

# Annual Report



## Office & Operations Report

Submitted by Rebecca Adams , Operations Manager

The church office and Operations team have remained active and productive this year.

Our aging building has required several updates and repairs. We addressed a number of maintenance issues as they arose, including a major upgrade to our alarm system to ensure compliance with current safety standards and codes, as well as minor exterior repairs. In addition, a church member—who is also a professional interior designer—proposed and volunteered to lead an update to our foyer to enhance the building's first impression. The Operations team approved this project, which is scheduled to begin later this summer. We also found a new home for our long-neglected coffee cart, giving it renewed purpose.

The Operations team reviewed and updated our rental contract and fee structure to reflect current operating costs and align with comparable venues in our area. We also made plans to replace outdated kitchen appliances this summer to both support our rental offerings and maintain our commercial license with the Health Department.

This year, we approved the formation of a new Social Activities team, organized by our Minister, Todd Eklof. This team has taken the lead on hosting monthly potlucks and successfully organized our Annual Dinner Luncheon in April. We look forward to many more events in the coming year. In the church office, we transitioned to a new accounting software system. The previous version of QuickBooks desktop increased its annual pricing dramatically—from \$30 to nearly \$4,000. By switching to a different version of QuickBooks Online, we were able to save over \$2,000 per year and streamline the transition. While we're still adapting to the new system's reporting functions, the long-term benefits are clear.

Additionally, we renegotiated our copier/printer lease contract, cutting our costs in half through a nonprofit-specific program. Looking ahead, we're excited to launch a new website this summer, with the goal of simplifying navigation and reducing the current 77-page structure to better serve our community's weekly needs.

## INDEX

Operations Report  
PAGE 1

Minister's Report  
NONE THIS YEAR

Music Director's Report  
PAGE 2

Religious Education Report  
PAGES 3-4

Board of Trustees Report  
PAGES 5-6

Treasurer's Report  
PAGE 7

Budget Overview  
PAGE 8

Endowment Report  
PAGE 9

Team Reports  
PAGES 10-16

Programs & Outreach  
PAGE 17

SOME REPORTS HAVE BEEN EDITED  
FOR BREVITY AND CLARITY

Contact Information  
PAGE 19

# Annual Music Director's Report

## MUSIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT 2024-25

BY RACHAE THOMAS, UUCS MUSIC DIRECTOR

This is my first ever position as a Music Director, and stepping into this role at UUCS has felt like coming home. After 17 years working professionally in Los Angeles as a Singer and TV/film and theatre actress, I moved back to my hometown during the pandemic—to be closer to family, to find ground, and to return to music as my main discipline. Music has allowed me to be both fully present as a mama and a storyteller—impacting hearts and carrying messages in a way that feels deeply aligned with who I am.

On the heels of my talented friend and the church's former Music Director, Madeline McNeill, I began this journey on December 1st. From day one, my intention has been clear: to let music serve as the spiritual companion to our sermons—to deepen their message, open hearts, and spark reflection. I want our music department to be so alive, so heartfelt, that UUCS becomes known as a place where the music truly moves people. Every piece I choose is intentional and comes from a place of deep care.

I curate all the music for our Sunday services, carefully choosing pieces that align with the themes and energy of each sermon. Around the same time I began, the amazing Jackie Sandberg joined as our pianist, and they have been a wonderful collaborator in bringing my musical vision to life. Their musicianship and reliability make the music soar.

Together, we've brought to life services like the Cosmic Advent, the Annual Requiem, and a series of Sundays during Rev. Todd's sabbatical, where I worked directly with guest speakers to design music that not only reflected our values—but helped make them feel at home. When Craig requested Star Trek music, we made it happen and had a blast. When Margo Lee Hill came to speak, I curated a service using Jim Boyd's music—something that deeply moved her and left her feeling welcomed and honored.

It's my joy to create a musical atmosphere that helps guest speakers and congregants alike feel seen, supported, and inspired. I've also brought in guest artists like Madeline McNeill, Olivia Brownlee, and Beth Rainey, who are beloved in our community and helped carry the spirit of UUCS while our core team was away.

