac Goekler organized a summer cluster family day (July 13, 2024 last year) at Killens Pond State Park (South of Dover DE). This is a kid friendly park as it is the only DE state park with its own water park.

Also, DAC is responsible for advertising and encouraging UUSD support for the regional Chalice Lighters program, which facilitates congregational growth within our Central Easter Region (CER). UUSD currently has 24% of our membership, who participate this past year in the Chalice Lighters program. We plan on having a

higher awareness of Chalice Lighters (many new members are unaware of this program) this coming year. This last September we made in person pitch during a Sunday Service

DAC also regularly shares denominational events, programs, and articles on the UUSD Facebook page that originate from the UUA, Central East Region and other UUA related groups. We have been paying particular attention to the ongoing re-invention of the UUA – new structures, revised GA, and new UUA bylaws including Art. II. DAC does support UUDAN through a budget line item.

We welcome new members to the committee to help us continue our focus on assisting and encouraging UUSD members to become knowledgeable and involved in UU denominational affairs activities. Being a member of DAC is a great way to better understand the workings of the Cluster, CER, and the UUA.

Mac Goekler, Chair, Denominational Affairs Committee, April 12, 2025

Executive Team

“We find solutions”

The Executive Team’s primary focus during the current church year has been finding solutions for UUSD’s administrative and operational issues. Working independently and in collaboration with the Board, committees, teams and individuals, ET worked to coordinate day-to-day administrative procedures, to answer operational questions, to resolve conflicts when needed and to anticipate future administrative needs.

ET Notes:

- In February Kim Cook joined the Executive Team.
- ET staffed an information table after service on Sunday, February 16, giving us an opportunity to meet and talk with members about what we do. (Beth Nevill did an excellent write up for the Beacon outlining the role of ET where she said that ET finds solutions.)

Building/Equipment/Storage

- ET is working on ways to make the Foyer a more ethnically-diverse, welcoming area.
- Working with the Property Manager a review of unused/older AV/computer equipment was undertaken. Items that were still operational were offered

to the members of the congregation in exchange for a contribution to the church. Non-working items will be properly disposed of.

- The Guide to UUSD Physical Storage Areas was updated for 2025. Going forward the Guide will be maintained by the Property Management Committee .

Committee Outreach & Support

- Communications:
 - ET worked with Communications to update the rental marketing page on the external website. Communications did a fantastic job on this page. To see the new marketing page go to <https://uusd.org/about-us/rental-of-our-building/>
 - Updated Building Use Guidelines are now posted on the UUSD website.
 - Worked with Communications to post new rental documents including the fee schedule.
- Fundraising Support:
 - Craft Fair 2024
 - Met with the co-chairs of the 2024 Fair to work out the space needed for the fair.
 - Coordinated with the Safety Committee and Fundraising to provide a safe environment during the event.
 - ET members rotated as the point-of-contact for the Film Society over the three day event.
 - Auction 2025: For the first time ET will be offering an item in the upcoming auction – an opportunity for a Member/Friend of the congregation to propose a message for our roadside sign.
 - Craft Fair 2025: Preliminary discussions are underway to support the 2025 Fair.
- Landscaping: provided support on bench placement
- Safety:
 - For some time, ET has been monitoring Rt. 9 safety and road improvement issues. After meeting with the Safety Team, we passed this project to them. Safety will now monitor these issues and look into additional support from State and local authorities on this issue.
 - Worked with Safety to update safety signage throughout the building.

Roadside Message Board: Present/Future

- Current Roadside Message Board:
 - ET updates the current message board every 4-6 weeks.
 - Recent messages include:
 - These are Anxious Times, Be Kind, Speak up
 - Love is the bridge between you and all that is
- Electronic Sign Update:
 - ET's proposal to submit a conditional use application for installing an electronic message board sign was approved by the Board. Pennoni & Associates submitted the request to the Sussex P&Z Commission earlier this year. It will take 12-18 months for P&Z to consider our application. Once approved, UUSD will have a 3-year window to complete the project.
 - [Electronic Sign Timeline](#) is available in the GW shared drive

Rental & Usage: A Major Focus in FY24/25

- Major Rentals/Usage: FY24:FY25
 - Film Festival
 - Coastal Concert
 - Annual piano recital
 - Transgender Day of Remembrance (non-rental). Safer Congregation arranged a police presence.
 - Earth Day event.
- Rental & usage documents updated: A priority for ET was updating existing rental documents including the Fee Schedule, Usage Guidelines, Rental Policy, Rental Procedures and the Hold Harmless document.
- In Progress:
 - Formation of a host/point of contact team. ET members now rotate as the UUSD onsite point-of contact at events. With an increase in the number of rental/usage requests we have identified the need to establish a group of volunteers who will rotate this responsibility with members of ET.
 - Developing a more refined set of questions to ask potential renters/users of UUSD spaces to better understand the impact the event will have on our facility, the number of UUSD personnel needed at the event and to identify safety concerns.
- Usage by members: Worked with the Property Manager to update the Building Use Guidelines for Members.

- Rental Log has been created to track requests. The monthly ET Chair is responsible for the log and will be the point-of contact for those rentals logged during their rotation.
- Looking Forward: Currently working on the Rehoboth Beach Film Society 2025 rental agreement.

Technical Support: Email and Google Work Space:

- Email: UUSD members who wanted to have their UUSD.org emails deleted were contacted to show how UUSD emails can be forwarded to their other email boxes. A notice was put in the Enews to encourage members to use their UUSD email and to highlight the benefits.
- The Techno Goober contract for Google Workspace support was renewed.

Finance Committee

Members: Dara Schumaier, Chair, Tom Delany, Luke Emel-Firestone, Kent Sprunger - Treasurer, Richard Wheeler – Treasurer, Peggy Hughes, and Linda Lewis—Pledge Subcommittee Chair.

The Finance Committee's primary focus is to work with the Finance Officer(s), the UUSD Board of Trustees (Board), and UUSD Committees to help assure a solid financial foundation for congregational growth and continued financial stability. The Committee adopted a sub-committee structure in 2019 to manage projects and distribute the workload within the interest and expertise of the members. Under this structure, the full Committee remains responsible for committee proposals and final project results.

The Committee can report the following accomplishments during the 2024-25 fiscal year:

- Oversight of the annual budget process, culminating in the presentation of the FY 26
- Budget, presented for congregational approval at the annual meeting in June 2025.
- The Pledge Campaign Sub-Committee began its planning in October 2024 and initiated the pledge campaign in February 2025. The campaign officially ran through the month of March 2025, achieving an end result that was nearly 2% above the pledge target to support the coming church year's budget.

