



UNITY CHURCH – UNITARIAN

integrity · service · joy

**Unity Church – Unitarian
Annual Report
July 2023-June 2024 except as noted**



Access the annual report online

<https://bit.ly/ucu2324report>

Unity Church-Unitarian

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Board of Trustees and Staff List

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Mary Baremore, Secretary	Claire Cooke	Louise Livesay-Al, Chair
Jackie Duffus Boyd	Kevin Ely	LauraSue Schlatter
Debbie Cushman	Marcia Hayes	John Steiner-Manning

EXECUTIVE TEAM

Rev. K.P. Hong	Minister of Faith Formation
Laura Park	Executive Director
Rev. Kathleen Rolenz	Interim Senior Minister

CHURCH STAFF

Program Staff

Philippa Anastos	Membership Coordinator and Program Assistant
Ahmed Anzaldúa	Director of Music Ministries
Laura Betinis Healy	Unity Choir Alto Section Leader
Rev. Lara Cowtan	Minister of Congregational Care
Drew Danielson	Coordinator of Youth and Campus Ministries
Mark Dietrich	Unity Choir Bass Section Leader
Kathleen Kraulik	Choir Accompanist
Nelson Moroukian	Coordinator of Youth & Family Ministry
Katrina Nichols	Nursery Coordinator
Laura Park	Director of Membership and Hospitality
Kathleen Radspinner	Children's Choir Director
Shahzore Shah	Unity Choir Tenor Section Leader
Shekela Wanyama	Youth Choir Director

Administrative/Facilities Staff

Sherifatu Akibu	Facilities Specialist
Robert Baker	Facilities Manager
Heidi Birkholz	Events and Technology Coordinator
Teresa Connor	Facilities Operations Coordinator
Marcos Del Angel	Facilities Specialist
Julie Fliflet	Director of Finance
Dion Jones	Facilities Specialist
Carlos McAdory	Facilities Specialist
Claire Newhouse	Facilities Specialist
Sani Shaibu	Facilities Specialist
Song Thao	Financial Assistant
Martha Tilton	Director of Communications
Mo Todd	Lead Facilities Specialist

STAFF EMERITA

Ruth Palmer	Director of Music Ministries Emerita
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In Memoriam
November 11, 2023 through December 7, 2024

Joan Velasquez

October 11, 1945 – December 4, 2024

Jeannie Spears

June 4, 1934 – November 30, 2024

Vincent Grundman

September 16, 1952–November 14, 2024

Dorothea “Dorle” Gumbrill

September 26, 1938 — October 2, 2024

Jennifer Bjorhus

August 25, 1964 – August 9, 2024

Bertrand Leon Poritsky

October 28, 1934 – July 3, 2024

Mary Ann Pollard

December 2, 1935 – May 9, 2024

Daisi Gavioli Martin

September 25, 1943 – April 23, 2024

Bruce Richard Behrends

November 26, 1947 – March 22, 2024

Rev. Janne Elizabeth Eller-Isaacs

February 4, 1953 – February 14, 2024

Burt Riskedahl

September 8, 1940 – December 12, 2023

Blake Shumway Davis

June 17, 1940–December 4, 2023

Donald Joseph Brunnquell

September 4, 1952–December 30, 2023

Jack Hawthorne

June 26, 1940–November 28, 2023

Sigrid Sophie Bachmann

November 8, 1925 – October 2, 2023

Introduction to the 2023-2024 Annual Report

Church, as most of us have experienced it in the 20th and 21st century, is changing. Many denominations which dominated the American landscape are in rapid and precipitous decline. The good news for Unitarian Universalism is that while the pandemic has challenged our church-going culture, Unitarian Universalism has not experienced decline at such a rapid rate. The reason for that is unclear, but Transitions Director, the Reverend Keith Kron, suggests some reasons. Unitarian Universalism's theological diversity is a strength. Our historical resistance to a single theological position fits well with the current trend of religious seekers, who are looking for greater depth and breadth. Parents and families are hungry for religious education that neither insults their intelligence nor demands fidelity to denominational dogma. Although there are signs to challenge this assumption, the cultural shift to the left on social issues makes Unitarian Universalism an attractive alternative to the rhetoric of racism, xenophobia, transphobia and other oppressions that seek to marginalize a person's ability to live freely and fully in the world. Finally, people do seek out church community for rites of passage and find in Unitarian Universalism services that acknowledge the spiritual practice of raising children, of launching them into adulthood, and of loving them into their life's ending with a ritual of remembrance of farewell.

Thus, the church can and must continue to play a vibrant and active role in the lives of its members and community partners. But more than that, it must also serve as a beacon for those who are yearning for Beloved Community and may come to understand Unity Church as an instrument of its realization.

Unity Church has been living into these aspirations for more than 150 years. At the same time, the members realized that they cannot take its health or vitality for granted. There was a need to tend to institutional health. In March 2023, the Board discerned that the congregation, though still grieving the loss of Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs and the terminal diagnosis of Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs, was ready to move ahead with the next Ministerial Search. By November 2023, the Ministerial Search Team (MST) completed their cottage meetings, and began updating the Congregational Record, created by the 2021-2022 Ministerial Search Team.

The work ahead included paying attention to several strands that would strengthen the congregation's commitment to their own future. One strand was related to the tasks of Interim Ministry, which were articulated at the first year of Rev. Rolenz's interim and regularly revisited during the second. A second strand involved a deeper dive into the congregation's capacity to embrace complexity, especially as it relates to conflict. Through the work of Team Dynamics and Rev. Terasa Cooley's book *Transforming Conflict*, these learnings helped to prepare the congregation for the search process.

This report highlights some of the many and generous ways ministers, staff, and volunteers provided worship, programming, inspiration, generous care, and strength in shared ministry. How we embody and realize this shared ministry will continue to be worked in the details of how we nurture the conditions that make possible the prophetic imaginary we know as Beloved Community.

The Unity Church Executive Team

Rev. K.P. Hong, Minister of Faith Formation

Laura Park, Executive Director

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, Interim Senior Minister

**Executive Team Interpretation of the 2019-2023 Ends
with Strategic Priorities for 2023-2024
Written in August 2023**

Working within ourselves, among our church community, and beyond in the larger world, we the people of Unity Church-Unitarian:

1. Create a multicultural spiritual home built on authentic relationships.

Interpretation:

The Beloved Community is inherently multicultural and always aspirational. It grows from holy relatedness and requires deep humility. We acknowledge that we need help navigating the complexity of this territory. Authentic relationships begin when we recognize and root out our assumptions and deepen through active curiosity and growing friendship. This work asks us to confront systems of oppression, disrupt white privilege and fragility, build bridges across differences, and embrace an ever-growing repertoire in every dimension of our ministry. We promise to embrace the discomfort and inevitable failures.

Strategic Priorities:

1. Promote and curate an expanding multicultural experience of worship, particularly in our music ministries, focusing on the *Minimization Orientation's* developmental task of deepening cultural self-awareness as necessary groundwork for recognizing and appreciating wider cultural differences. As we look toward the change that comes in interim work and ministerial transition, we will incorporate new elements into the worship service while attending to the need for constancy. We will help the congregation more clearly identify what we mean by a meaningful worship service and what we mean by a meaningful multicultural worship experience.
2. Shift the culture toward evangelism via intentional outreach on the part of individuals and the institution, expanding the capacity to testify to the good news of the Beloved Community in the greater world.
3. Strengthen chalice circles and small group ministry with a deeper emphasis on cultural self-awareness as necessary work in building authentic relationships.
4. Acknowledging the within, among and beyond dimensions of multicultural practice, we will:
 - a. Build on areas where coaching, facilitating, and training remain both critical and effective
 - b. Translate the individual practices of antiracist multiculturalism toward what an antiracist multicultural congregation looks, sounds, and feels like culturally

- c. Help us build institutional practices that create brave space for prophetic ministry that dismantles dominant culture (see end #7), shaping how we think about values, finances, and reparations (see end #8).
5. Recognizing the importance of holy relationship and proximity to people of color:
 1. Support the efforts of the Ministerial Search Team to link with members of color within Unity Church
 2. Raise awareness in the congregation of our moral owners in the community through the work of the COMTs.
 3. Support the work of the Board of Trustees to link with moral owners in communities of color beyond the church, promoting a focus on partner organizations engaged with our Community Outreach Ministry Teams. (COMTs)
 6. Incorporate the DNA double-helix map interweaving faith formation and antiracist multiculturalism throughout the ministries of the church.
- 2. Ground ourselves in personal practice and communal worship that grows our capacity for wonder and spiritual deepening.**

Interpretation:

Both personal practice and congregational worship ground us in our relationship to the holy, inspire reverence, and prepare us to engage change as it comes. Individual spiritual practice and communal worship are essential expectations of church involvement. Consistent practice expands our capacity for wonder and fosters spiritual development. When we bring our full selves into the worship experience, our particular stories, practices, and insights enrich communal worship, awaken the welcoming spirit among us, and help us realize holy relatedness.

Strategic Priorities:

We will:

1. Explore the qualities of worship, with attention to in-person and online, that grow our capacity for spiritual deepening, as part of a process of regular review and discernment of the worship experience.
2. Discern the identity and needs of our online worship community that inform how we grow our capacity for wonder and spiritual deepening.
3. Structure faith formation as an overarching priority across existing programs and emerging initiatives, facilitating lifespan faith formation and intergenerational opportunities.
4. Evaluate intergenerational worship as an avenue for wonder and spiritual deepening

- 3. Articulate our Unitarian Universalist faith identity, teach it to our children, share it with others, and live it courageously in the world.**

Interpretation:

We know and feel part of the unfolding story of liberal religion and use our stated principles as tools for self-reflection and action in the world. We understand teaching as a spiritual practice and cultivate the salvific potential of learning together as a multigenerational community. Together, we disciple ourselves to our living tradition through ritual and worship, in stories and by example. We confidently claim our faith and testify to its transforming power.

Strategic Priorities:

We will:

1. Strengthen growing opportunities for intergenerational faith formation within existing RE structures and practices, including strengthening parental involvement in seminal programs from Our Whole Lives and Coming of Age to the Boston pilgrimage and Tower Club parent council.
 2. Engage and inform the congregation about the proposed Article II that will be voted on in June of 2024.
 3. Shift the culture toward evangelism via intentional outreach on the part of individuals and the institution, expanding the capacity to testify to the good news of the Beloved Community in the greater world.
- 4. Know each other in all our fullness and create an ever-widening circle of belonging for all people**

Interpretation:

We acknowledge the fullness of being human by embracing the messiness, complexity, and beauty of our existence. Our hearts contain the capacity for good and evil and all that lies between. Religious community helps us align ourselves toward the good, welcoming both gifts and wounds across a diversity of human experience. We claim a faith that breaks past fear and leads toward Beloved Community.

Strategic Priorities:

We will:

1. Provide opportunities for the congregation to transform its relationship with conflict through the exploration and practice of covenantal relations.
2. Lift up the importance of radical hospitality, inclusive of our in-person and online participants, and increase our capacity to nurture mutual belonging, exploring the best use of technology to know each other in all our fullness.
5. **Generously give and openly receive compassionate care in times of joy, sorrow and transition.**

Interpretation:

Our pastoral ministry reflects a growing understanding of relational ministry rooted in covenantal theology and its ability to transform lives. We accompany one another during threshold moments and times of transition. We commit to being present in joyful times and to building resilience in the face of suffering. The Holy reveals itself in a tangible way in our mutual care for one another.