In February, I brought back the UUCS Choir, and it's been a deeply fulfilling part of this role. We meet every 1st and 3rd Tuesday at 6pm, and perform on the last Sunday of each month. Our group is growing with new energy, and I've been recruiting through the Sun newspaper and inviting musicians from our community to join us. My vision is an Inclusive, collaborative music ensemble a welcoming space that brings people together who love to sing, perform, reflect and celebrate the human spirit through music.

Every song is chosen with my singers in mind. I want them to feel empowered and valued. Maggie, one of our standout vocalists, recently performed a beautiful solo in Imagine, and I plan to feature more emerging talent throughout the year. This department is here to nurture creative expression, joy, and growth.

Looking ahead to summer, I'll be:

- Exploring AI tools to streamline our music planning and organization
- Prepping next year's choir selections
- Looking into a fundraiser to support future growth It's been a beautiful beginning. I'm proud of what we're building—and can't wait to see how this department continues to grow and thrive.

With heart, Rachae Thomas

# Religious Education Report

## 2024-2025 Religious Education Summary

### Prepared by Stephanie Gronholz, RE Specialist

#### Sunday Morning Play Club / Children's Chapel

We began the 2024-2025 church year with our third implementation of "Play Club" during the months of June, July, and August. Play Club is a program developed by Let Grow, a nonprofit formed by Lenore Skenazy, Jonathan Haidt, Daniel Shuchman, and Peter Grey. It is radical in its simplicity: let kids learn through multi-age, unstructured outdoor play with minimal interference from adults. Children's Chapel volunteers served as supervisors, but others from the congregation were able to help too.

Back to school in September meant going back to Children's Chapel too. We continued to use the following routines to build community in a multi-age setting: stocking and organizing the Little Free Pantry in the parking lot, lighting our chalice, sharing "peaks and valleys," having snacks, listening to and discussing a story, and doing a craft or game related to the sermon topic or a relevant holiday. We source materials from the UUA, our robust library of quality children's books, the Prindle Institute for Ethics, and a variety of education websites. Children's Chapel attendance has ranged from 1 to 18, but on a typical Sunday there are 8-12 children present. Ten church members have volunteered Sundays, including three who volunteer on a monthly basis.

One of our monthly volunteers is Lynn Jinishian, who is leading a "Reading Across the Lifespans" (RAL) initiative. She speaks with the children about the importance of reading – not for grades or points, but just for the sake of it. She is getting to know the preferences of our young readers and brings books that are specifically matched to them. RAL Sundays are always lots of fun!

A couple other Children's Chapel highlights from this year included using toilet paper to understand the immensity of our solar system, having a philosophical discussion of "The Emperor's New Clothes," and making pinecone bird feeders to care for wintering animals. At several points this year, we were able to let our middle school students break off into a group where they could discuss appropriately challenging topics. They even waxed philosophical about a couple episodes of The Twilight Zone they got to watch in the Young Room while the younger children stayed in the Thoreau Room.

#### Nursery

Since July 2021, our nursery has been staffed during the second service by two childcare providers, sisters Emma and Bella Hernandez. When Rachae Thomas took the position of Music Director, we opened up the nursery for the first service as well. Nursery attendance ranges from zero to five; on most Sundays there are two or three children. Bella and Emma also provided childcare during Parents Night Out events in October, December, February and April. Attendees numbered 13, 10, 6 and 4, respectively.

Samantha and David Sly are also on staff as childcare providers and they work on Sundays when Bella and Emma are gone. We are currently in the process of hiring a fifth caregiver for the times when an additional person would be helpful.

# Religious Education Report Continued

## Next Level Nights / Neighboring Faiths

As our children have grown older, we have recognized the need for additional opportunities for youth to be part of our church mission. While it is not feasible to offer a separate youth group every Sunday, we held “Next Level Nights” for students in grades 5 and up in September, November, and March. A January meet-up at the ice rink was cancelled due to low registrations and cold weather. A final event is scheduled for June. Activities have included video games, virtual reality, and board games. There’s been plenty of junk food to go around, but the shared laughs have been the best part.

Neighboring Faiths, like OWL, seems to be a UUA program that has been successful at UUCS in past years. It is a customizable curriculum that allows middle school students to explore world religions – in general but also in the context of their city. With the help of parent and Children’s Chapel volunteer Christina Amidon, we are excited to offer Neighboring Faiths to our families in the fall! We will explore Judaism, Catholicism and Protestantism, plus whatever other religious traditions our participants identify through guided activities in their first two sessions. A Neighboring Faiths Support Team will meet in early fall to launch the program by mid-October.