The numbers:

- FY26 pledge campaign target: \$410,400

- Total amount of FY26 pledges: \$ \$416,932
- Percent of target achieved: 101.6%
- Total amount short of target: \$33,773 over target: \$6,532
- Total pledge units: 174 (75 joint; 99 single) — 13.7% increase over last year
- Total new pledges (without a FY25 pledge): 34 — 21.4% increase over last year
- Total pledges by non-members: 32 — 45.4% increase over last year

We submitted a revision of the name of our legacy giving entity, the Cloud Legacy Society Board in March to clarify the purpose of what was formerly known as the Cloud Society.

The Finance Committee is committed to:

- Continue to build a strong reserve for the future.
- Look into establishing a plan for a socially responsible investment advisory committee which is inclusive and diverse. We will aim to include those members with expertise and diverse perspectives and backgrounds in financial investing and others who are community and committee focused.
- Subject to the broader visioning of UUSD's mission and strategy, prepare for an eventual capital campaign in conjunction with the newly created Stewardship Ministry Team.
- Continue to support and offer our insight to the Finance Officers as the church more fully transitions to new capabilities, including online giving, with the new financial systems.

Respectfully submitted,

Dara Schumaier, Finance Committee, May 1, 2025

Fundraising Committee

Annual Craft Fair Committee

The Craft Fair was on November 7-9 for the public and Sunday November 10 following the Sunday service.

Special Features: The craft fair committee provided four workshops for volunteers to learn and make crafts for the sale. Soup, sandwiches and baked goods were available for eating in or take out.

Saturday afternoon a secret Santa shop was provided for the children in our congregation. Each child was given a \$10 gift certificate to buy Christmas gifts for their family. Volunteers helped them shop and wrap the gifts. Besides new crafts there was a unique boutique that sold used items.

The craft fair was held on the same days that the film society rents our sanctuary during their film festival. The people attending the films appreciate the opportunity to shop at the craft fair and eat in our café. Snacks were sold in the foyer for the movie attendees.

Volunteers

It took good teamwork and many volunteers to manage the three-day event.

32 – made and donated crafts

65 – donated to unique boutique

36 – donated homemade soups and baked goods

51 – worked the sale days – greeters, floor watchers, cashiers, baggers, food servers

26 – setting up and tearing down

The total income for the event was \$10,621. The craft fair is not just about raising funds; it is a community building event that brings members of the congregation together that helps foster friendships and connections. The film society shared that the people who attend the films look forward to the craft fair.

Submitted by Darlene Sellers and Nancy Commisso

Governance Review Team

- * GRT members: Rand Lytton, Mac Goekler)

- * GRT is currently reviewing UUSD policies (Board) and procedures (Committees) to see where they overlap.

- * Once we feel comfortable where UUSD is and where UUSD should be going, along with any possible policy and procedure changes and standardization a plan will be designed.

- * A larger team may be required for further ongoing work.

Respectfully submitted,
Mac Goekler, GRT Co-Chair

Leadership Development Committee

Members: LDC decided to have two co-chairs to rotate chairing meetings: Rand Lytton and Lori Rocheleau. Other members were Susan Goekler, Beth Nevill, and Dar Sellers

Committee Purpose: Leadership Development (LDC) is a standing committee elected by and accountable to the congregation. LDC's responsibilities are set out in the UUSD's Bylaws.

LDC Responsibilities:

- Identify Potential Committee Members and Others Interested in Volunteer Positions: Provide the Board of Trustees and committee chairs with the names of potential committee members and others interested in volunteer positions.
- Annual Election of Board Members and LDC Members: Identify potential candidates to fill open positions on the Board of Trustees and LDC; develop and manage the election process.
- Coordinate Leadership Development Activities: Coordinate leadership development opportunities to help identify and prepare members for leadership positions within UUSD.
- Supporting Potential Leaders: Identify, encourage and nurture current and potential leaders.

Key LDC Accomplishments Include:

- Recruited Self-Nominees for Three BOT Openings and Three-Five LDC Openings
- Continued the "Leadership in Action: Our Future is Up to You" recruiting campaign to identify and recruit potential members interested in self-nominating themselves for six to eight open positions on the BOT and LDC. Five members submitted self-nominations for the open positions.
- Information Session: LDC participated in a BOT chat session on March 16th to connect with prospective candidates for openings on BOT and LDC.
- Candidate Conversations: Had conversations with each of the new candidates to discuss the roles that they are self-nominating for and ensure there is a mutually good fit.
- Meet the Candidates Forum: Hosted a Zoom forum for candidates to share their background, skills, and interest in becoming a leader and for the congregation to have an opportunity to ask questions of the Candidates.
- Archives: Old LDC archive files were housed in a folder in the LDC committee shared drive.
- Coordinated Featured Committee Tables: To help new members get to know about the Committees within UUSD, and to help Committees with recruiting new members, we continued the Sunday Featured Committee tables. LDC scheduled each committee to be featured on a different Sunday

than their kitchen clean-up week. We also highlighted the Featured Committee both in the Beacon and through a message from the Pulpit.

- Liaisons with Membership Committee, UU Tune-up, and BOT: A member of LDC attended Membership Committee meetings to better coordinate our activities. The liaison worked with Membership to update the welcome packet. LDC members attended UU Tune-up classes as an opportunity to meet potential leaders. LDC members attended some but not all of the BOT meetings.
- Encouraging New Volunteers: LDC assisted UUSD Committees who needed new members and Committee Chairs. We worked with committees to identify new members who had not yet found a committee to join, and worked to align their skills and interests with committees that were searching for helping hands. LDC members met with committee chairs in one-to-one interviews to find out what was going well, and what leadership needs each committee has or may have in the near future. A list of five questions was created to guide each interview, and one of the questions sought what kind of LDC-organized workshops might be helpful in the future.
- LDC decided to hand out the “Serving with Grace” book to committee chairs at the beginning of the new church year at a church council meeting.
- LDC looked for an online tool that could be used to promote volunteerism, particularly for one-time commitment opportunities. The decision was made to use Signup which LDC will administer.
- Searching for the Future (STF) Strategic Plan: LDC participated in gathering information for Goal 4 “We will become an integral part of expanding a beloved community beyond our walls” by sending out a survey on our congregation’s community involvement.
- Jean Charles Service Sunday: LDC led the Jean Charles Service Sunday on May 4th.

2024-2025 was a busy year for the Leadership Development Committee. We continue to build and develop our own team, engage with new and long-term members, support transitional planning and provide learning opportunities to support the congregation. We look forward to continuing to expand on the work that we are doing in the year ahead.