Strategic Priorities:

We will:

1. Build a culture of trust by creating opportunities to be vulnerable with one another, enabling us to ask for and receive care.
2. Build capacity for the congregation to stay present and resilient in response to (both personal and societal challenges) the compounded risks of systemic grief, loss, and suffering.
3. Explore the ordinary moments when the church community gathers, offering more opportunities for deeper connection through worship, liturgy and fellowship.
4. Manage with care the transitions of staff, leadership and ministries.
6. **Discover and pursue our individual and collective work to advance justice, wholeness, and equity for people and our Earth and all life on it.**

Interpretation:

We encourage and challenge ourselves and one another to live out our faith in the world with a personal and collective commitment to justice, equity and healing. We invite the power of this commitment, deepened by our spiritual practices, to change our hearts and lives and to help us discern practices of renunciation in order to make room for what needs to grow. We will linger in the discomfort of not knowing long enough to find our place,

personally and congregationally in the wider movements seeking justice, equity and ecological wellness in the world.

Strategic Priorities:

We will:

1. Determine staffing to support our community outreach ministries and what it means to right-size those ministries.
2. Further develop the capacity of our Community Outreach Ministry Teams to engage the double helix connecting faith formation and justice work.
3. Explore an environmental audit and divestment from fossil fuels.

7. Create brave space for racial healing and dismantling dominant culture.

Interpretation:

As an expression of a covenantal faith tradition, brave space invites us into authentic relationships that allow us to imagine and experience new ways of being and help to heal old wounds. With particular attention to the antiracism front door in the House of Intersectionality, we learn to confront oppression in ourselves and in others, make mistakes, and enter into accountable relationships that lead to change. In brave space we turn down the volume of the dominant culture and amplify voices that fight to be heard.** We will learn to be together in new ways, practice sharing power, sing new songs, pray new prayers.*

**The House of Intersectionality given to us by Team Dynamics*

***This sentence drawn from the work of Micky ScottBey Jones.*

Strategic Priorities:

We will:

1. Build the staff and congregation's capacity to recognize the characteristics of white dominant culture and engage their antidotes in their interactions with one another.
2. Normalize and navigate the conflict inherent in this work and learning.
3. Explore intersectionality in advancing antiracist work, with particular attention given to class and race.
4. Center the conversation about reparations that would lead us toward an action plan to make reparations to those impacted by chattel slavery and settler colonialism.
 - a. Provide funds for our BIPOC members to participate in denominational gatherings, i.e. DRUM, Finding Your Way Home, etc.
 - b. Revisit and refresh the conversation about the use of the Currier Fund for Racial Justice, considering final recommendations made by the St Paul Recovery Act Reparations Commission.

8. Sustain and steward the church and our larger Unitarian Universalist movement for the future.

Interpretation:

Gratitude rests at the heart of our faith. When we embrace the gifts of the church and put them to work in the world, we understand the significance of the church in new ways. As disciples to our faith and its teachings, we hold the church in trust, testify by example, and steward its resources as an expression of the promises we make to each other and the world. Our gratitude extends to and undergirds our commitment to the larger Unitarian Universalist movement and our shared mission in the world.

Strategic Priorities:

We will:

1. Coordinate with the Board of Trustees to ensure a smooth transition and honoring of the Executive Director's upcoming retirement:
 - a) Establish a lay Development Ministry Team to advise the Executive Director on how the assets of the church can boldly and courageously express the church's core values and its antiracist, multicultural ends.
 - b) Celebrate the tenure of the outgoing Executive Director.
2. Track ongoing variables and complete a comprehensive staffing plan, with commitment to our antiracist multicultural work and the UUA's recommended Salary Guidelines.
3. Establish and normalize denominational engagement.

II: Executive Team Limitations
Policy J: Anti-Racism and Racial Healing Commitment
Monitoring Report September 2024

Policy language in boxes; interpretation and metrics below.

The Executive Team shall not take actions or otherwise conduct the affairs of Unity Church-Unitarian in any manner that does not comport with its commitment to becoming an actively anti-racist institution.

A full interpretation of this policy would include the policies below, plus the interpretation of all other board limitation policies. We are confident that all our interpretations align with our commitments to become an actively antiracist institution and that compliance with the policies below is compliance with the overarching statement.

The Executive Team shall not:

1. Engage vendors in an amount greater than \$2,500 annually without assessing and educating any such vendor using a matrix of values which includes, but is not limited to anti-racism, anti-oppression, multiculturalism and class inclusion.

Interpretation:

The matrix below, to be used when choosing vendors or when continuing our relationship with them, reflects the Executive Team’s operational understanding of this limitation:

Matrix of Criteria for contracts and vendors (weighted):
1. Minority hiring practices - resulting in a 31%* employment of people of color and women. (25%)
2. Sustainability practices – demonstration of a commitment to healing the earth. (15%)
3. Local engagement – demonstration of a commitment to the community’s overall health and well-being. (15%)
4. Worker’s Equity in fair compensation, inclusive benefits and healthy work environment. (20%)
5. Competitive fees for goods and services (25%)
*Keyed to Ramsey County requirements.

Evidence of compliance:

On the next page, you’ll find a table of vendors to whom we’ve paid \$2,500 or more from September 2023 through August 2024 along with commentary about how we have applied the matrix. For many years, the Executive Team has been reporting its intention to interview current vendors; this report repeats that commitment for those that have not yet had a conversation.

We report non-compliance and over the next year will work to come back into compliance.

Company Name	Policy J Conversation?	Notes on Hiring
Alfonso Wenker	yes, when hired	
Amazon.com	no	chosen by price and convenience and what's in stock.
Aset Supply and Paper	no evidence	long relationship
Berwald Roofing	no evidence	long relationship
Costco	no	chosen by price and what's in stock. Costco is also known for good labor practices.
Cub	no	chosen by price and what's in stock
Diligent Corporation	no evidence	BoardEffect
Freewheel Bike	no evidence	Barbara's retirement gift
Gephart	no evidence	long relationship since 2012 remodel
Gilbert Mechanical	no evidence	long relationship
Great American Insurance Co.	no evidence	Chosen because they would renew our insurance and for a less steep increase than most other congregations experienced
Health Point Cleaning Solutions of Minnesota, LLC	no evidence	have since brought cleaning in house again
Kraft Mechanical	no evidence	long relationship
Marco Technologies	Yes, November 2019	
Master Mechanical	no evidence	long relationship since 2012 remodel
Mind IT Services	no evidence	Long relationship
Perman Law Office	no evidence	chosen because the best at immigration legal matters
Schechter Dokken Kanter	no evidence	long relationship
Staples	no evidence	long relationship
Sweetwater Music instruments & Pro Audio	no evidence	long relationship that's under consideration for a change. We will definitely include Policy J conversation if there is a switch.

Company Name	Policy J Conversation?	Notes on Hiring
Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP	no evidence	general legal matters; the firm Sally Scoggin, our former general counsel and congregant who gave us a steep discount, retired from.
Webstaurant	no	chosen by price and the alignment with current stock
Winco	yes, when hired in 2021	
Xcel Energy	not yet and not sure we will be able to do that	no choice about Xcel
Zac L. Enterprise	no evidence	Holly Ave stair refurbish

2. Allow the Board to be uninformed about diversity of staff on payroll, including the percentage of positions and salary paid to people of color.

Evidence of compliance:

As of September 2024, our staff is comprised of 32% people of color (6 of 19). 30% of salaries paid from September 2023 through August 2024 were assigned to people of color (\$296,484 of \$1,000,902).

We did prioritize salary increases for our lowest paid staff members which resulted in a higher percentage than last year of the salaries assigned to people of color (25% reported last year) even though we have a lower % people of color than last year (35% last year).

We continue to experience higher turnover among our men of color in Facilities than we'd like, two in the last six months, partly due to their life circumstances. We continue to investigate what Unity Church can improve in supervision and support to better retain them.

We report compliance, in alignment with our Policy J rubric in #1 above.

3. Allow staff members to be uninformed about how to conduct their duties in alignment with the anti-racism, anti-oppression, multiculturalism and class inclusion values of Unity Church-Unitarian.

Evidence of Compliance:

- The existence of the Beloved Community Staff Team (BCST), composed of Executive Team, program staff, and congregant liaisons to the BCST Communications Team.
- We ask all incoming staff members to take the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and develop an Intercultural Development Plan (IDP). Supervisors follow up with staff

about their progress on their IDP and how the church can support their work, without violating the confidentiality of the IDI results.

- Recognizing that our intercultural development work as a group is to understand our current culture and state it clearly, the August staff retreat included a conversation about staff norms and a case study about staff culture.
- We anticipate increased engagement with these values through the music ministry through some large-scale projects.
- As acknowledged in the ends interpretations and strategic priorities, we have more work to do with the staff and with the congregation around our class inclusion values. Our next report will have more evidence of staff development in this area.

We report compliance.

4. Interpret the Ends statements without consideration of the anti-racism commitment of Unity Church-Unitarian and how that commitment is implemented in covenant with local communities of color.

Evidence of compliance:

- The ends interpretation submitted to the board for this September meeting includes numerous connections to these commitments.
- The 2022-2023 annual report on pages 31-32 lists the partners of color that inform the work of our Community Outreach Ministry Teams.
- Our Artists in Residence program has helped us implement our ends in covenant with local communities of color.

We report compliance.

5. Allow the congregation to be uninformed about the work being done to live out the anti-racism, anti-oppression, multicultural and class inclusive values of Unity Church-Unitarian, and the measurable outcomes of that work, including the percentage of Sunday Offerings that go to organizations with an anti-racist agenda and/or that serve communities of color.

Evidence of compliance:

- 2022-2023 Annual report. These commitments appear in the:
 - Strategic priorities for the ends (pp. 6-12).
 - Policy J report on page 13.
 - Notes on Beloved Community Staff Team work on pages 23 and 29-30.
 - Notes on the work of Community Outreach Ministry Teams pages 31-32.
 - Inclusion in Wellspring Wednesday programming on pages 38-39.
 - Notes on worship life pages 49-50.
- Articles in the newsletter from the Communications Team of the Beloved Community Staff Team (BCST). Every newsletter from August 2023 through June 2024 included an article from this team.

- Offerings percentages are included in the 2022-23 annual report (see page 14-15). The table on this page includes an update from July 2023 through June of 2024:
 - 80% of the organizations that received a Sunday offering serve communities of color.
 - 18% of the organizations include an explicit commitment to antiracist work in their mission. This includes organizations that talk of empowering marginalized communities. This is probably not as significant a reduction from previous years as it appears; with a new Executive Director, we're probably just counting this differently. For example, we would have counted 12 in 2022-2023 using these criteria instead of 19.

Policy J

Offering Recipient Analysis

Church Year	Total	# Serve Comm of Color	%	# With A-R Mission	%
2014-2015	51	37	72.5%	23	45.1%
2015-2016	49	39	79.6%	35	71.4%
2016-2017	47	39	83.0%	24	51.1%
2017-2018	44	32	72.7%	21	47.7%
2018-2019	48	36	75.0%	20	41.7%
2019-2020	46	37	80.4%	22	47.8%
2020-2021	49	45	91.8%	24	49.0%
2021-2022	50	38	76.0%	17	34.0%
2022-2023	50	43	86.0%	19	38.0%
2023-2024	51	41	80.0%	9	18.0%

Report from the Board of Trustees

2024 has been a year of anticipation and change for the Board. With the changes of Executive Leadership in both our Interim minister to Senior Minister and the Executive Director, we have worked to develop new rapport and trust with the changed Executive Team (ET) as a whole. While this report is meant to summarize key work over this past year, I want to start by talking about how we do our work each month, followed by our various initiatives.