## Our Whole Lives (OWL)

OWL continued to soar this year. Together with congregants from Inland Northwest Unitarian Universalist Community (INUUC) and a member from Westminster United Church of Christ (WUCC), we identified facilitators for a class for 4th through 6th graders. MaryAnne Winniford, Sara Bauer, and Kate Johnston led classes on Wednesday evenings and some Sunday afternoons from February 26–April 2. Ten children participated: 5 from UUCS, 2 from INUUC, and 2 from WUCC, and 1 who is unaffiliated with a church. It was truly a team effort, from delivering the lessons, to procuring the updated books, to providing weekly snacks. The cohort developed strong bonds and even had a reunion party at someone’s house in May!

In the coming year, we will explore offering OWL for 7th–9th graders. Rather than offering the full program by holding all 26 sessions, we may offer a modified version of an OWL-inspired human sexuality class that only offers a limited number of sessions based on parent input. Identifying trained facilitators is the first step in moving forward with this plan.

## Other Family Events

Regular potlucks have provided opportunities for families to socialize. In March, the children had a dedicated table with butcher paper and crayons, so they could decorate their tablecloth. In December we held our winter decorating party and cookie sale. We decorated our Christmas tree during the services and enjoyed cookies, some of which were frosted and decorated by RE kids, after the second service. The October service on the creation spirituality of John Denver was an intergenerational service, and in March, we chose to make our partner church service an intergenerational one as well.



# Annual Board of Trustees Report

## TOM MOSHER — 2024-25 PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

This Board began its year on July 1, 2024 with six Trustees and one vacant position. The vacancy was a result of the resignation of Lilia Riordan-Rodgers effective July 1, 2024. Sue Stiritz was appointed several months later to fill the remaining one year of that three-year term/position. Your officers are Tom Mosher, Board President; Doug Deaton, Vice President; Cindy Fine, Secretary; and Dick Burkhart, Treasurer. Justin Bell and Luba Johnston are Trustees, along with Sue Stiritz as an appointee. The Board was ably served by the dedication of Marilyn Johnson, its Recording Secretary.

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane (UUCS) is governed by a model known as Policy Governance. This means the Board works on the vision and sustainability of the church including policies, the Operations Team and staff members work on the day-to-day operations of the church and the Minister and Ministry teams organize and produce Sunday worship services.

Below are the items the Board dealt with as of May 2025. The below topics are approximately in chronological order of when they first occurred. Although in many instances, the topics covered several months.

**BOARD EMAIL USE POLICY:** The Board updated their current email use policy, which they felt needed improvement to allow for certain email contact between Trustees. Ultimately, over several months the Board revised this policy, as is now contained in the Policy Governance 'Policy and Procedures' document, to ensure that Trustees can communicate with each other as long as neither deliberations nor decisions are made by email.

**MEMBER-SPONSORED RESOLUTIONS FOR A CONGREGATIONAL MEETING:** The question presented at a Board meeting about whether UUCS had a bylaw or a policy to handle any resolution not sponsored by the Board, that may come before the Membership, e.g. in the Annual Meeting. UUCS has no Bylaw or policy that covers this situation. The Board decided to develop a policy to address this and to be included in the Policy Governance 'Policy and Procedures' document. A Trustee subcommittee was assigned the task to bring wording to the Board for consideration. The new policy was adopted as a new section (5) of the Policy Governance 'Policy and Procedures' document. It was later used to guide the presentation of the Apartheid-Free Community resolution, which is on the Annual Meeting agenda.

**BOARD SUBCOMMITTEES:** The Board created two Trustee subcommittees to deal with income enhancement and increased attendance, with hope there would be a resulting spinoff of increased membership. These subcommittees produced ideas that were brought to the Board and then referred to the Operations Manager for review/comment with regard to any past history. The board decided against pursuing any additional fundraising efforts this year.

**DEATH WITH DIGNITY (ASSISTED SUICIDE) IN OUR FACILITY:** After receiving an open letter from a person inquiring about the use of UUCS facilities for legal assisted suicide consistent with the WA state Death with Dignity Act, the Board discussed this matter in several meetings. Ultimately, the Board deferred to the decision previously made by our Senior Minister, which was that we do not allow this in our building for a multitude of reasons.