Submitted on behalf of the Leadership Development Committee by Rand Lytton and Lori Rocheleau, co-chairs, April 29, 2025

Membership Team (for 10-month period: July 1, 2024 to May 1, 2025)

This was a year of transition for the Membership Team as Barbara Barnette passed the leadership baton to Renée Rocheleau on February 28, 2025. As a result, meetings were moved to the fourth Thursday of the month in the evenings since Renée works full-time during the day. Also, Donna Dolce took over as Coordinator of Greeters and Ushers when Tony Codella was no longer able to fulfill that role. Tony passed away April 12, 2025, and will be deeply missed.

Consistent with the vision and mission of UUSD, the purpose of the Membership Team is to provide a welcoming atmosphere for those attending Sunday services, to attract new members, and to work to retain current members. To that end, our dedicated team has worked faithfully over the past year to fulfill our charge resulting in the following accomplishments:

Provide a welcoming atmosphere for those attending Sunday services:

- Donna holds regular meetings with her team and works to ensure consistent expectations and open lines of communication.
- An upcoming article in *The Beacon* will highlight our Greeters and Ushers, noting that friendly faces are always welcome to join this incredible team.
- The foyer table has been organized and cleaned out, and a new pamphlet holder/rack has been installed to facilitate a more welcoming entrance.
- Members, Friends and Visitors join us online as well as in person for Sunday services. Our Sunday attendance continues to increase each week.
 - From July 7, 2024 to April 27, 2025 (43 services):
 - We welcomed **5,813 people in person** or an **average of 135 people** each Sunday.
 - Of those, **296 identified as in person Visitors**.
 - We welcomed **678 children** or an **average of 16** each Sunday.
 - During that same period online, **1,010 accounts logged into to watch either via Livestream or Zoom**. We have no way to account for how many people are watching from each account.
 - There are 9 services remaining in this fiscal year.
 - We started “Purple Mug Patrol,” a program where people sign up to intentionally seek out those using a purple mug during coffee hour and

make them feel welcome. This serves a dual purpose in that it involves more members of our congregation in “membership” activities as do our new Kindred Spirits Affinity Group and New Member Mentoring Program.

- Each visitor who completes a Visitor Information Card is sent a handwritten note from the Greeters and receives an email follow-up from the Membership Team Leader inviting them our next Kindred Spirits Affinity Group meeting. Membership is the only group charged with reaching out to Visitors.
- We are working to better organize the name tags in the Gathering Area and reviewing them to ensure we are storing only current/active Members and Friends or Visitors who attend regularly.
- We are working with Kris Acker and the Communications Team to create a collage of pictures which represents the diversity in our community. This collage will be displayed in the foyer, and the photographs of our past ministers will be relocated.

Attract new members:

- First Sunday Signings continue to be a success as the Membership Book is consistently available for signing at a table set up in the Foyer. As of May 1, 2024, when this annual report was due, UUSD had 207 Members. Twelve months later, as of May 1, 2025, we have **273 Members**** for an increase of 66 Members.
 - 24 of those Members joined in April 2025!
 - *****It is worth noting that our membership number remains fluid in that the Membership Team reviews our membership roster at least once a year and sends letters to Members who have either not made a pledge or have not actively participated in the past fiscal year.***
- The New Member folder handouts have been updated and/or redesigned.
- A folder has been created to give to new Friends.
- The Directory Information Form has been updated and is now being completed at the time the Membership Book is signed to help our Office Admin facilitate her process more efficiently.
- We held Newcomer Socials on September 13, 2024 & April 4, 2025. Both were well attended and offered an opportunity to get to know newer folks in a more intimate setting than Sunday morning coffee hour.
- Jean Charles, Kim King & Rev. Heather offered the UU Tune-up Class three times throughout the year with both in-person and Zoom options.

- We held two New Member Recognition Ceremonies (December and May) to celebrate our newer members and recognize them formally in front of the congregation.
- We started a new Affinity Group called Kindred Spirits, which meets once a month with the purpose of providing a space for conversation, connection, (and cookies!) on all things UU and UUSD. Visitors, Friends and Members are all welcome.

Work to retain current members:

- We culled through those listed as “Friend” in our directory and had our Office Admin send out 9 letters to people who haven’t pledged (though Friends are not required to make a pledge of record) or been active, asking if they wanted to remain Friends. We currently have **90 Friends** listed in Breeze.
- We started a New Member Mentor program pairing new members with mentors for the first four months after they sign the Membership Book.
- As new members join UUSD, we publish a brief profile along with a photo to help facilitate their introduction to our beloved community.
- Randy Davidson continues to be our Directory Photographer, offering Pop-Up Photo opportunities several times throughout the year immediately after service.
 - We worked with Communications to update our Photo Consent Form.

Sadly, we have lost members and friends this past year:

- Sue Davidson
- Joe Latta
- Darlene Lehr
- Tony Codella

Current Membership Team Members: BarB Barnette, Sylvia Daniels, Randy Davidson, Donna Dolce, Bobbi Dunham, Mollyne Honor, Betty Kirk, Ellen Loewy, Rand Lytton (LDC Rep), Sarah Raymond, and Elizabeth Shepley.

We are looking ahead to the coming year with excitement and energy as we further our outreach, continue to improve our processes, and increase our visibility, both inside and outside of our Beloved Community.

My deepest gratitude to BarB Barnette, Donna Dolce, Aela Maas, Sue Brown, Sandy Scheet-Robitaille, Kent Sprunger, Richard Wheeler, and Rev. Heather who have been invaluable in easing my transition into my new role. It takes a village, and I feel immensely blessed to be in the same one as these incredible, selfless individuals.

Respectfully submitted, Renée Rocheleau
Membership Team Leader

Pastoral Care Committee

This year the Pastoral Care Committee has increased to 11 members and the committee membership has been more stable than in years past. Two new members are learning the role of the lay Pastoral Care Associate (PCA) as well as the use of Google Workspace and Breeze. These tools are essential to accessing helpful resources for our support of church members.

The continued growth of new church members in the past year, and the aging membership continues to present challenges. We have assigned new church members to lay PCAs within a one to two month time frame which is more expedient than the 6 month time allotted for this task.

The congregation is more aware of the team and at least 82% of individuals know who their Lay PCAs are, according to the Congregational Life Committee's survey of 2024. If individuals are unaware of who their lay PCA is, any lay PCA would be able to look that information up at social hour on Sunday mornings as a list is kept in the building with that information. The Membership Chair also has access to that information.

Most team members have completed an initial training program offered by the UUA for lay Pastoral Care Associates, and three team members have completed the full 40 hour online training obtaining a certificate provided by the UUA. This training course is available to our newest members. Every lay PCA has a backup person on the team to cover for vacations and/or just offer more support if

needed. We have developed more of a team approach to assisting members so that the team can support one another and not be overwhelmed by needs.

The team uses various ways to reach out to their assigned members. Some use quarterly emails, text messages or phone calls or some combination of these. The purpose of these contacts is to remind congregants that we are ready and willing to help or just be an empathic ear.