- A. Board meeting structure. How the Board does our work each month is important to highlight because it touches on how our work is intended to be a spiritual practice. The structure of our monthly meetings, before we go into the “business tasks” includes:
1. A monthly reading by the rotating host and a review of the Board and ET Covenant to ground us in our work together.
 2. A reflection at the top of the meeting – revisited at the conclusion – to set our individual intentions in service to our antiracist multicultural ends.
 3. State of the Congregation report from two Board members and one Executive Team member, rotating each month.
 4. A Generative Conversation relating to some aspect of church or Board life that would help us do our work and decision making with a deeper reflection or understanding of the topic.

This results in about an hour of our meeting helping us be grounded in our work as Trustees and practicing the Double Helix in our work.

- B. Work of the Board. The Board has six committees that work on specific tasks that are brought back to the Board as a whole for further discussion and decisions. Here is much of the work of the Board as a whole, and those six areas of focus.

1. The Board as a whole:
 - a. Continued to monitor the Executive Team in how it is meeting the Ends and working within the limitations set by the Board in achieving those Ends.
 - b. Support and coordinate with the Ministerial Search Team (MST) around the search and Congregational meeting in April to vote on the candidate for Senior Minister.
 - c. Much of this year we have also been reflecting on the topic of reparations through a study guide with readings, videos and other resources that help inform our conversations on reparations in preparation for decisions around a Board designated fund from Helena Currier’s bequest. In October, the Board voted to name the St. Paul Recovery Act Community Reparations Commission as a primary source of authority around the issue of reparations.
 - d. Discuss budget issues with ET and means to increase Staff and ET salaries, worked on fiscal monitoring through learnings from financial review through Schechter, Dokken, Kanter.
 - e. Monthly articles for the *commUNITY* newsletter and other congregational communications, including Board Walk & Talk and special announcements.
 - f. Special Congregational Meetings in April and October, and Annual Meeting.
 - g. Host Unity fundraiser event.

- h. Linking with members, friends and partners of Unity Church.
2. The Transitions committee:
 - a. Support transition of Barbara Hubbard as Executive Director to Laura Park, and honoring Barbara Hubbard for her 25 years at Unity.
 - b. Complete the work with Interim Minister Kathleen Rolenz and final report on our transition to the UUA.
 - d. Plan for the release of the MST and their final report, do a gap analysis and pull records together from search process for future reference.
 - e. Welcome Rev. Dr Oscar Sinclair and family through various means.
 3. The Policy and Bylaws committee:
 - a. Develop bylaw changes:
 - o Art. I, sec. 2 Eligibility to Vote
 - o Art. I, sec. 4 Time to Respond to Inquiry regarding membership
 - o Art. II, sec. 1 Annual Meeting
 - o Art. V, sec. 2 Voting to Call or Remove a Minister
 - b. Reviewed and created policies for Unity's Governing Policies.
 4. The Evaluation committee:
 - a. Oversee the Congregational Survey as one of the tools for monitoring how the Executive team is meeting the stated Ends.
 - b. Compile the data from the survey with Bill Etter and share it with the Board and in a report for congregation.
 - c. Volunteer and Staff Survey to assure that the Executive team is not violating the limitations set in policies by the Board.
 5. Recruitment Committee:
 - a. Coordinate the process for recruiting new Board members, incl. refreshing the rubric, questions, application, communications to congregation, interview and recommend to the Board the slate of candidates.
 - b. Plan and coordinate on-boarding for the new Trustees.
 6. Ends Committee:
 - a. Starting mid-year, work on identifying timeline for Ends Renewal process.
 - b. Put together an RFI for a consultant to assist with Ends Renewal, interview and provide recommendation.
 - c. Organize first session with consultant and further tasks to prepare for Ends Renewal, incl. creating a powerful question for listening sessions.
 7. Grievance Committee: There were no grievances brought to the Board for consideration.

The Ends renewal process in the first part of 2025 will be important work for members to participate in as we work together to envision our next 5 years together. This will guide the work of the Executive Team in shaping our programming and ministries. The Board is looking forward to this work and continuing the conversation and decisions around the Currier Fund and the overall work of the Board. For questions, please email Board@unityunitarian.com.

On behalf of Unity Church Unitarian Board of Trustees
Louise E Livesay-Al, Chair

Interim Ministry Report

Rev. Kathleen C. Rolenz, Interim Senior Minister

November 2022 – June 2023

The purpose of this report is to document some of the interim work that has been accomplished or is currently in progress during the period of August 2022 – June 2023. This serves as both a documentation for future boards and ministers to read and as a celebration of the good work that Unity Church has done since my arrival in August 2022. Although I am the primary author of this report, I am representing, in part, some of the work of the executive team. Therefore, I'll be referring to myself in the third person.

August 2022. We must begin, however, by going back before the November 2022 annual meeting. Rev. Kathleen Rolenz was hired by the Board of Trustees in June 2022 and began her ministry August 15, 2022. One of her first tasks was to assist the executive team to find a minister of congregational care. After consulting with colleagues and posting a job description, we lured Rev. Karen Gustafson, who lives in Knife River, MN, out of retirement. Rev. Gustafson has served as minister of pastoral care at the UU Congregation of Madison, WI, is a trained interim minister and was available! We welcomed her to the staff in August 2022. Rev. Gustafson's contract was for a year, with the possibility of a second-year renewal.

Rev. Rolenz also met with Executive Team members Barbara Hubbard and KP Hong for the team's annual retreat. The purpose of this retreat is to review strategic priorities and to assign various parts of the strategic priorities to members of the executive team, who are accountable to the board of trustees for the fulfillment of those ends. Rev. Karen Gustafson joined us for part of the retreat to orient her to her new role.

September 2022. The first major event of the fall was the memorial service for Minister Emeritus Rev. Rob Eller Isaacs. Rob's memorial was held on September 17, 2022. Colleagues and tributes from all over the country poured in. It was a powerful, heartfelt and memorable tribute to a beloved former minister. At the same time, Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs health took a dramatic and frightening turn, which meant that she could not be physically present for the service. The congregation and church staff had to hold both grief and fear together to rise to the challenges of ministering to this still bruised congregation.

October 2022. Rev. Rolenz outlined for the Board and for the congregation the five developmental tasks of interim ministry:

- Exploring a congregation's history
- Articulating a congregation's identity
- Developing new leadership
- Strengthening denominational ties
- Preparing for the future

Of these five, Rev. Rolenz told the congregation she was focusing on primarily history and identity for the first year of interim ministry, while weaving in strengthening denominational

ties. In October Rev. Rolenz offered a series of sermons including, “What Will You Do with Your Second Chance?” on October 2, and “150 Years of Longing” on October 8. Rev. Rolenz also created the interim monitoring team to assist with the interpretation of the goals of interim ministry and to help Rev. Rolenz interpret the needs and culture of the congregation.

November 2022. On November 5, 2022, Rev. Rolenz and the Board of Trustees offered a joint presentation called Forward Together. The Board described their plan for the upcoming two years (bylaws review, clarity about the search process, etc.) She outlined a plan for her interim ministry in the next two years:

What had already been planned or was in process:

1. Weaving themes into sermons and services
2. Groups and gathering on grief and trauma
3. Wellspring Wednesday programs
4. Creating rituals of healing, release, etc.

Upcoming Programs

1. Congregational Life Review (exploring a congregation's historical timeline & important events)
2. Change, Conflict & Complexity workshop with Alfonso Wenker
3. One-on-one conversation between estranged members with trained facilitator and pastoral support
4. Small group conversations - facilitator and pastoral support
5. Congregational study and engagement
6. Explore: congregational covenant
7. Explore: Right Relations team
8. *Transforming Conflict* and participate in workshop offered by Rev. Dr. Teresa Cooley

Also in November, the Executive Team (Barbara Hubbard, KP Hong and Kathleen Rolenz) embarked upon a yearlong analysis of staffing needs at Unity Church. We met with each staff member, and reviewed their job description to determine what modifications, if any, needed to be made. We realized that some staff members' jobs had expanded due to pandemic responsibilities, which they maintained when we returned to in-person. We looked at past trends to determine future ones.

In November, the Unitarian Universalist Association published new compensation guidelines. We compared those guidelines with our current standard (NACBA – National Association of Church Business Administration) and found compensation discrepancies in several staff positions. In addition to creating positions that were more appropriate for how Unity operates *now*, we also needed to propose a salary increase to several positions. The process of analyzing positions, meeting with staff, proposing new positions and salary has consumed much of the team’s time and attention for the 2022-2023 church year. However, we

are proud of the work we've done and believe it has set in motion a strong and healthy staffing structure for the next chapter of Unity's life.

In November, Rev. Rolenz also hosted a gathering to discuss changes to Unity's order of worship, which were further reviewed at the worship associates retreat in January 2023

December 2022

On the weekend of December 8 – December 11, Rev. David Pyle, Regional Consultant for the Mid-America Region, was invited to meet with Rev. Rolenz and the Executive Team, and to offer two workshops to the congregation as well as preach on Sunday morning. The first workshop was on creating a Covenant of Right Relations or Healthy Relations Team and the second was to provide Unity Church members a chance to understand Rev. Pyles role in the search process and how he, as a member of UUA staff, can be a supportive presence to Unity Church. His assessment of Unity Church was that it was healthier than he expected-- that people seemed to be in a much better place emotionally than earlier in the summer. One of the questions posed to him throughout the weekend was, "Are we (spiritually) ready to go into search again, or should we postpone?" Rev. Pyle could not answer the second question, but to the first, his response was "yes."

This winter was the first one in which Unity Church felt a return to "normal" after having online church since March 2020. The Blue Holidays service, the beloved carol sing/shout, the Christmas concert, Las Posadas, the Christmas pageant, and the traditional Christmas Eve services all returned in person. Attendance was good, but not as robust in years past. On Christmas Day (which was a Sunday this year) a portion of the ceiling in Parish Hall collapsed, necessitating the closure of Parish Hall to repair the ceiling.

January 2023

Tolling of the Bells service was particularly poignant as we remembered former minister emeritus, Rev. Rob Eller Isaacs and many other beloved members who died in 2022. Alfonso Wenker led the Change, Conflict and Complexity workshop as part of the year-long series on those very issues! How do we navigate the complexities that accompany change and conflict with spiritual integrity? These were some of the questions raised and discussed.

Worship associates held their bi-annual retreat in January. At the retreat, we discussed changes that Rev. Rolenz had made to the order of service, such as:

1. Moving congregational news from the beginning of the service to the end,
2. Moving the offering/offertory to after the sermon, and
3. Changing the words to the embracing meditation.

February 2023

Rev. Karen Gustafson brought a wealth of experience to Unity Church, not the least of which was her work in what's called "life review." Similar to the personal practice of life review, the congregational life review is a process by which a congregational timeline is created, and stories about various epochs of the congregation's history are told. The purpose of this life review is to

explore both a congregation's history and how that history has shaped its current identity. Then, we led the group into an exploration of how their history and identity shapes the ways in which Unity develops its norms, culture, expectations and hopes for their future.

March 2023

By March, the Board of Trustees had made the decision to open a search for a new senior minister, to be welcomed to Unity Church in August 2024. Nominations for who might serve on the search team were requested. The Executive Team supported the decision to move forward with the search process. Unity Church also held its first-in-a-while fundraiser, March 4, which provided a necessary boost to our operating budget *and* a lot of fun and good dinners, services and programs offered as a result. It felt like a return to the pre-pandemic days.