**ENDOWMENT FUND LEGACY BEQUESTS & PLEDGES WHEN A DEATH OCCURS:** On the rare occasion when a deceased Member or Friend has an established annual pledge, and also an estate bequest. The concern arose that death, during a fiscal year, may result in unpaid pledge, even though the bequest may eventually end up in the Endowment Fund. If this occurs, it could adversely impact the (budget) pledge income. The Endowment Team and the Board discussed this issue, including a discussion before the Legacy Society in 2024. We are required to follow the current bylaw which determines usage of designated vs. undesignated funds.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 2025-2026 BOARD TO ADDRESS:** As this Board discussed items of importance for the future of UUCS, it identified three items that should be dealt with in the next fiscal year: (1) an update of the Five Year Strategic Plan; (2) a review/update of the Ends Statements, which are found at the beginning of the Policy Governance 'Policy and Procedures' document; and (3) the prescribed three year review of the Ministry Agreement with our Senior Minister.



# Annual Board of Trustees Report, Cont.

**APARTHEID-FREE COMMUNITY PETITION:** The Social Justice Coordinating Council (SJCC) recommended that the Board sign the petition. The Board decided not to sign as a Board of Trustees. Rather, it referred the item back to the SJCC for it to consider whether to bring a resolution before the Annual Meeting for the Membership to vote to sign the petition as an Apartheid-Free Community. Ultimately, SJCC came back to the Board with a request that this matter be brought before the Membership at the Annual Meeting. A formal motion was jointly agreed upon and included this resolution/motion on the agenda for the Annual Meeting.

**APPOINTMENT TO FINANCE TEAM:** The Finance Team is to be composed of two Members, the Treasurer and the Senior Minister (or his/her appointee) as an ex-officio, nonvoting, member. A vacancy existed. Donna BORDEN-ROADS was appointed to the Team and was to serve as its Chair. Unfortunately, Donna passed away recently, and there is now a vacancy on the Team.

**TODD'S STUDY MONTH & MODIFIED SABBATICAL:** Our Senior Minister, Todd, is contracted to take an annual sabbatical. While he typically uses February as a study month, he has, over the years, deferred several sabbaticals and accrued unused time. For 2025, Todd has requested a modified sabbatical from March through July. During this period, he will continue delivering Sunday sermons, collaborating with the Pastoral Care Team, and meeting with the Operations Manager as needed.

**RADIO PROGRAM UNDERWRITING TRIAL:** Consistent with the Board's interest in increasing attendance, the idea of underwriting one or more local radio programs surfaced. Tom Mosher volunteered to pay for some trial program underwriting as this is not budgeted for. Tracking data will be available when visitor intake forms are completed.

**BOARD BUDGET PRIORITIES:** This year the Board established the following budget priorities for the 2025/26 Fiscal Year: non-pledge income enhancement (fundraising); increased attendance/new members (not a budgetary line item); and increased financial commitment to our capital and reserve maintenance fund.

**FILLING THE TREASURER POSITION:** Our current bylaw requires one of our elected board members to serve as Treasurer. It has proved difficult for seven elected Trustees to find among themselves the skills and qualifications needed of a Treasurer. A Member of the Congregation suggested appointing an ex-officio Treasurer, as we have done for many years in the past. This means someone who automatically holds a seat on the board via the position of Treasurer. This expands our pool of eligible people to serve in that role and allows them to serve as long as they would like to. That concept was considered by the Board and was looked upon favorably. After considerable discussion the Board took no action.

**SHARED MINISTRY TEAM 'CONGREGATIONAL CONVERSATION':** The topics of UUCS withdrawing from UUA, discussion about the Seven Principles, and discussion of changing UUCS's name, came to the Board's attention. The Shared Ministry Team conducted a congregational survey. In January, the Team organized meetings to discuss the survey results, inviting the congregation to express their interest and concerns. As a result of that meeting, the Board considered what to do with these three topics and consequently decided to take no action regarding withdrawal from UUA, changing UUCS's name and took no action for emphasizing or displaying the Seven Principles. Any of these topics may be taken up in the future.