Individuals that require assistance, often reach out to their Covenant group members or other friends in the church because they are well known to them; this is appropriate but at times one may need more help/support, a confidential ear, or privacy that “friends” may not be appropriate to fulfill. Please just know that you are not alone, and we are mandated to confidentiality.

Services that we have provided this year include sitting with members to give their family members a break, coordinating meal deliveries from Helping Hands or directly by Pastoral Care team members, referrals for professional service, rides to appointments as well as just a friendly phone call from time to time to individuals that we know are experiencing a stressful time. If we don’t meet expectations, please let us know, so we can make another effort or take another look at our resources and how we might be more helpful to you and others. Know that we are volunteers and wish to be effective.

We currently have 17 members on the Helping Hands list, and we always welcome others that want to assist congregants on an ad hoc basis. Individuals on the Helping Hand team also provide meals, rides, shopping, pharmacy runs and other necessary tasks for someone that is temporarily unable to do those things for themselves.

At the rate of numerical membership growth of our congregation, the aging population of members, as well as an aging Pastoral Care Committee with the limited capacity of volunteers, it might be time to consider a Second Minister (Assistant, Associate, Intern, part-time or full-time) soon with a focus of the pastoral needs of congregants. This Second Minister could be available to fill-in for other services, such as officiating at memorial services.

Michele Cavanaugh, Chair, Pastoral Care Committee

4/23/25

Property Management

Property Management Committee (PMC), along with Facilities Point Person (FPP), is charged to:

- Manage operation and maintenance of the UUSD facility,
- Focus and provide information on facility-related problems and concerns,
- Monitor needs and oversee work on maintenance and improvements.

In addition to the main committee, PMC has organized subcommittees for:

- Landscape Management
- Audio/Visual Systems and Operations (detail reported separately)
- Hospitality
- Indoor Aesthetics

Hospitality Committee, formerly known as “Kitchen Committee,” provides a welcoming space for socialization following the Sunday morning service. Also provided are receptions as needed following special life events such as memorial and wedding services.

- Prepares coffee, creamers, cookies, cold beverages
- Sets up tables as needed for service
- Replenishes said items as needed
- Maintains cleanliness of kitchen area

The Hospitality Committee chair is responsible for:

- Scheduling volunteers and assigning Sunday morning clean-up to Covenant groups and Committees.
- Purchasing food, beverages and paperware supplies as needed for events.
- Working with Executive Team and UUSD Cares committee as special events are scheduled.

Hospitality committee members request or are assigned to volunteer on Sunday mornings. Two volunteers are needed each week. As of this date, twelve volunteers are on the roster to help. For special events, an email is sent to volunteers requesting assistance.

PMC and subcommittees work closely with all other committees, Executive Team, and the UUSD Administrator to accomplish its charged responsibilities.

PMC members are Lori Rocheleau (leader), Gary Schmidt, Allan Cairncross, Lewis Rathbone, Ken Loewy, Doug Welch, Cheri Garnet, and Mike Bonti plus subcommittee chairs, BoT and ET liaisons.

Committee meets monthly (1st Thursdays @ 1:30pm)

Landscaping Team members are Karin Westermann (leader), Linda DeFeo, Margaret Keefe, Judith Paige, Pat Bartels, Lee Wheeler, Jim Gervan, Sue Greer, Valerie Andrews, Mark Clark, Mary Yesson, Lewis Rathbone, and Kathi Young

Hospitality Team members are Karen Krieser (co-lead), Donna Dolce (co-lead), Eli Searce, Bobbi Dunham, Darlene Regan, Lewis Rathbone, Rosemary Weiland, Judy McClure, Carol Huckabee, Darlene Sellers, Cindy Arno, and Zip Warmerdam

Ongoing responsibilities of the PMC include:

- Contract management (Fire systems, HVAC system, pest, mow & snow, septic, insurance, phone & cable, cleaning, building supplies)
- Maintenance, repair, and improvements,
- Energy system (DPL utility, solar & HVAC) management,
- A/V system operation, maintenance, and enhancement.

Key activities for Landscape Management Team included:

- Budget was \$3,500.00 - We spent approximately \$3,000 on tree and landscape maintenance. It is anticipated that the remaining budget of approximately \$500 will be spent on landscape maintenance by fiscal year end.
- As a result of the Feature Table, five individuals have shown interest in joining the Landscape committee. At this time, some/all will be invited to sit in on a meeting and see if the Committee is a good fit. We are pleased with this add on because it's been quite some time that we've been able to attract new members.
- The wildflower garden is being prepared for another year of bloom; maintenance, pruning, etc.
- The vegetable garden will be prepared for summer planting.
- The Memorial Garden's budget is not included in the Landscape Committee budget. The Memorial Garden is self-funded by the memorial plaques and other past contributions.

- The 2025-2026 budget is \$3,500.00. At this time, we anticipate normal maintenance.

Key activities for the Hospitality Team included:

- Approval was given for home-made cookies, provided the baker lists their name and the ingredient list. This has been a special treat and helped with the cookie budget.
- An updated Hospitality policy written with the approval of E.T. was completed earlier this year.

Key activities for the PMC last year included:

- Executed new cleaning contracts
- Replaced part of the roof (oldest part of the roof) - all the roof has been replaced since sanctuary was built
- Septic rotor-rooter
- Partially completed deck renovation (steps, railing)
- Added TV monitor to foyer along with drapes
- Propane test/stove replacement deferral
- Scheduled and supervised annual maintenance for HVAC, fire alarm & extinguishers, septic.
- Interior improvements: painted and repaired foyer, replaced lighting in foyer
- Well water nitrate level test: raw well and filtered
- Managed major snow events
- Maintained mowing contract with DR's Mowing
- Support to "Safer Congregation Team" provided (hung new signs)
- Continue migration of PMC hardcopy and softcopy documents to Google Workspace.
- Staff facility point person onboarded
- Facility mold & moisture survey conducted in January.
- Ongoing monitoring of energy usage and production to maintain "net zero" usage on an annual basis.
- Changes made to shed to create an Annex for meeting/classroom space as well as storage

Key (known) activities for the next year include: completion of deferred maintenance/improvement items, including:

- The Landscape Committee is hoping to implement a labyrinth. However, this plan will be introduced after we understand the expansion plans for the Children's program;
- Replace upper decking
- Install flush toilets in men's restroom
- Support of additional building (yurt, pole building, etc.) - TBD
- Large RE Room - replace vanity sink with utility sink; and new lights in closet, etc.
- Replace garden shed

Key challenges for PMC are:

- Managing, inherent "unknownness" of facility operation & maintenance demands,
- Delegation of problem resolution and/or work execution beyond "core" PMC members, including engaging non-PMC congregation members in ongoing PMC-related activities.
- Ongoing management of the currently very limited facilities (e.g., storage space)

Key challenges for the Hospitality Team are:

- The challenge for this team is having adequate space for Sunday morning social time. As our membership grows, the gathering area has become overly crowded.