April 2023

Saturday, April 22, Rev. David Pyle and Rev. Sharon Dittmar of the Mid-America Regional Staff held a workshop on Covenants and Healthy Congregations | Right Relations Teams, which included White Bear, First Universalist and Unity Church. This was an opportunity to understand the purpose of creating a congregational covenant and to dive deeper into the work of a Healthy Congregations and Right Relations Team. It was attended by approximately 60 members.

May 2023

On May 14, the congregation voted on its new Ministerial Search Team. Including in that meeting was a charge to the search team, but also, more importantly, a charge to the congregation, which outlined expectations of how the congregation should conduct itself during this search year. Both charges were crafted by the Board of Trustees, and set forth clear guidelines on how we, as a congregation, will be in relationship with one another for the 2022-2023 church and search year. The relationship between the Board, the Executive Team and the Ministerial Search Team was clarified.

June 2023

One of the five developmental tasks of interim ministry is “strengthen denominational connections.” Unity Church has had individual members and its senior leadership involved in denominational activities, but a deeper connection with the Unitarian Universalist Association has largely been absent. In an attempt to generate more interest in and involvement with General Assembly, Rev. Rolenz created “watch parties” to enable members to participate in General Assembly virtually. The key events, such as the Service of the Living Tradition, the Ware Lecture and Sunday morning worship were livestreamed at Unity Church. Some were better attended than others. Sunday morning was held in Parish Hall, via livestream, with muffins and coffee served before the service.

After some discernment, Rev. Karen Gustafson decided that she wanted to return to her home and life in Knife River and this time, really retire! However, she agreed to stay through the summer, covering the summer services in July and responding to pastoral care needs as they arose, while Rev. Rolenz was on a long planned for vacation. The Executive Team advertised for

a minister of congregational care in June. Rev. Lara Cowtan, who was completing a three-year ministry as Interim Senior Minister of the Vancouver Unitarians, applied. The executive team interviewed Rev. Lara and were impressed with her credentials, her work as interim senior minister and her enthusiasm for working and living in Saint Paul and the Mid-West. However, as a Canadian citizen, the Executive Team and our immigration lawyer needed to secure a work visa for Rev. Lara. We were able to accomplish this in time for her to move to the United States in August 2022.

The Beloved Community Staff Team (BCST) continues to assess the impact of our commitment towards embedding antiracist and anti-oppressive themes, articles, and programs in all aspects of worship life. This is ongoing work.

October began with the news of the attack on Israel by Hamas. As we prayed each week for the cessation of violence, we also realized the growing need for a gathering to mourn and to grieve. On November 1, Rev. Rolenz organized a brief vigil just before Wellspring Wednesday.

From Interim Senior Minister

The famous quote attributed to such diverse sources as Confucius or Mark Twain (!) said: “If you love your job, you never work a day in your life.” While ministry is definitely work – there is always more that can be done than there is time to do it, the benefits of working at Unity Church are enormous. Members are generally kind to their ministers and to their Executive Team and staff, and to one another. Critiques are fair, praise is generous, gratitude is often shared. Ministering at Unity Church has been – and I fully expect will continue to be – one of the most exciting and fulfilling ministries of my career. It is with deep gratitude that I submit this annual report.

Keeping the faith with you,
Kathleen

Ministerial Search Team Final Report

Angela Wilcox, Chair

Rebecca Flood

Richard Lau

Tara Romanov Messana

Katherine Sherman-Hoehn

Jennie Smith

Ray Wiedmeyer

We lead in love.

That is the first element of the 2023-2024 Ministerial Search Team's covenant to each other and also the best summary of our work, and the work of the congregation, during our successful search.

Love is at the center of Unitarian- Universalist values, of course. Love was also at the center of our process, and just as evident in the early, anxious, and wounded congregation that entrusted the Ministerial Search Team with its charge and participated in Cottage Meetings and wondering with us, as it was of the congregation that later voted, nearly unanimously, to call our new settled Senior Minister. Gratitude and relief radiated within the sanctuary. We began again, with great effort, in love.

There is much more to be said, and this report will say as much of it as we can find actual words to describe: the gifts and skills we each brought to the MST, our strategies and processes, communication plans, anti-bias trainings, and discernment processes. There is no doubt that our success stemmed from the love for each other, our congregation, our faith, and our community which composed the heart of our journey. By creating a space where members of our congregation could engage with each other in love and wonder, and by listening deeply, we eventually reached that joyful April afternoon.

Our faith calls us to embrace universal love as the foundation and grounding of our actions. This can feel challenging and too heart-centered for our pragmatic, head-oriented selves to comfortably apply to such a critical undertaking as calling a senior settled minister. Yes, love, of course! Of course, we love each other and will sprinkle it on top of our meticulously crafted processes.

It may feel a bit unusual to read this at the outset of a formal report. While calling a settled minister is indeed a hiring practice, it is fundamentally a spiritual practice as well. As love is the core of the Church, it must also be at the core of the call. This report will tell you how we achieved this.

To read the middle of this report visit <https://bit.ly/mstfinal>.

Many elements contributed to the successful search and call process at Unity Church-Unitarian. These include the diverse skill sets and backgrounds of MST members, the valuable insights from mentors like Rev. Keith Kron, Alfonso Wenker and Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley, the vision and leadership of our beloved Senior Interim Minister Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, and the steadfast support from and covenant with the Board and ET. Critical to our success was maintaining a focus on Unity's own vision and Ends. MST Chair Angela Wilcox's leadership played a crucial role in guiding and steering the search team towards our collective goals and creating that initial space for us to come together to do this important work.



However, the most pivotal and fun factor (for us) was the organic development of relationships within the MST itself. The connections fostered a deep sense of trust and love, serving as the foundation for our journey and leading by example of how we, as thoughtful (and sometimes contrarian) Unitarian Universalists, can come together and build a path forward. As one MST member said, "There isn't any project that I wouldn't be willing to do with these six other people."

We are thankful for having had the opportunity to serve Unity, to work so closely and collaboratively with such a supportive UUA team, Interim Senior Minister, ET and Board. Our time on the search committee has been life-changing and sacred work. Thank you! We are so excited for what's next and we will be forever grateful and changed by our time together and in service of Unity Church-Unitarian.

Congregational Survey

Congregational survey results are available online at <https://bit.ly/congsurv24> or as a printed copy on request.

Some highlights:

Ends with particular strength (relatively high rankings for progress and importance):

- Generously give and openly receive compassionate care in times of joy, sorrow, and transition.
- Discover and pursue our individual and collective work to advance justice, wholeness, and equity for people, our Earth, and all life on it.

End that represents an opportunity (relatively low ranking for progress and relatively high ranking for Importance):

- Know each other in all our fullness and create an ever-widening circle of belonging for all people.

Over the period 2019 – 2024

- The End with the largest gain: Create a multicultural spiritual home built on authentic relationships.
- Loyalty (-17%) and Net Loyalty (-22%) took substantial hits in our transition years of 2022 - '23 but rebounded in 2024.

One group of congregants place relatively higher importance on Ends 1, 6, and 7 and relatively less importance on Ends 3 and 8. In contrast, another group of almost equal size reverses these priorities to some extent, placing relatively less importance on Ends 1 and 7 and relatively more importance on Ends 2, 3 and 5. Both groups, however, agreed on the relative importance of End 4.

Ends:

1. Create a multicultural spiritual home built on authentic relationships.
2. Ground ourselves in personal practice and communal worship that grows our capacity for wonder and spiritual deepening.
3. Articulate our Unitarian Universalist faith identity, teach it to our children, share it with others, and live it courageously in the world.
4. Know each other in all our fullness and create an ever-widening circle of belonging for all people.
5. Generously give and openly receive compassionate care in times of joy, sorrow, and transition.
6. Discover and pursue our individual and collective work to advance justice, wholeness, and equity for people, our Earth, and all life on it.
7. Create brave space for racial healing and dismantling dominant culture.
8. Sustain and steward the church and our larger Unitarian Universalist movement for the future.

Administration

The 2023-2024 church year included significant administrative change as Barbara Hubbard, Executive Director for over 25 years, retired on March 17, 2024. Filling the large shoes Barbara left behind are two people:

- Laura Park, Executive Director, who began February 1, 2024.
- Julie Fliflet, Director of Finance, who began January 21, 2024.

With the able help of long-time Financial Assistant Song Thao, Julie immediately began the work of financial transition, looking for opportunities to enhance the church's financial position and the work of handling contributions, payroll, and accounts payable. Julie also worked closely with Schechter, Dokken, Kanter CPA, the firm engaged by the board to conduct a review of our 12/31/2023 financial position, which concluded in September 2024 (see financial report section).

Other aspects of our administrative ministry continued, including:

Livestreaming our Sunday services, memorials and other events under the direction of Martha Tilton, our livestream executive producer. You can visit Unity's YouTube channel to watch past and current services. We're grateful to our sound team for their excellent support of events in the Sanctuary: Johnny Balmer, Heidi Birkholz, Vladimir Garrido, Lucas Martin, Nico Munoz, Lizzie Nelson, Craig Rutherford, Mo Todd.

Communications. Martha Tilton, in her 17th year as Director of Communications, managed a myriad of communications channels (newsletter, emails, social media, website, outdoor sign, indoor sign with rotating events displayed), ensuring the quality and clarity of our message across all platforms. We are so grateful for her dedication, wisdom, skill, and creativity.

Memorial Services, supported by our memorial service reception team, led by Barbara Ford. Thank you to the mighty crew of bakers of bars and cookies, and to those who provided kitchen service and support at memorial services. Additionally, we would like to thank Terry Linskey for his dedication in memorial coordination along with a wonderful crew of greeters and bell tollers to help these families say good-bye to their beloved.

Front Desk Volunteers. Our dedicated front desk volunteers, led by Peter Heege, enhanced our ministry of hospitality with their warm welcome at the Holly Avenue entrance, phone call screening, and help with mailings, napkin folding, silverware rolling, and other tasks. Front desk volunteers in 2023-2024 were Peter Heege, Marty Rossmann, John Sherman, Sharon Merritt, Betsy Moore, Terry Linskey, Jo Lucas, Joan Maclin, Daphne Thompson, Mary Ashmore, Colleen Zuro-White, Sue Doffing, Stephanie Steel, Jerry Grunstad and Bob Albrecht.

Archives Team

The archives team has been working since 2013 to sort and box all types of records—documents, photographs, and mixed media—that tell the story of Unity Church Unitarian. During those years, we gradually transferred most of these records to the Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS) archival collections. This past year has seen great progress in several areas.

First, the materials sent to the MNHS are now cataloged and ready to use. The collection consists of 146 boxes of photographs and documents of many kinds. In addition, MNHS digitized many sermons from Unity ministers and guest preachers that are now available on the Internet. Go to <http://www2.mnhs.org/library/findaids/00896.xml> to see the online catalog of the Unity collection or to retrieve a sermon from the past. The team learned that Unity materials represent the largest church collection housed at MNHS.

Second, we obtained a dedicated space within the church building. Thanks to the efforts of interim senior minister Rev. Kathleen Rolenz and the support of the Executive Team, we now have a designated room after working out of the Facilities Storage Room since we began. We're especially grateful to facilities staff members Robert Baker (Facilities Manager at that time), Mo Todd, and Marcos Del Angel for doing the painting, carpet laying and shelving assembly that made the room functional. We're pleased to now have an appropriate space where we can continue the work of preserving the story of Unity Church-Unitarian.

Third, we began writing articles for the church's newsletter, *commUNITY*, to publicize the team's work and share some of the interesting stories found in the archives. In 2024, members of the team produced ten illustrated articles about topics such as ministerial selection, Rev Arthur Foote, summer camp at Unity in 1964, and the Generosity Ministry.