**BYLAW AMENDMENT SUBMITTED TO BOARD FOR REVIEW/INCLUSION IN 2025 ANNUAL MEETING:** As per UUCS Bylaws, the minimum number of Members have submitted a proposed Bylaw amendment for review by the Board. The proposed Bylaw amendment would make the current non-voting ex-officio Trustee position of the Senior Minister into a voting Trustee, establishing the Board as having eight voting Trustees.



# Annual Treasurer's Report

## FINANCIAL REPORT SUMMARY 2024-25

SUBMITTED BY REBECCA ADAMS, OPERATIONS MANAGER AND DICK BURKHART, UUCS TREASURER

As of the time of this report, we have achieved 93% of our projected revenues and 91.5% of our projected expenses. This positions us closely in line with our annual financial plan. While our income is slightly under budget, so are our expenses, which is a favorable outcome under the circumstances. This variance is not unexpected, as pledges and other revenue sources are not always fulfilled in full.

As in previous years, we continue to operate with a “bare bones” budget. Our current income is sufficient to cover our carefully minimized operating costs, with limited additional funds available. We have only a few hundred dollars allocated for essential outreach efforts such as social events, advertising, and community sponsorships, which are vital for maintaining visibility and promoting our mission.

A notable challenge this year was a fundraising goal added to our budget to address a \$12,000 shortfall from the previous pledge drive. This initiative was proposed by our treasurer and approved by the Board of Trustees. However, no specific fundraising plan or committee was established to carry it out. Despite initial brainstorming, the Board ultimately did not pursue any concrete fundraising efforts.

Fortunately, we received a generous contribution from the family of a late member, specifically designated to cover an unfulfilled pledge from the previous year. This donation significantly improved our revenue position and helped offset the additional shortfall.

While we do have a budgetary shortfall reserve to help cover any year-end deficits, it is not a resource we can rely on indefinitely. This is a depleting fund, and using it as a fallback too often risks undermining its long-term purpose. The reserve also serves as our contingency fund—an essential component of our financial stability—intended to cover operating expenses in the event of an emergency. It is important that we preserve this fund for truly critical situations.

In conclusion, we are on target to end this year well. We might have a small deficit or a small surplus. As every year, we will not know our final numbers until we close out the finances in July/August.



# BUDGET OVERVIEW 2025/26

SUBMITTED BY REBECCA ADAMS, OPERATIONS MANAGER

Our budget for the upcoming year closely mirrors last year's, with modest adjustments reflecting both inflation and increased operational costs. At the same time, we've managed to reduce spending in certain areas through successful contract renegotiations and by securing more competitive vendor pricing.

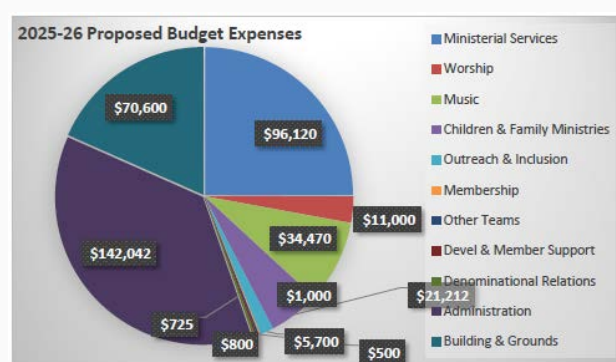
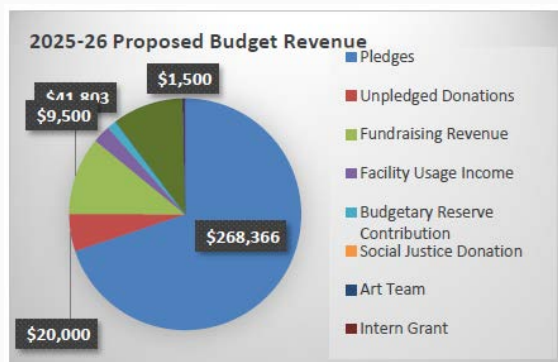
Despite these efforts, we are once again facing a shortfall following this year's pledge campaign. Several factors have contributed to this outcome. We sadly lost six members this year, including several who were among our largest contributors. Additionally, a number of long-time members are no longer able to pledge due to age or illness. While we are grateful to welcome new pledging members and have seen increased commitments from some existing members, we must acknowledge the reality of an aging congregation and the need to diversify our sources of income.