Safer Congregation Committee

Mike Burns, Ruth Lamothe co-chairs, Adele Abrams, Randy Davidson, Debbie Knepp, Ken Loewy, members

Achievements

- Established Safety Response Volunteer Team to monitor and assist with any potential crisis situation at UUSSD
- Completed revisions of Emergency Response Manual, the go-to document for managing emergencies at UUSSD
- Purchased and used 4 walkie talkies to unite communications across all sections of the building
- Developed procedures for building entry and exit to maintain safety of the church and its occupants

- Submitted regular articles for The Beacon, informing the congregation of safety news and initiatives
- Held an event with the Sussex County Office of Emergency Management to inform congregants of local activities in case of a natural disaster
- Assisted with the 'refocus' of greeters on Sunday mornings, to first alert by monitoring cars coming onto the church property and reporting to SRV team member as needed
- Continued to offer annual CPR/AED training for UUSSD members and friends. 26 People attended the April '25 training. To date, over 100 UUSSD members and friends have attended this training
- Conducted table top drills for various crisis scenarios, including extreme weather conditions, intruders, medical or emotional health crises
- Met with committee chairs to update them on security measures and inquire about needs or concerns
- Updated and installed new signs throughout the church
- Clarified fire marshal policies on the safety importance of keeping chairs linked in the sanctuary. Fire marshal also confirmed the capacity of the sanctuary at 230.
- Purchased and installed 1 additional exterior camera to monitor a blind spot in the western parking lot

CHALLENGES

- Keeping the congregation informed of the need for safety measures without causing unnecessary alarm
- Rapidly changing local and national environment with increased risk factor of anti-liberal protests
- Maintaining relationships with other safety 'officials' at area churches to keep current on threats

FUTURE PLANS

- Conducting an annual review and revision of Emergency Response Manual
- Continuing with annual fire drills
- Continuing with annual CPR/AED training for congregation
- Having a ½ day Safety Fair for the congregation
- Continuing to explore potential safety issues and develop remedies
- Continuing to develop strategies for dealing with helping an aging population exit the building safely and quickly in the event of an emergency
- Reviewing church insurance plan

- Developing a cadre of attorneys in the congregation and the legal community to serve pro bono as expert advisors for sensitive issues that may arise in the church

Social & Environmental Justice Committee

Chairs: Susan and Mac Goekler. People who Have Participated in Meetings during the Year: Adele Abrams, Joyce Bramson, Anne Cook, Denise Corvarrubias, Donna Davis, Marta Dominguez, Norma Eckard, Ed Gill, Lindsey Haynes, Elaine Loughlin, Katherine Mils, Vicki Nichols, Teresa Ripley, Lorin Rocheleau, Jo Anne Saltzberg, Peter Schott, Rev. Heather Rion Starr, Bailey and Beth and Lynn Weaver-Ronk

The Social & Environmental Justice Committee (S&EJC) supports UUSD's Vision, Mission and Resolution of Conscience and Statement of Position by proposing, coordinating, and participating in a wide variety of activities in the name of social and environmental justice. The S&EJC conducted the following activities during the 2024-2025 church year. The activities are organized by the Resolution of Conscience's priority areas:

Multi- element efforts

- Continued the monthly Share the Plate to benefit local non-profit organizations and others. See Recipients under the relevant issue areas below. Between our last report in April 2024 and March of 2025, UUSD has donated \$8108.00 to local community groups from Share the Plate offerings. Vicki Nichols coordinated work with recipients.
- Continued supporting the UU Service Committee through Guest at Your Table program Mac Goekler continued as the UUSC-UUSD liaison.
- Continued to support UU Delaware Advocacy Network (UUDAN) with Elaine Loughlin, Peter Schott, Lorin Rocheleau, and Joyce Bramson being on the UUDAN Steering Committee.
- Continued to be part of Network Delaware, with Ed Gill and Mac Goekler as our representatives.
- Supported Get Out the Vote and Voter Education Initiatives: Volunteers wrote and mailed over 1000 cards.
- Encouraged Advocacy: at Featured Table, provided language, addresses, and cards to contact Delaware's federal legislators and planned for advocacy during Action Sunday

- Hosted a forum on Boycotts planned by Southern Delaware Alliance for Racial Justice and S.O.A.H., 150 attended. Notified congregation of local protest events.
- Submitted proposed revisions to the UUSD Resolution of Conscience for the congregation's consideration at the annual meeting.
- Continued the Grant program: Roy Parks Fund. 2024 recipients are West Rehoboth New Beginnings, Community Resource Center, and Sussex Preservation Coalition.
- Promoted UUA's Side with Love and UU the Vote initiatives and trainings; Mac Goekler is on the Side with Love Action Center.
- Showed the film *Banned Together* about banned books at UUSD for free. 100 attended.
- Served as umbrella group within UUSD for UUSD's participation in LRAC (Julie McCullough and Donna Davis are UUSD representatives; hosted meeting in July) and the Multifaith Coalition (Rev. Heather and Don Peterson serve as UUSD's representatives; Don is co-chair), as well as an umbrella group for the UUSD Cares team.
- Maintained an e-mail list of 85 UUSD members and friends interested in Social/environmental justice. Collected opportunities for involvement in the community offered by UUSD and other community groups and shared those opportunities as well as advocacy alerts with the list.

Racial Justice

- Susan and Mac represented UUSD on the Community Minority Liaison Committee (CMLC) to work with the Cape District on equity issues. The CMLC has 3 priorities: decrease disparities in disciplinary actions between racial minorities and white students, to close the opportunity and achievement gap between minority and white students, and to hire more minority teachers and staff to resemble the student population more closely.
- Brought back information from a Death by Incarceration Summit, and the Delaware Center for Justice "Visions of Justice" workshop.
- Showed the film *Traces of the Trade* and worked with Worship to arrange for Jane Carrigan to lead a discussion after the worship service. 25-30 people signed up as interested in pursuing *Coming to the Table* opportunities. After consideration, we decided that it closely aligned with SDARJ's work and to encourage those interested to become involved there.