Fourth, the team worked with Executive Director Laura Park to develop a process for regularly selecting and preserving the records that tell the story of Unity Church. Our goal is to encourage staff and team leaders to contribute their files to the preservation effort on an ongoing basis. We look forward to processing the first collection in early 2025.

Several people joined the Archives Team this year. The team welcomes new members; the only requirement is an interest in the history of Unity Church Unitarian.

Archives Team members this year were Louise Merriam, Carol Miller, Patt Kelly, Pauline Eichten, Fritz Hoehn, Betsy Moore, and Deb Woodburn.

Art Team

November 2023 – November 2024

Unity Church's Art Team continues to embody our adopted Ends Statements* through emphasizing recruitment of artists with diversity of gender, race, ethnicity, and (dis)ability. We also strive to introduce different forms of art and creative processes to our community.

Parish Hall Artists (Nov 2023-Nov 2024)

The period between November 2023 to the present, the Art Team brought a variety of artists and mediums to the Parish Hall.

- The November '23 exhibit presented works from celebrated Rondo artists Melvin and Rose Smith. Their art is included in the permanent collections of MIA, Minnesota Museum of American Art (M), MNHS and the Walker. We were honored and privileged to display their art at Unity.
- Various art mediums showcased this year include painting with encaustic (wax) from Naomi Hart (January), Sun Suki Sun's Chinese Ink drawings (February), and watercolor painting on textile batik from Kim Gordon (March).
- Two exhibits featuring pieces created during the COVID-19 pandemic included works by Unity Church members. Maura Williams' solo show centered around the theme of Containment (May). Carole Humpage and members of the watercolor group, *Against All Odds*, shared work which grew from their intention to maintain a creative practice during this time of isolation (October).
- The Art Team hosted an intimate exhibit and reception in the Center Room displaying work from the *Fresh Eyes Arts* program of Midwest Special Services. *Fresh Eyes Arts* studio supports artists with disabilities. This was the first time the Art Team used the Center Room for a show and reception. It was a success, and we will likely continue offering more intimate programs like this in the future.
- The November '24 exhibit offers works by Russian oil painter Ekaterna Kazachenko. Her painting, *A Bit of Renaissance*, was exhibited this summer at the highly competitive Minnesota State Fair Fine Art Show. Her realistic paintings showcase traditional "Old Masters" techniques, a departure from the abstract and contemporary paintings we often exhibit at Unity.

Permanent Art Collection Acquisitions

The Art Team continues to expand our permanent art collection featured throughout the spaces of Unity Church. Three pieces were added this year:

- Mixed media painting/collage by Amber Roland of Lincoln, Nebraska. This piece was donated by Reverend Oscar Sinclair.
- Collage painting by Danielle Day. This was acquired after it was on display with the exhibit in the Center Room by artists involved in the Midwest Special Services Fresh Eyes Arts program for artists with disabilities.

- A photo taken in 1963 in the Sanctuary showing the aftermath of the fire that destroyed much of the woodwork in the chancel and burned a hole in the ceiling.

Transformative Changes

It is appropriate that in 2024, a year of significant change and transformation for Unity Church, the Art Team has enacted the following changes.

- **Parish Hall Exhibits**

Primarily due to our limited resources (volunteers), the Art Team has voted to extend the duration of each Parish Hall Exhibit from one month to two months, commencing March 2025. We will attempt to coordinate the theme of each exhibit with the work of a Unity Ministry, thereby encouraging collaboration with Ministry programs. For example, our March-April '25 exhibit centers on nature. We will reach out to the *Act for the Earth* ministry team and see if we can work together on programs and messaging.

- **Artist Recruitment**

Themed exhibits, described above, necessitated a change in our method of artist recruitment. Rather than send *A Call for Artist*, a method the Art Team has employed since its inception, we now ask our members to be intentional in searching for artists. This puts greater responsibility on membership. We are testing this method to determine if it is sustainable with our limited resources of volunteers and time.

- **Financial**

The Art Team membership voted to waive the 20% fee payable for the sale of art exhibited in the Parish Hall, for all art nonprofits. This past year the fee was waived for nonprofits Art from the Inside (AFTI) and Midwest Special Services (MSS).

The Art Team leadership continues to work with Unity staff on payment issues associated with the sale of art.

- **Facilities**

The Art Team is working with Unity staff to provide improved lighting in both hallways of the Eliot Wing to view art displayed on the walls. These hallways are often used to extend the exhibition in the Parish Hall.

- **Leadership**

The Art Team has new leadership. Colleen Zuro-White resigned her position as Leadership Co-Chair, effective June 2024. She continues to be an active member of the art team and has assumed new responsibilities. Donna Gies has joined Paul Rogne and Pam Satre as Art Team Co-chairs, effective September 2024.

*Adopted Ends Statements that guide Art Team work:

- The creation of a multicultural spiritual home built on authentic relationships.
- Help people know each other in all their fullness and create an ever-widening circle of belonging for all people.
- The pursuit of justice, wholeness, and equity for the people of the earth and life on it.
- Create brave space for racial healing and dismantling dominant culture.

Respectfully submitted for the Unity Art Team
Colleen Zuro-White

Beloved Community Staff Team (BCST)

Reflections and Highlights

Submitted by Rev. K.P. Hong, Minister of Faith Formation

During his speech at the conclusion of the march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965, Martin Luther King, Jr. referred to a groundbreaking work about Jim Crow segregation—*The Strange Career of Jim Crow* by C. Vann Woodward—and described it as the bible of the southern civil rights movement. As his own understanding grew more complex with a sophisticated grasp of the nation’s history, King wanted to make clear a false premise about racial segregation, interweaving race and class, and ultimately condemning the “triple evils” of racism, militarism, and poverty:

“Racial segregation as a way of life did not come about as a natural result of hatred between the races [but as] a political stratagem employed by the emerging Bourbon interests in the South to keep the southern masses divided and southern labor the cheapest in the land... Why, if the poor white plantation or mill worker became dissatisfied with his low wages, the plantation or mill owner would merely threaten to fire him and hire former Negro slaves and pay him even less.”

Over the course of history, radical progressive voices like W.E.B. DuBois, Martin Luther King, Jr., and César Chávez have insisted that cross-racial solidarity and building a multiracial movement for racial and economic justice remains the crucial ingredient in resisting the dangerous plutocracy of this historical moment. Repeatedly, this insight and counternarrative into the deep connections between capitalist exploitation and racial oppression have been suppressed, forgotten, and abandoned. “Racism in the United States has never been just about abusing Black and Brown people just for the sake of doing so,” writes critical race scholar and activist Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor. “It has always been a means by which the most powerful have justified their rule, made their money, and kept the rest of us at bay. To that end, racism, capitalism, and class rule have always been tangled together.”

Advancing this intersectional framing and prophetic grasp of race-class fusion deepened throughout the past year of interim ministry, lending clarity and significant response to one of the questions asked by the Ministerial Search Team during candidating week—*“What is the story about Unity’s antiracist multicultural work that most needs telling today, and has the power to call us into our future?”* Alongside intersectionality and interlocking forms of oppression, our antiracist multicultural work continued to grow more complex and comprehensive along several fronts, including:

- More critical engagement with identity politics, of ways “identity does not equal capacity” (Alfonso Wenker) as preparation for candidating week, more critically examining tokenization which falsely equates racial identity with political constituency and reduces complex social realities to simplistic racial categories.

- Reparations panel discussion with Jane Prince, Russel Balenger, and Trahern Crews in ongoing support of reparations and tracking the work of *The Saint Paul Recovery Act Community Reparations Commission*.
- September/2023 spirituality series giving attention to the spiritual and faith formation side of our double helix model, and examining concrete ways our faith practice illuminates antiracist practices.
- Working with the Communications Team (of the Beloved Community Staff Team) to strategize ways to amplify the question of belonging (End 4). As the character of a multicultural community is shaped neither by *othering* nor *saming* but *belonging* as the prophetic alternative, how might we collect and share narratives of “knowing each other in all our fullness and creating an ever-widening circle of belonging for all people”?

Ahead of the Ends renewal process in the coming year and setting critical directions for the future of our antiracist multicultural work, the point of framing “race as the modality in which class is lived” is not to displace discussions about racial hierarchy but to profoundly acknowledge that antiracist multicultural work has always been interwoven with political economy. How do we talk about money at a register comparable to our antiracist discourse and practice? Not merely about socioeconomic status (of income, education, occupation, financial security, etc.) but the fundamental antagonism between capital accumulation and labor, between owners and those who sell labor to survive. About progressive taxation, wealth distribution, minimum wage, labor rights/unionization, social safety nets, affordable healthcare, affordable housing, community development, of stolen land and neoliberal free market economy, and much more. Amid the ever-present politics of manipulating racial resentment, the work of building solidarities that match the complexities of our world today only continues to matter profoundly and unambiguously.

Members of the Beloved Community Staff Team: Lara Cowtan, Drew Danielson, KP Hong, Barbara Hubbard, Laura Park, Lia Rivamonte, Kathleen Rolenz, Angela Wilcox.



Community Outreach Ministry

Unity's Community Outreach Ministry Teams (COMT) invite church members and friends to live out our liberal religious values in the greater world as they engage the rich and challenging work of education, advocacy, and service related to particular issues and community needs. Each ministry team partners with one or more organizations addressing the team's focus area and the teams, in turn, engage the congregation in joining action with spiritual reflection in the work of transforming the human heart and the wider world.

This year's teams and their ministry continued to be impacted by changes, both within specific ministry teams (adapting and shifting priorities, exploring new directions and purpose, expanding their partnerships, some teams changing their name) and larger congregational changes during the interim period, including greater lay leadership from each of the COMT as Rev. Kathleen Rolenz and Rev. KP Hong assumed supportive roles in the absence of staff solely dedicated to community outreach ministries. As part of that interim work of exploring church structures and staffing, COMT members gathered for a January/2024 "summit" with Revs. Rolenz and Hong to occasion greater awareness and shared conversation among the ministry teams, including:

- Opportunity to gather together as teams engaged in community ministries, and explore collaborations from among ministry teams, such as the compelling series *"Truth Telling and Healing: Indigenous and Environmental Justice Series"* co-sponsored by Indigenous Justice and Act for the Earth.
- Noting the resonant aims of serving the greater community and the generosity of each Sunday's offering that goes out to the wider world, each COMT would receive one Sunday of outreach offering to support their ministry.
- Exploring the meaning of "moral ownership" and ways our COMTs mediate Unity's commitment to many partner organizations. How can we deepen our aspirations surrounding moral ownership via the work of COMTs?
- Engaging with the Double Helix model that illuminates the mutuality of faith/spiritual practice with antiracist multicultural work toward a more integrated life of faith and justice. What actual difference does our liberal faith and spirituality make in community service and justice work? How might this model generate new perspectives and new conversations for reimagining the work of building the Beloved Community?

The summit resonated with appreciation and the request to continue this convening of all COMT, to deepen, support, and complexify the work of the church's ministry in the world.

- **Housing Justice Ministry Team**
Community partners: Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative, Project Home, and Faith Builders Habitat for Humanity Collaboration.
- **Evergreen Projects Ministry**
Community partners: The Family Place, Hallie Q. Brown Food shelf, Jeremiah Transitional Housing Program, Obama School

- **Gun Violence Prevention Ministry Team** (note name change in 2024)
Community partner: Protect Minnesota
- **Mano a Mano Ministry Team (“Hand to Hand” in Spanish)**
Community partner: Mano a Mano International Partners
- **JJ Hill/Obama Ministry Team**
Community partner: Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School and J.J. Hill Montessori School
- **Partner Church Ministry Team**
Community partner: Unitarian church in Homorodszentpeter, Transylvania, Romania
- **Racial and Restorative Justice Ministry Team**
Community partners: Amicus (Second Chance Coalition), Rondo Circle of Peace
- **Act for the Earth Ministry Team**
Community partners: Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light
- **Indigenous Justice Ministry Team**
Community partners: Dakota and Ojibwe neighbors and leaders of the Minnesota Indigenous tribal nations and the Twin Cities Repair Community, working to preserve language, culture, land recovery, and spiritual life and to restore broken treaties.