- Susan worked with SDARJ on a white paper on Criminal Justice Reform submitted to the incoming DE State administration.
- Participated in the 2024 Juneteenth parade in Georgetown.
- Co-sponsored and hosted a Backpack assembling event that produced 100 backpacks for people getting out of prison.
- Co-sponsored and led the planning group for a Reentry Simulation about the challenges faced by those returning from prison.
- Worked with Worship to plan the April 27 worship service about Second Chances (for formerly incarcerated people). Tanya Whittle Policy Director for the Delaware Center for Justice brought reflections.
- Share the Plate: SDARJ (August 24), Dignity Backpacks (January 25)

Immigrant and Refugee Rights

- Brought to the UUSD Board's attention the potential for sanctuary seeking immigrants to come to our door.
- Share the Plate: Primero Pasos (July 24)

Environmental Justice

- Participated in the UU Climate Justice Revival with a powerful worship service where most people in the congregation took the climate justice pledge.
- Showed the film *Common Ground* regarding the industrialization of farming as part of Peace Week event.
- Coordinated Beach Cleanup in October and April
- Hosted and co-sponsored day-long Earth Week workshop, where the European Commission On IPBES Nexus Report was a major topic. 25 people participated including elected representatives.
- Hosted DelPL awards ceremony: RENEW (Reflective Essays on Nature, Earth and their Wonders) for essays by students. 50+ invited people attended and US Representative Sarah McBride provided the keynote closing.
- Share the Plate offerings: UUA Disaster Fund (November 24)

Women, Family, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Justice

- The Reproductive Justice Task Force (RJTF)
 - Created links with Women's March Sussex, ACLU, Progressive Democrats of Sussex County, UDAN, Indivisible of Sussex County, Planned Parenthood of Delaware, and the First State Abortion Fund;

- Provided group lead for Women's Rights Work Group for Indivisible Sussex;
- Tracked and advocated for legislation pertaining to reproductive choice and women's health; and
- Recruited members to get training and then serve as Planned Parenthood escorts in Dover.
- Hosted 80 – 100 people for the Transgender Day of Remembrance service (that made CNN news) and a later Transgender Day of Mourning Service
- With the UU Delmarva Cluster, had a presence at Pride Festival in Dover on the grounds of Legislative Hall (Mac Goekler) and participated in the Milton Pride Fest (Rev. Heather)
- Initiated the ILYA (Independent Living for Yount Adults) program in Sussex County. Two covenant groups have “adopted” one youth each who is transitioning out of foster care, assembling student care packages, and soliciting gift baskets to raffle as fund raisers as well as baby clothes needed by one youth.
- Rev. Cathy Rion Starr and Eli Searce facilitated a 6-part series using the UUA's “Transforming Hearts: Transgender Inclusion in Congregations”
- Arranged for Cape Henlopen School District's Mentoring Coordinator to share the program and invite volunteers.
- Share the Plate: I Support the Girls (May 2024), What is Your Voice (June 2024), ILYA (February 25)

Economic Justice

- Coordinated UUSD's participation in a food packaging event Rise Against Hunger.
- Coordinated gift cards donations for Holiday gifts for needy Cape Henlopen students and their families.
- Hosted 20-25 people for a Faith and Housing workshop exploring some of the Sussex County issues with having affordable, inclusive housing. Anne Cook became UUSD's liaison with the Housing Alliance.
- Encouraged participation in The Housing Alliance's Point-in-Time count of unhoused people.
- Shared UUDAN's book discussion of Matthew's Desmond's book, *Poverty, by America*.
- Worked with Covenant Group Council to recruit groups to provide meals for shelter residents.

- Hosted a Boycott Forum explaining the value and logistics of economic boycotts in collaboration with SDARJ and S.O.A.H.
- Co-sponsored Day of Housing advocacy event.
- Share the Plate: Indian River School District School District Homeless Liaison Program (September 24), Clothing Our Kids (October 2024)

Peacemaking

- As part of Peace Week Delaware participated in a peace pole dedication at St. Martha's Episcopal Church in Bethany.
- Helped organize and participated in Sabbath for Peace service at Epworth as part of Peace Week Delaware and in collaboration with S.O.A.H.
- As part of Peace Week, Mac Goekler facilitated a children's peace pole project during Winter Wonderland in Laurel.
- Initiated planning with Peace Week Delaware to plant 10 peace poles throughout the state for its 10th anniversary.

UUSD Cares

UUSD Cares had an active year.

June 16, 2024, "25th Anniversary Picnic"

25th Anniversary Year-End Picnic

UUSD Cares held the yearend annual picnic. Over 100 UUSD members and children attended.

Delicious food was provided by the congregation, and all enjoyed the picnic.

September 20, 2024, "Falling into the New Year Picnic"

UUSD Cares hedged their first potluck of the new year, "Falling Into the New Year Pot Luck"

The dinner was attended by 68 members and friends. A wonderful way to get to know each other.

October 25, 2024, "Spooky Dinner"

The sanctuary was decorated, and the lights turned low. Time for UUSD's yearly "Spooky Dinner"

Another delicious potluck provided by all.

Many members, friends, and children attended this fun evening. Great picture opportunities!

November 28, 2024, "Friendsgiving"

The sanctuary was lovely with cloth tablecloths and fall trim.

Over 70 members and friends came to enjoy a delicious meal together for Thanksgiving.

We also had Rev. Heather and her family join us this year.

December 13, 2024, "Sing in the Season"

This was a new event this year, and everyone really enjoyed it.

Mike Bonti and Beryl Martin supplied the music and words for many holiday classics.

Joan Applebaum led us all in the 12 Days of Christmas.

UUSD Cares supplied cookies and hot chocolate, and we had 40 + members, including many children.

Everyone had a great time singing and eating cookies.

February 15, 2025 Valentine Drive- thru Collection

We had great help for a collection of clothing, personal items, baby supplies and cleaning supplies.

We also had a Great turn out on a half dry/wet afternoon.

Pat Bartel worked with our children making beautiful handmade Valentine's that we gave to All our Wonderful donors.

Cheri Garnet gave away beautiful handmade glass hearts and the Beth and Bailey supplied Valentine candy.

We did fill 3 1/2 SUV's and a van full donation for the Rehoboth Community Resource Center and clothing for Sheperd's Office.

March 1, 2025 "Chili Cook Off"

This was our first Chili Cook off in many years, but it won't be our last.

Over 100 UUSD members and friends came and enjoyed an amazing number of different Chilis

Chili winners from various categories were delighted with their certificates and chili necklaces!

We had lots of after event talk for improvements for next year and how to enable everyone to vote.

A new good addition

March 6, 2025 “Philadelphia Flower Show”

Camp Rehoboth asked UUSD Cares to share a bus trip with them to the Philadelphia Flower Show

Many UU's joined the trip and filled the bus

May 17, 2024 “Rose Garden Gala Auction Kick Off Dinner”

This will be our final event in this fiscal year.

Worship Committee

Co-Chairs: Jean Charles, Rick Welk

Members: Susan Goekler, Julie Keefer, Beryl Martin, Lori Rocheleau, Dara Schumaier, Marj Shannon, Sue O'Brien, Don Peterson, and Rev. Heather Rion Starr

The Worship Committee has been responsible for the appearance of the chancel, which includes preparation for the holiday season beginning Dec. 1. This also includes occasional arrangements of flowers/plants as donated by members of the congregation or purchased by the committee in coordination with Membership (Donna Dolce).