Denominational Affairs

Unity Church continued to maintain its covenantal relationship with the larger Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA).

Unity Church increased its financial support to the UUA / Mid America Region by 5% in 2022, remained flat at \$70,540 in 2023, and increased 4% to \$73,200 in 2024, which is 73% of the UUA's requested amount, an increase from 69% last year.

Seven ministers and congregants served as delegates to the all-virtual 2024 General Assembly, at which the gathered assembly:

- Passed a new Statement of Values and Covenant for Unitarian Universalism. This reflects changes to Article II of the UUA Bylaws, which include its “Principles and Purposes” as the foundation of all the work of the UUA, its member congregations, and its covenanted communities. The new values are Equity, Generosity, Interdependence, Justice, Pluralism, and Transformation, centered around Love. Each value statement has a corresponding statement of covenant calling us to embody and live into our values. Read the story here: <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/uua-article-ii-passes-general-assembly-unitarian-universalism-bylaws-vote-values-statement>
- Voted on several significant statements that will guide our faith tradition in the years to come. They voted to embrace Transgender, Nonbinary, Intersex and Gender Diverse people in an expression of our faith, to center love amidst the ongoing impact of COVID, to support the houseless and those most vulnerable to impacts of climate change, to be in solidarity with Palestinians, and to reiterate the call for a release of all Hamas held hostages. More information here: <https://www.uua.org/action/statements/search?f%5B0%5D=date%3A2024>

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, an accredited interim minister, continued as Unity Church's interim senior minister for her second and final year. Kathleen began her ministry in August 2022.

The Ministerial Search Team (MST) relied heavily on the guidance and expertise of the UUA throughout its second and final year of the ministerial search, consulting regularly with UUA contacts on the issues that faced the team.

Finally, we continued to offer Unity Church's program of Unity Consulting, which, while not a volunteer contribution, supported UU congregations throughout the country in their governance practice.

Facilities

Our Facilities team also saw leadership transition in the 2023-2024 church year as:

- Robert Baker began his work as Facilities Manager November 3, 2023.
- Teresa Connor, Facilities Operations Coordinator, retired January 7, 2024
- Heidi Birkholz took on a new role as Events and Technology Coordinator in January 2024.
- Mo Todd was promoted into the Lead Facilities Specialist position when Claire Newhouse ended her employment July 19, 2024.

Despite these many changes, our facilities staff continued to provide a level of care and hospitality that earns them the admiration and appreciation of members, friends, and visitors alike. Additional facilities specialists instrumental to that care in the 2023-2024 church year: Sherifatu Akibu, Marcos Del Angel, Sara Feinberg, Dion Jones, Carlos McAdory, and Sani Shaibu.

Building use by tenants and community groups continued to grow in 2023-2024 as groups were increasingly willing to meet in person. Our ability to accommodate hybrid meetings (both in-person and online) increased interest in using our space.

Due to the many staff transitions, we put most capital projects on hold in the 2023-2024 church year. These resumed in the fall of 2024; next year's report will list them.

Gardening

A special thank you to our Unity Garden Team, led by Sharon Merritt. These dedicated volunteers gathered most Thursdays from spring to fall to plant, tend and care for the incredibly beautiful gardens and grounds around the church. Such a gift to our church community and to our neighborhood!

Building Tenants and Community Groups

One Voice Mixed Chorus and Border CrosSing Minnesota maintain their offices at Unity Church. We continued to have core tenants such as Medley Village Preschool, the New Century Club, Mind Stretch, the Minnesota Hungarians, Transforming Families, and a number of recovery programs. We also provided space for Red Cross blood drives and as a polling site.



Literary Ministries

The Library-Bookstall Team (LBT) is comprised of a wonderful group of volunteers, many of whom have been on the team for a dozen years or more, and led in the Bookstall by Barb Foss and Vicki Kappus and in the Anderson Library by Shelley Butler. Both places are staffed to welcome visitors and longtime members alike on Sunday mornings. The Anderson Library is open for self-serve checkout at all other times when a meeting is not in progress.

The LBT co-sponsored the Unity-UU Common Read in the fall of 2023 with the Beloved Community Staff Team. Three well-attended events were held, led by Rev. Kathleen Rolenz and/or Rev. Lara Cowtan, to take a deep dive into *On Repentance and Repair: Making Amends in an Unapologetic World* by Danya Ruttenberg. The LBT also assisted Rev. Kathleen in a January congregation read and workshop with the author: *Transforming Conflict: The Blessings of Congregational Turmoil* by Rev. Dr. Teresa Cooley. In addition, the team hosted a book read for Unity's own Susan Heuhn, *The Widow's Guide to Becoming a Handyman*.

It takes a dozen or more people, and around 100 contributors to create a single issue of *Cairns: The Unity Church Journal of the Arts*, published by Unity's Reredos Press, and Vol. 15, 2023 was no exception. Anticipating the retirement of three longtime *Cairns* staffers after the publication of the 2024 issue, advertisements for a new Editor-in-Chief went out, but no viable candidates surfaced. As typical, the launch of the new issue was celebrated with a party in the Center Room.



In January, the team hosted the Anderson Library 35th Anniversary Open House and Celebration, which included a short presentation of some interesting history of how the Anderson Library came to be, served with cake, of course. In March, we said goodbye to our retiring, longtime staff liaison, Barbara Hubbard, with much gratitude for her generous support of over a dozen years. Thank you to Laura Park for stepping in as the team staff liaison.

The 16th Annual Cafe Unity: Poetry and Music Salon in May 2024 was one of the best attended coffeehouses, with both in-person and Zoom options to attend. A multitude of fantastic Unity musical and literary talent was showcased, hosted by the delightful Rev. Lara Cowtan.

The Library-Bookstall Team has a mission of providing materials of current interest to the congregation, ministers, and staff; the Community Outreach Ministry Teams; and of anticipating future needs. To that end, we provided books related to the Indigenous Justice COMT, the Act for the Earth COMT, and the spring call for ministers and in anticipation of a stressful fall election season.

Work continued on the Unity Justice Database, which began in 2020 following the murder of George Floyd as a joint Next Right Action project of the Racial and Restorative Justice Team and the Library-Bookstall Team.

The Bookstall had a great year, thanks to our reading community! Proceeds from book sales fund book purchases for the Anderson Library, LBT book events, the Unity-UU Common Read, Cafe Unity, the Antiracism Literacy Partners program, Chalice Circles, and supports Unity authors and ministries.

Membership

In February 2024, Unity Church certified 819 voting members with the Unitarian Universalist Association. From July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024, Unity welcomed 33 new and returning members and their families. Finding Yourself at Unity continued as a year-round, drop-in weekly Sunday class, led by congregant facilitators with staff information presenters.

These are the people who joined Unity Church July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024:

1. Peter Berglund
2. Eve Blaney Johnson
3. Michael Brafford
4. Sam Brown
5. Peter (Headley) DeLong
6. Suzanne R. DeYoung
7. Margaret Dornfeld
8. Berry Elizabeth Farrington
9. Rev. Barbara H Gadon
10. Robert A. Gadon
11. Eileen Galvin
12. Derrick Hanson
13. Ingrid Haugen
14. Korey Haynes
15. Danielle Hudrlik
16. Lynn Indihar
17. Toni M. Lee
18. Ruth Lencoswki
19. Kristopher Lencoswki
20. Mike Luke
21. Gladys Manuela Torres Almonte
22. James P Martin
23. Ralph McQuarter
24. Scot Nortrom
25. Laura Riskedahl-Hampton
26. Chris Russert
27. Robert (Bobby) Schmitz
28. Raymond C. Sinclair
29. Joshua Smith
30. Ollie Stocker
31. Stephen Talsness
32. Emma Thoron
33. Darcie Vandergrift

Welcome Teams

Welcome Team members worked at the intersection of hospitality ministry and the multicultural ends of the church. Full team trainings deepened their capacity for their mission of nurturing mutual belonging and connected them with the emergency action plan and their responsibilities in it. Sunday team meetings with team practice grounded members for their ministry of welcome across difference.

Adult Religious Education and Programming

Adult religious education opportunities at Unity Church continued to span a wide range, from one-time offerings to 10-month commitments, inviting church members and friends to strengthen their spiritual practices and faith, deepen their relationship with one another, and to share the fruits of both in the larger world. Unity's adult programming continues to include online, in-person, and hybrid opportunities.

Several programs offered the opportunity to engage deeply over the course of the year.

In its seventh year, the Chalice Circles program engaged 58 participants in small groups meeting monthly online to reflect on the month's worship theme and to experience fellowship through the spiritual practice of conversation. Led by a core of eight trained facilitators and supported by monthly packets developed by a team of gleaners to address the theme in all its complexity, Chalice Circles served as both an entry point and ongoing sustenance for congregants' engagement with spiritual themes.

Also in its seventh year, the 10-month UU Wellspring program engaged 17 participants in twice-monthly spiritual deepening rooted in the sources of our Unitarian Universalist faith tradition, led by two trained facilitators.

The Teaching Associates program entered its fifth year, with a new cohort beginning its journey to be lay theologians in residence, equipped to support the collective faith life of the congregation. A second cohort continued its third year, meeting monthly for minister-led education and practice.

Sangha practice happened every Tuesday afternoon. In this weekly practice of meditation, open to anyone interested, participants discover a clarity of mind attentive and accountable to each moment of life's flow, and touch the mystery of our original face.

Offering shorter programs for spiritual growth, Wellspring Wednesday at Unity Church gathered a multigenerational church community to nourish right and holy relationship among us and deepen our life of faith grounded in spiritual practice and antiracist multicultural work.

The Wellspring Wednesday experience includes:

- Sharing meaningful time and nourishing food together
- Brief multigenerational worship in Ames Chapel
- Opportunities to play, learn, and practice with one another

Wellspring Wednesday programs focused on spiritual practice, antiracist multicultural practice, and the intersection between them as expressed in our Double Helix metaphor. Spiritual practice programs included:

- Lectio Divina twice a month
- Self-Compassion and Loving Kindness: Practice and Dialogue
- A three-part series on spiritual practice in the fall followed by a "what's next?" session in January.

- A Taste of Coming of Age (for adults to go through the five major questions of Coming of Age)
- Dying for Beginners series

The antiracism emphasis included the bi-monthly Antiracism Literacy Partners program, pairing participants up to discuss books, articles, films, podcasts and other resources and find what actions these resources call them to take, plus one-time programs on:

- Food waste
- The American Indian Recovery Act
- The Doctrine of Discovery
- Mitakuye Oyasin Poems and Words from a Dakota Poet's Journey
- The Process and Politics of Reparations in St. Paul
- Planetary Health: Envisioning Our Future with New and Ancient Eyes

Deep appreciation goes out to the many Unity Church teams, including Community Outreach Ministry, Library Bookstall, Beloved Community Staff, and Art teams, and other members who help make this rich and diverse learning possible.

Music Ministries

Submitted by Ahmed Anzaldúa, Director of Music Ministries

The period from July 2023 to June 2024 was particularly busy for the Music Ministries at Unity Church. This was a period with various transitions and important events, and the Music Ministry played an important role in holding the congregation through them. These included the memorial service for Janne Eller-Isaacs, the ministerial search and candidating week, and the end of Kathleen Rolenz's tenure as interim senior minister. I have gradually been working to encourage more congregant participation in worship music, promote a wider variety of musical styles in worship (holding space both for the old and the new, the familiar and the unfamiliar), and have been especially pleased to see the evolution of Unity's house band.

The following are highlights of the past year:

- In the summer of 2023 we held monthly pick-up choirs, which resulted in an influx of new members into all of Unity's adult choirs. The Women's Ensemble has especially grown as a result, from a dozen members in 2022 to nearly 40 currently. The summer services also were open for congregants to share musical gifts as part of the gathering music or in the service itself, giving various members of our community a creative home for their gifts.
- This last year has seen a larger volume of memorial services than ever before. The music ministry continues to provide the best possible quality for these, and it has been gratifying to see folks from the memorial services explore Unity as a spiritual home afterward.
- Throughout the year I continued to host a hymn singing and discussion group that met bimonthly on Zoom. This group provided a home for folks that wished to continue singing but were not able to attend Unity in person. Starting in 2024, this has turned into a regular monthly Wellspring Wednesday offering.
- Dr. Shekela Wanyama has done wonderful work with the Youth Choir and we are working to grow it as the younger children age. She has also played an important role in supporting my work with the adult choirs along with her work in the community as choir director and activist. This year also saw the retirement of long-time Unity Choir alto section leader KrisAnne Weiss. Laura Betinis Healy has stepped into her role starting in September 2024.
- The Threshold Choir is active and has ministered to various folks in the congregation, their loved ones, and people in the community, singing at people's bedsides as they approach their last moments.

- I continue to be active in the wider choral community. Highlights of my work include being invited to talk at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music and being featured as a guest conductor by groups around the country.
- In March we hosted the girl choir of the Berlin Vocal Academy, who participated with all the choirs in the Easter services. That same month we hosted South African choir 29:11. Throughout the year we have also had a wide variety of guest musicians participating in worship services, many known internationally in their respective fields.
- Unity hosted a performance and workshop by Boston-based conductor Anthony Trecek King. He led a session at Wellspring Wednesday focused on the singing of African American Spirituals, and much of the repertoire that he introduced during his tenure is now being explored by the choirs at Unity Church.
- Unity Church has served as host for various events in the Twin Cities music scene, including the Saint Paul organ crawl, various instrumental recitals, and performances by community ensembles. One new partnership I hope to nurture in coming years is with Walker West Academy of Music, who used the spaces at Unity for several of their programs throughout the year.
- This year we organized successful performances of beloved Unity Church musical traditions such as the Winter Concert and dessert buffet, the Christmas Carol Shout, the Christmas Candlelight Choir, the Tolling of Bells Service, the Youth Musical, Foote Music Sunday, and hosting Peter Mayer to open the church year at Merging of the Waters.
- Our partnerships with OneVoice Choir, Mila Vocal Ensemble, Border CrosSing, and the Saint Paul Conservatory and Walker West Music Academy continue to deepen, and much of my work has been in creating connections between their leadership, members, and Unity Church.
- The Music Ministry played an important role in Rev. Oscar Sinclair's two services during candidating week as well as the congregational meeting where he was called.

Ministry with Children and Families 2023-24

Reflections and Highlights

Submitted by Rev. K.P. Hong, Minister of Faith Formation

An underlying focus this past year of interim ministry sought to make our values, commitments, and practices in Religious Education more visible, updating our ministry with children and families with *relational learning* and *religious imagination* as encompassing objectives.

Relational learning: Teachers and parents understand our ministry with children and youth not as limited commitment to task completion but a covenantal commitment to lifelong faith journey. Relational learning creates situations in which our children are handed over to themselves and each other as subjects in the re-creation of themselves, their community, and the world in which they live. For that purpose:

- The Religious Education Ministry Team (REMT) continued to update and strengthen “teaching as a spiritual practice” for teaching teams, encouraging teachers to deepen relationship among themselves, taking time to reflect after Sunday classes and longer scheduled conversations during the year on their shared ministry. This practice was logistically supported by additional volunteer chaperones who weekly accompanied children for fellowship and play outside in the community park following Sunday classes, allowing teachers to take time for their reflection and team ministry after each Sunday class.
- Comprehensive curriculum review revealed antiracist multiculturalism as embedded throughout all program areas, attentive to greater inclusion and diversity of human relations as well as the history of racism in America. Staff will continue to apply antiracist multicultural rubrics in ongoing development and updating of curricula, inquiring:
 - How is culture/race relevant to any given particular unit or course?
 - What kind or degree of focus on antiracism and multiculturalism is appropriate for each curriculum within the overall aim of curricula?
 - What aspects of racial justice/multicultural focus is best served through the curriculum, and what is best served through teacher training and teachers’ adaptation of curricula or emergent classroom discussions?
 - What can be realistically accomplished within a particular unit or course, as opposed to the larger trajectory of the multiyear curricular exposure children will receive?

Religious imagination: Beyond the usual emphasis on teaching as a matter of method and content, teaching-as-faith-formation is the work of religious imagination. For that purpose, a wider conversation was convened over winter/2023 for parents and teachers to get better grounding in the work of faith formation across core program areas:

- Spirit Play is an adaptation of Godly Play, based on children’s developmental propensity for story and ritual, play and creative wondering. 7 UU Principles integrated in curated collection of stories.
- Workshop Rotations curriculum is based pedagogically on the multi-intelligences theory of Howard Gardner, curricularly adapted to the five core theological questions that underpin

RE*, and culminates in the Coming of Age program. UU Principles and Sources are embedded throughout the curricula.

- Middle School curricula directly focuses on the Six Sources of Unitarian Universalism and the world's religious traditions, including the history and theology of Unitarian Universalism and the work of building the Beloved Community that breathes at the heart of our liberal faith. Contemporary issues and questions are integrated throughout the curricula, as are the monthly themes of the church in the Sunday middle school worship.
- OWL is a comprehensive, lifespan sexuality education curricula for use in both secular settings and faith communities, developed and partnered by both the UUA and the UCC. While OWL is an elective program (on Wednesday evenings versus Sunday mornings) the vast majority of RE children choose to take OWL.
- COA engages the five core theological questions that structures its curriculum and credo, along with monthly themes of the church in Sunday worship and UU Sources and Principles that youth have "caught" throughout their RE experience.

Parents and teachers expressed clear interest in learning more deeply about how faith formation occurs in each core program area, as well as a growing appreciation of parents' own faith formation as vital to their work as spiritual directors of children. As we look toward the coming year, the members of the REMT will continue to further conversations on the new Article II and how to bridge current curricula's focus on Principles and Sources to values and inspirations promoted by Article II.

*Five Core Theological Questions for Coming of Age at Unity:

- What does it mean to be human and alive?
- What is the nature of the Greater Power/God/Transcendent?
- How is the Sacred present in each of us and experienced in our lives?
- How do we live in the face of death and loss?
- How will we live together, striving for the Beloved Community?

Ministerial Intern

Unity Church values its role as a teaching congregation for future UU ministers. During the Eller-Isaacs's tenure, Unity had one, and sometimes two, ministerial interns each year. Each intern was supervised by Revs. Janne and Rob Eller-Isaacs, and each has had a ministerial intern support team made up of members of the church.

In the last year of the Eller-Isaacs's ministry (2020-2021), and in the following three years of interim ministry, we have not had interns. We will resume the ministerial intern program in the fall of 2025.

Congregational Care

The 2023-2024 Program Year in Congregational Care was a year of transition for Unity, with Rev. Karen Gustafson leaving her position of Interim Minister of Pastoral care after one year, Rev. Lara Cowtan beginning as Minister of Congregational Care in August, 2023, and with the Interim Senior Minister, Rev. Kathleen Rolenz in her second and final year as the congregation underwent another search process and called Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair.

There were also significant changes in many staff roles, most notably as Barbara Hubbard retired after 25 years as Executive Director. There remained some lingering grief and anxiety from the 2022 incomplete search process, though a lot of grief had been resolved.

Lara developed a three-tiered structure for the team with clear descriptions of roles: Lay Chaplain, Caring Visitor, Helping Hands. Team members at the Caring Visitor level engaged in Spiritual Care Training for Lay Leaders through the UUA Leader Lab, continuing to meet monthly as a group with Lara and taking on short and long-term assignments to provide individual care to members. New members continue to be recruited to the Team, with Linda Kjerland, Bill Etter and Signe Nestingen serving as Care Team leaders.

Monthly Elder Care Ministry meetings at Episcopal Homes and Lexington Landing have centered around the monthly theme packets.

During the year, pastoral needs arose with the illness, death and memorial service of Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs as people were impacted by compounded grief. A grief service was held in Ames Chapel upon the notice of Janne's death.

Following the October 7 attacks in Isreal, a Peace Vigil was held in Ames Chapel.

A Wellspring Wednesday series of eight informational sessions on death and Dying, called, "Dying for Beginners" was successful, and spearheaded by lay-leaders Marty Rossman and Patricia Ohmans.

Three monthly support groups, held online to serve a wider geographic range and to make them more accessible include groups for Caregivers, facilitated by Cynthia Orange; Grief support, facilitated by Linda Kjerland; and Families Living with Mental Health Challenges, facilitated by Angela Scott. Rev. Lara co-facilitates these groups as often as possible.

The Embracing Meditation continued to be a regular part of Sunday worship. Card writing at the Congregational Care Table in Parish Hall sent about 300 cards.

The shawl ministry distributed 20 comfort shawls to congregants in hospital, home care and bereavement by ministers and Caring Visitors.

Unity's Threshold Choir now established and is the only official Threshold Choir in the Twin Cities offering bedside singing to people dying, across denominational lines.

There were 20 memorial services for Unity Church members and non-members.

A Memorial Summit was held before summer 24 with key staff and lay-leaders to set new guidelines for member and guest memorial services, in response to a large number of memorials.

Sanctuary Congregation

In December of 2017, the Board of Trustees made a decision to become an official Sanctuary Congregation. We converted space on the lower level of the church to accommodate this commitment, and housed three individuals or families between June of 2018 and January of 2021.

In January of 2021, a request came from the St. Paul Sanctuary Coalition to house a Ghanaian family facing homelessness. Our new guests are an extended family from Ghana and have been with us since January of 2021. Given that the building was closed, we created extra sanctuary space for them on our lower level, and when the church opened for religious education in September of 2021, they moved into our duplex to the east of the church.

Over the past three years, our staff members and members of our Sanctuary Team have been supporting the family's journey with help in learning English, navigating the health care and public school systems, working with an immigration attorney, finding employment, obtaining driver's licenses, swim lessons and playing soccer! It is the shared goal that the family will be able to support themselves in an apartment or a home beginning in the summer of 2024 (next year's report will highlight how this was achieved in the fall of 2024!).

The Sanctuary Team reconvened in June 2024 to address more complex issues together. Many thanks to Scott Charlesworth, Teresa Connor, Pat Haff, Will Hommeyer, Jill van Koolwijk, Susie and Rick MacPherson, and Charlie and Jen Vanek.

Unity Consulting

Unity Consulting is a program of Unity Church whose mission is to liberate and empower the leadership of progressive religious congregations and institutions to awaken compassion, transform lives, and bless the world. We help congregations understand their purpose, the difference they make in people's lives, and then we help them organize to deliver on that promise. Our primary tool is Policy Governance® as we've learned to adapt it for congregations.

Five percent of Unity Consulting's fees go to support Unity Church's operating budget. Unity Consulting also provides some pro-bono services to the denomination through governance consulting with denominational and congregational leaders.