The Committee meets each month to discuss and plan on providing assistance to enhance the quality of the many components of the worship experience. This includes (but is not limited to) planning with the Minister, and other committees, individuals or groups, the content and themes of services throughout the year.

This committee strives for excellence every Sunday. Our trained worship associates work with the minister and/or guest speaker, to develop a cohesive and meaningful service. We provide information for the Order of Service (OOS) and supply a large print OOS, as well as large print hymnals, for those who need them.

When the minister is not in the pulpit, we strive to provide thoughtful and interesting lay sermons, or invite visiting ministers. We encourage services by all committees, covenant groups, and sermons by visitors as well as by members of our incredibly diverse congregation.

Music has always been an integral part of every service. The congregation continues to be energized by our Director of Music Ministries, Julie Keefer. There also continues to be a wonderful relationship between Rev. Heather, the Worship

Committee and Julie to make every Sunday an inspiring experience with the music creating the perfect atmosphere and spiritual extension for each service. We are also blessed to have musicians in the congregation who have shared their talents and continue to do so. We thank Julie, choir members and musicians for their dedication, hard work and contribution to enhancing every worship experience.

In addition, live streaming and a zoom room for after services discussion have proven to be valuable assets to our services. We have received many wonderful responses from members as well as visitors and guests who otherwise would not have been able to attend in person. We will continue to review and improve on this aspect of our service so that *everyone* can be a part of our incredible spiritual journey.

The AV Team is under the auspices of the Worship Committee.

- UUSD AV Team FY 24-25 Annual Report

UUSD's AV professional Cheryl Hickey provides regular AV support for Sunday live-streamed services. Brian O'Toole served as a backup when she was unavailable. They have provided excellent service.

The AV Team recruited and arranged for Cheryl to train five people to provide volunteer AV support for events outside of Sunday mornings – Linda DeFeo, Susan Goekler, Leika Lewis, Shirley Bautista, and Lorin Rocheleau. These people comprise the AV support system (we do not meet as a team) and have provided support for congregational information and voting meetings, social justice forums, Adult Faith Exploration offerings, funerals, and films. We worked with outside AV professionals to arrange for a concert offered by Emma's Revolution.

A previously purchased portable sound system and hybrid cart are available for any UUSD group to provide its own AV support and several groups have taken advantage of those tools.

Jean Charles, Chair, Worship Committee

25th Anniversary Team

Members: Kris Acker, Sue Brown, Betty Kirk, Rev. Heather, Alice Casey, Sue O'Brien, Jean Charles, Linda Marsden

First half of the year focused on our history

June – September: Where are we now?

October to January 5, 2025: Where do we want to go?

1. January 21, 2024 Rev. Heather led the first 25th Anniversary Sunday service. Sue O'Brien & Kris Acker worked with Anne Pikolas and the Hospitality committee to provide finger food brunch after the service, catered by Scratch Mill kitchen. UUSD Cares members helped to make this a very successful event.

- Founders Jim Lesko and Sheryl Winsby lit the chalice. Sheryl and Beryl played and sang some of the songs they sang together during the early days of the church. Bob Johnsen (contact) appeared in person.
- The reception following the service went very well. The food provided had good variety and was carried around on trays for serving so there wasn't a crowd trying to get food at one table. Champagne and sparkling cider were served, making it very festive.
- This is just the kick-off! An insert in the order of service described other events coming up throughout the year and opportunities to get involved
- The first of the History trifold picture boards was displayed, including photos from 1997 – 2000. There was a lot of interest in it from both original members and newer members. There was a "heartbeat" across the middle of the boards where folks wrote in when they joined UUSD. All of the founders present added their names. Drawings from current CFE kids were at the bottom of the screens. Cards were available for folks to add notes about memories from this period in our history.
- Announcing upcoming events: Jean will put write-ups from Kris in her Sunday Up-dates
- Commemorative Swag: Pens with UUSD info on them have been purchased and are being used as needed at church.
- There was a press release after the January 21 service regarding our 25th anniversary. Alice contacted Kris about what to say.
- Our Facebook logo has been changed to the 25th anniversary logo.

2. January 28 (Jean Charles Service Sunday) the Pioneers held that service. Rev. Heather presented those present with their picture and Plaque that will be hung in our foyer.

- Gary Colangelo (former member and Pioneer) and Betty Kirk spoke, and Gary sang *Dream the Impossible Dream*.

3. February was Black History month and Lois Powell, an original member of the Chantels, spoke at an evening pot-luck/movie event on Saturday, February 24.

- Lois was featured in the documentary movie called “Street Light Harmonies” that was shown. SDARJ has rights to the movie and gave permission for us to show it. Lois provided her copy for our use.
- UUSD Cares members worked on setting up the event, setting out the food, making sure the event ran smoothly, and cleaning up.
- Clare Nichols provided AV support for the evening.
- Richard Wheeler took photos of the evening, and Linda Marsden served as MC.
- About 80 people attended the pot luck and an additional 10 people joined us for the movie only.
- The planning details for this event were worked out at the February 20th meeting, including layout for the sanctuary, table covers, paper plates and bowls, name tags, registration table, beverages, and recruiting help with set up and clean up.
- This event celebrated UUSD’s history of support for civil rights and other Social Justice issues in an extra special way in honor of our 25th anniversary.

4. March:

- The 2nd trifold screen was displayed starting March 3rd with pictures from the Toddy’s years. This included some pictures of the groundbreaking and building of the new sanctuary.
- Members were able to sign where they joined and add pictures and comments to this history.
- There was also a picture display featuring the Wild West auction event.
- Kris needed more photos from the Toddy’s years and Sue Brown and others provided some.
- March 3rd the new pledge drive was launched with the theme “Deep Roots/New Growth.”
- This display will remain up until the end of March.
- When UUSD hosted a Coffee and Conversation event with the multi-faith group, she was able to share some of UUSD’s history and the creation of the new space with our visitors using the trifold screen.
- Heather Hamilton approached Sue Brown about providing bags for the UUSD Easter Egg hunt at the end of March. Linda M. has also been interested in another “anniversary swag” item that would include our 25th

anniversary logo. We decided to pursue the idea of the tote bags with a logo for the congregation as a whole, not just the kids. Sue shared pictures of possible bags and designed a logo specifically for them. Both the type of bag and the logo were agreed to via email, and Sue ordered 250 bags. Heather H. decided these bags were too big for the kids to use for the Easter Hunt, but they will still be distributed to the congregation (see below).

- We continue to search for a 15"x8" shipping box that contains the cards for adding notes to the trifold boards and other related supplies.