Highlights from this past year's work include:

- Provided consulting services, retreats and hourly coaching, to three congregations over the course of the year (July 2023-June 2024), far fewer than last year as Laura Park moved to full-time work as Director of Membership. One congregation was a new client.
- Concluded the work of identifying spiritual "types," using Spirit Map data. Spirit Map, a proprietary product of Unity Church and Unity Consulting, is a tool that helps individuals, groups and institutions explore their spiritual landscape, focus their spiritual practice, grow their spiritual presence, and deepen their spiritual well-being.
- Continued sales of *The Nested Bowls: The Promise and Practice of Good Governance*. InSpirit, the UUA Bookstore, carries the book and it is also available on Amazon. Sales have been small but steady.
- \$1,510 went to the Unity Church operating budget from Unity Consulting and Spirit Map fees and book royalties July 2023 through June 2024.

Worship Life from 2023-2024

Submitted by Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, Interim Senior Minister and Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair, Senior Minister.

Note: This will be a shorter annual report for worship, because the author (Rev. Sinclair) was not present for much of the year reflected in the report.

2023-24

Worship is the congregational glue which brings us together in spiritual community to reflect deeply on the essential questions of life. In collaboration with worship associates, we departed from the regular cycle of themes established by the previous ministers to create themes that were more relevant for the third year of a three-year interim ministry. These themes included

Month	Theme
September 2023	Connecting
October	Confessing
November	Capacity
December	Compassion
January 2024	Courage
February	Choosing
March	Creating
April	Calling
May	Community
June	Cultivation

In September, Unity Church hired Rev. Lara Cowtan as Minister of Congregational Care. Rev. Cowtan preached approximately once a month throughout the year.

In addition to regular sermons from Unity's ministry team, guest preachers included George Anastos, Karen Gustafson, Keith Kron, Andrea Johnson, Terasa Cooley, Jessica Clay, Barbara Hubbard, Justin Shroeder, and Nelson Moroukian. Rev. Sinclair preached twice in April as part of the search and settlement process, prior to starting his role in August 2024.

All the "usual" rituals of Unity Church continued, including story and family Sundays, Merging of the Waters, Christmas Eve services and the Christmas pageant, the Tolling of the Bells, Coming of Age, and the Flower Celebration.

At the worship associates bi-annual retreats, we explored not only the mechanics of what makes for a good service, but took a deeper dive into how we make our services reflect the multicultural, antiracist, anti-oppressive commitments we share. We discussed the difference between cultural appreciation and appropriation, what is tokenism in worship, how our

worship services can reflect the diversity that exists within our congregation, and how to be more theologically and spiritually sensitive to that diversity. New worship associates were added; other worship associates cycled off, and the "acolyte" duties of worship associates were included as part of their portfolio.

The musical collaboration with Ahmed Anzaldúa, Director of Music Ministries, has been one of the greatest joys of the past year. Between Unity Singers, Unity Choir, Women's Ensemble, Children and Youth Choir and with the addition of our new monthly band, the music at Unity Church continues to inspire, challenge, and create community among its members. The energy and vitality created by the music program is a crucial part of creating a worship service that helps our members lead lives of integrity, service and joy.

2024 and forward

I (Rev. Sinclair) began at Unity Church in August 2024, after the time covered by this report. While not a part of the 2023-24 congregational year, here are some of the questions that I am holding in the first months of this shared ministry:

- What is the emerging shared liturgy of Unity Church going forward? Rev. Rolenz worked to experiment with Unity's long-standing liturgy, which opens the door for us to consider, together, how we want to worship going forward. Our culture of worship will evolve in conversation with the congregation, worship associates, and ministry team, reflecting the changes in all of those bodies.
- What is the role of online ministry and worship at Unity Church? Over the last two years, on most Sundays nearly as many people attended online as in person. How do we understand the online 'congregation,' their needs, and the possibilities for deeper involvement in Unity church programs?
- How will we train, cultivate, and celebrate multiple voices in worship? Unity church has a long history of lay worship associates. Our multicultural ends and our commitment to faith formation are served by being intentional about how we center multiple voices in our worship life.

Leading worship at Unity Church is a thrill. This is a congregation with a rich worship life, traditions, and a willingness to try new things. I am excited to see what we will build together in the coming years.

Finance and Resource Development

2023 Financial Update

The Board of Trustees engaged Schechter, Dokken, Kanter CPAs (SDK) to complete an audit review of Unity's financial statements as of December 31, 2023. Their final report was presented by a representative of SDK to the Board at their September 2024 meeting.

The Audit Report includes four financial statements:

- 1) Statement of Financial Position
- 2) Statement of Activity and Changes in Net Assets
- 3) Statement of Cash Flows
- 4) Statement of Functional Expenses

The **Statement of Financial Position** (often referred to as the Balance Sheet) is a snapshot of Unity's financial position and financial health as of December 31, 2023. It reflects the following balances as of the end of Fiscal Year 2023:

- Total Asset balance of \$12,360,549
- Total Liability balance of \$646,200
- Total Net Assets balance of \$11,714,349

Assets include Cash (\$310,794), Investments and Funds Held by Others for the benefit of Unity Church (\$3,192,957), Pledges and Other Receivables (\$1,331,776), Prepaid Expenses (\$20,361), and Property and Equipment (\$7,504,661).

Liabilities include Accounts Payable (\$27,293) which is mainly vendor invoices payable, Accrued Expenses (\$68,252) which is mainly payroll liabilities, and the Long-Term Mortgage Note Payable (\$550,655) which is the principal balance for the Unity Tomorrow Capital Project Loan.

Net Assets include both Unrestricted (\$7,148,593) and Restricted Fund Balances (\$4,565,756). The Board of Trustees has designated two funds within the Unrestricted Net Assets -- one fund for Future Staff Compensation (\$219,288) and another fund for Racial Justice (\$569,929).

The **Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets** (often referred to as the Income Statement) shows the revenue, expense, and resulting net income or loss for the year. It reflects the following amounts for Fiscal Year 2023:

- Total Unrestricted Revenue of \$2,992,368
- Total Unrestricted Expenses of \$2,656,935
- Total Unrestricted Net Income of \$335,433

The large surplus resulted from adjustments to reconcile and correct prior year revenue recognition of restricted contributions, which led to the establishment of the Board Designated Fund for Future Staff Compensation.

The **Statement of Cash Flows** gives an overview of sources and uses of cash for Fiscal Year 2023. It shows a net decrease in cash during the year of \$363,146.

The **Statement of Functional Expenses** shows the expenses by nature (the type of expense) and then further categorizes them by functional category (the type of support activity). The expenses are broken down into the three functional categories of Program, Management and General, and Fundraising and the results from Fiscal Year 2023 show that 85% of Unity's expenses went directly to program or mission related activities, 12% went to administrative or management and general activities, and 3% went to fundraising activities.

Fiscal Year 2024 Budget

The Fiscal Year 2024 Operating and Capital Budgets were approved by the congregation at the November 18, 2023, annual meeting. A complete copy of the budget is available at the link below, and a YTD snapshot of actual to budget through Q3 of 2024 is also available below for review. A full report on 2024 actual results will be available and communicated after year end.

Finance Attachments

Request a printed copy or see links for:

- SDK Review for Years End December 31, 2023, and 2022 (<https://bit.ly/ucu2023fin>)
- Fiscal Year 2024 Operating and Capital Budgets (<https://bit.ly/24budgets>, see pages 23-28)
- Fiscal Year 2024 Revenue & Expense Statement YTD through Qtr3 (<https://bit.ly/revex24q3>)

Unity Tomorrow Capital Campaign / Long Term Debt

The Unity Tomorrow renovations that were completed in 2012 tied together the church campus that had been built in five stages over more than 100 years. A new main entry was created, a restroom was added, and our infrastructure was updated with new high efficiency systems. The project cost approximately \$8 million and we raised \$6.8 million in commitments. After paying principal and interest on a short-term construction loan for 4.5 years, we converted the remaining \$1,950,000 of debt to a long-term note on January 1, 2017. This was a five-year note on a 20-year amortization schedule with a fixed 4.0% interest rate. This debt was approved by the congregation with the caveat that the annual debt service could not exceed 10% of the annual operating budget.

On December 15, 2021, after five years of principal and interest payments on the note (including extra principal payments made possible through special additional gifts specifically for payment of loan principal) the terms of the note were renegotiated. The balance of \$860,772 was refinanced as a new five-year note with a seven-year amortization and a fixed 3.7% interest rate. Annual debt service payments of principal and interest are approximately \$140,000 per year. The new note has a maturity date of December 15, 2026 at which time a balloon payment would be due for the balance. The current balance on the loan is approximately \$417,000 and the balloon payment that would be due on December 15, 2026, would be approximately \$160,000. We do not anticipate any barriers to being able to make the balloon payment when it comes due.

Legacy Giving

Members and friends (over 140 people currently) who have informed Unity Church of their intention to support the church in their estate plans belong to the church's Heritage Society. These gifts help secure the church's future and enable us to complete special projects beyond the church's operating and capital budgets, such as signage at the Holly Avenue entrance and intensive training for our antiracist multicultural work.

Members of the Heritage Society gather each spring for dinner to celebrate their stewardship and hear from a speaker who brings out an aspect of history and legacy for members to consider. On June 1, 2024, the keynote speaker was Rev. Dr. Molly T. Marshall, President of United Theological Seminary, who shared eight purposes of church, four questions church helps answer, and the key tension in church life.

If you have or are planning to remember Unity Church in your estate plans, please contact Laura Park to become part of the Heritage Society.

Unity's Generosity Ministry began on Sunday, October 15, 2006, the first Sunday we gave a portion of our offering plate to a community organization that shares our values. Here are the impressive Generosity Ministry totals

From inception through 11/24/24:
Sunday collections: \$2,102,433
% to Unity Church (currently 40%):
\$532,538
Amount to recipients (currently 60%):
\$1,569,895

July 2023 - June 2024
Sunday Collections: \$131,614.23
Percentage to Unity: 47,867.55
Amount to Recipients: 83,746.86
Recipient Average: \$1,550.86

Generosity Ministry Recipients: fiscal year July 1, 2023 - July 1, 2024

1Heart2Hand Metro Deaf School	Partner Church	BLUU*
Project Home*	East Side Learning Center	Chalice Camp*
Chalice Camp	Amicus Reconnect*	Unity's Music Ministries*
Center for Victims of Torture*	Northwest Passage	Ukrainian Relief
One Voice Mixed Chorus*	Ministers' Discretionary Fund	Faith Builders*
	Minnesota COPE*	Indigenous Justice Team
RISE*	MUUSJA	Housing Justice Team
Hallman Intern Endowment	Before Racism*	Mad Dads of MN*
H Q Brown Foodshelf*	Frogtown Green	Interim Ministry Sabbatical Fund*
Sarah's Oasis*	Wakan Tipi*	Camp Tamarack*
Freshwater Society*		
	Ujamma Place*	Freedom School*
Beyond Walls Squash*	Planting People, Growing Justice*	Keystone Community Services*
Dispute Resolution and Conflict Center*	Unity's Restorative Justice Team*	Prepare and Prosper*
Mano a Mano*	Free Writers MN*	Bedo Kornelia Women's Association*
Art from the Inside*	CoMUSICation*	
Makoce Ikikcupi*	GALA Choruses	
Padoc Area Scholars Society*	Shobi's Table*	
Good Courage Farm	Mano a Mano	
FREC*	Act for the Earth Team	
Faceit Foundation	STRIDE YWCA*	

Recipients marked with an * target BIPOC demographics