5. April was Earth Day month

- The group had discussed inviting the Active Hope covenant group, Landscaping, and/or S&EJ to sponsor a project or activity.
- Possibly get Sussex Preservation Coalition involved as well.
- The "swag bags" Sue B. has purchased were distributed to the congregation after the April 21 church service in celebration of Earth Day (these re-usable bags cut down on waste). Heather Hamilton coordinated having the children participating in CFE help with the distribution of the bags. Betty Kirk also made them available after church on the following Sunday.

6. May/June

- Betty K. and Dar S. had children interview long-time church members (elders). Elders have been identified as well as children (and parents) to interview them. This happened on two Sundays in May/June. Pictures were taken by members of the photo team, and the children/parents created a written record of their talk. Rev. Heather spoke to the parents about it at a Parent Covenant meeting. Pat Murdock was interviewed on May 5 by Ramona and Maxine with parent, Aela. Betty received the notes from this interview. On May 12 Beryl Martin was interviewed by Bryden with parents Adam and Luke, and Walt Smith was interviewed by Chloe, supervised by Dar. The ongoing schedule went into the end of the year. Dar lined up parents and children and Betty lined up the elders. Eight (8) interviews were done. Interviewees include Jean C., Ann P., Beryl M, Walt S, Kris A, Jim L, and Valerie A. Jeff Cordiano declined to be interviewed due to health issues. Justin took great pics of the interviews. The interviews along with a picture for each were printed out on 8 1/2 by 11 paper (one or two pages each).

- Betty, Dar, and Heather H. worked on the process and how to present the interview information to the congregation. There could be a “Carrying Our Stories Forward” display in January, 2025 (see below). Sue B. arranged for photography of the interviews.
- This was the beginning of the “Where are we now” stage
- The Searching for the Future Task Force made their final report, and had already started working with committees to get initiatives started
- The 3rd trifold display reflecting our years at our current location (2015 – 2023) was not be displayed in June. It was displayed later on Dec 8. Once again, folks had the opportunity to add their joining date to the heartbeat line and add memory notes. We also created a 2024 25th Anniversary Year photo display.
- June 16 annual picnic was held. This is the “Gratitude for All the Things” picnic (Juneteenth, Father’s Day, Pride Month, 25th anniversary, etc.). UUSD Cares and the 25th Anniversary Committee took the lead, but all committees that interact with the congregation contributed as well. The picnic was well attended and there was plenty of food.
- This was the end of the church year for formal children’s programing. Heather H. let families know of any summer activities.

7. July/August

- Nothing planned during this vacation period of the year
- 3rd trifold? Rescheduled for Dec 8 (Fall New Member ceremony)

8. September

- September 15 was the ingathering water ceremony service
- Info from the Searching for the Future Task Force was used as a springboard for moving forward

9. October

- October 19 was the Emma’s Revolution Concert, followed by a workshop after service on October 20
- Kris was in contact with Pat Humphries. She had a contract from the group, which she forwarded to several committee members.
- They sent Kris press releases, graphics, tickets and photos.

- Money was in the FY 25 budget for the \$1,000 down payment
- The group required a \$2,500 guarantee. This was covered by ticket sales (\$25 in advance and \$30 at the door). There were paper tickets, and they were also available on-line.
- Needs of the members of Emma's Revolution were taken care of. Pat Humphries spoke to an AV tech, Cheryl Hickey. Mid-South audio was there to support audio needs. Beebe Frazer graciously provided accommodations. They arrived at 3:30 on the 19th. Dinner before the show was provided. Sue Brown and Justin came to their sound-check on Saturday afternoon to take some pictures as the lighting is not the best during performances.
- Refreshments were available at the concert. Lori Rocheleau created a special 25th Anniversary cocktail which she and Renee provided and served in both in virgin and alcohol included forms at the concert.
- ER was going to send us music from the choir director in Portland for Keep on Moving On. We had permission to adapt the lyrics for UUSD to fit with this election season. Linda let Julie Keefer know. It was later decided not to pursue this as the lyrics were fine as written.
- They also took part in the service on October 20. Julie K was there as well.
- The group offered a 90 minute post-service workshop on singing
- Concert, service and workshop were greatly enjoyed by both the performers and the audience!
- Net income from the concert was \$426. Expenses for audio support ran higher than expected but were necessary for the success of the event.
- October 27 was the All Souls service

10. Nov-January: celebrate a year of celebration and focus on the future

- November 24 cookbook release
- Still Water years (2015 – 2023) trifold displayed Dec 8

11. January 5, Rev Heather service, "Looking Back and Looking Forward."

- 25th Anniversary Year (and all previous boards) January 5: 6 panel; interviews and pics; - event summary (Pens and grocery bags, kick off service/reception, Lois Powell event, Annual picnic, stained glass window, Emma's Revolution, Cookbook, SFTF taskforce report), children's drawings from the year and hopes for the future, blank space for hopes and dreams, keep on moving on lyrics

- Appreciation of committee
- Committee met January 2nd at 10:00 a.m. to arrange boards around the perimeter of the sanctuary.
- We discussed what to do with the picture boards going forward. Suggestions included creating a password protected on-line album or video of them in the Members section of the web-page or archiving them in some other way.
- What do we want to make sure is included: ESL, March of 2022 installation of Rev. Heather, building of the playground, A Tiny Miracle performance. On January 5 Sue Greer expressed that she felt that solstice services and the drum circle were under represented.

12. Undated projects

- New UUSD cookbook. Renee Rocheleau took the lead on this project with advice from Susan Goekler who has experience with the software and Jean Charles regarding UUSD process. The deadline for submissions by August 25 was announced in Jean C's update on August 15th. Rev. Heather asked Heather Hamilton to encourage families to participate in her email reminder. Sue B. provided pictures of UUSD gatherings for the cookbook. Pictures and stories from those contributing recipes have also been included. The project was completed and introduced to the congregation at the November 24th service. Lori and Renee enjoyed working on the project and their energy and enthusiasm were contagious! The cookbook was on sale for \$25 after church on Nov 24th, and following Sundays before Christmas. We will make some income off the sales once we exceed 132 copies sold (we have 200). As of the Dec 17 meeting, we have between 40 and 60 books left. The Rocheleaus will decide how they should be managed from here (continue to sell or perhaps give to new members).
- Stained glass project: Ron Parks has completed the stained-glass chalice picture based on the one Gabrielle Zapecki created in the window at the back of the sanctuary. It is large and heavy, so installation was tricky, but ably accomplished by Cheri Garnet and other volunteers. The piece was unveiled at the Sunday service on June 9th, 2024.

This committee has been disbanded as of the January 5th service.

The members appreciated all that the volunteers and participants did to make this a wonderful anniversary year! ~Linda Marsden