In our final Budget Summit of the year, we recognized the importance of shifting our mindset toward growth and sustainability. To ensure a strong future for UUCS, we must look beyond budget cuts and instead focus on building financial resilience through expanded fundraising. This includes reaching within our congregation and outward to the broader Spokane community.

To support this initiative, a new FUNdraising Team—led by Nancy Avery and Lynn Jinishian—has been established to coordinate and energize fundraising efforts. There will be many opportunities to get involved in the coming weeks and months. We encourage all members to participate actively in these efforts to help strengthen our community and support our shared mission.

It's important to remember that our budget is a projection—our best estimate of revenues and expenses for the coming year. During the Budget Summit, it was unanimously agreed that further cuts to staff compensation would be neither sustainable nor ethical, especially given the financial pressures many are already facing. For the third consecutive year, our minister has generously accepted a \$25,000 reduction in pay, partially offset by taking long-deferred sabbatical time. Meanwhile, our administrator has worked diligently to reduce overhead by renegotiating contracts for our alarm system, printer/copier, and other vendors.

One area we hope to see expand is funding for our programs and teams. Currently, there is minimal budget allocation for these important areas, though we've been able to support them independently of the general fund. We remain hopeful that, through growth and renewed financial health, we'll be able to fully fund existing programs and bring new programs to life.





# Endowment Team Report

## 2024-2025 UUCS ENDOWMENT TEAM REPORT

Submitted by Karen Dorn Steele, Endowment Team Co-Chair

The UUCS Endowment fund, under management of the Seattle Foundation, continued to grow in 2024 but lost momentum this year due to the turbulent economy in the first months of the Trump administration.

Our endowment had a balance of \$924,093 in December 2024 (and an interim balance of \$920,833 in mid-May 2025).

Last year, your Endowment Team voted to provide \$35,000 to the church's 2024/25 operating budget. This spring, we voted to increase that allocation to \$38,000 for the 2025/26 budget, continuing our trend of growing annual contributions.

We are hoping we can continue that pattern of increasing contributions in future years, but there are cautionary signs on the horizon: continued turbulence in the American and international economies which may suppress fund returns, and the fact that many of our elderly members, who have been among our most generous contributors, are dying.

However, UUCS congregants continue to make generous contributions to the Endowment Fund, either in memory of deceased members or in a conscious effort to build the fund to ensure our church's future. In 2024, the endowment was boosted by \$5,425 in member donations; the total through mid-May 2025 is \$3,635.

In early 2022, after discussions with the UUCS Legacy Society and the UUCS Board, we moved our endowment funds out of the Unitarian Universalist Association's Common Endowment Fund in Boston. The reasons included our church's concerns about the illiberal direction of the UUA and language in (now-revised) UUCS documents that said UUA would become the owner of any funds and properties owned by a church that dissolves.

After reviewing several investment options, the Endowment Team received Board approval to create a Reserve Fund at the Seattle Foundation, the largest community foundation in the Pacific Northwest, with over \$1 billion in assets.

Our Reserve Fund is currently invested in a low-cost Index Fund, but we can change investment options twice a year at our discretion. Under Seattle Foundation management, our fund has grown from \$714,267 in our initial 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2022 report to \$920,833 this spring.

Endowment Team leadership will change this year. Co-chair Karen Dorn Steele and Richard Steele will leave the team due to term limits. Dan Eacret has agreed to continue for another term, subject to a vote at our annual meeting in June. Co-chair Sue Stiritz, Tom Brattebo, Mary Giannini and Shane Gronholz will continue to serve. We will deeply miss Donna Borden Rhodes, a longtime champion of the endowment, who died this year.

# UUCS TEAM REPORTS

## PASTORAL CARE TEAM

BY BETTE BRATTEBO AND SUE STIRITZ, PASTORAL CARE TEAM CO-CHAIRS

This past year, our team has been available to help church members and friends as needed with cards of support, visits to those who are hospitalized or otherwise unable to attend services. We are a very caring congregation with many volunteers willing to lend a helping hand.

Two of our long time Pastoral Care Team members retired from Team participation to do other church activities. We honor their long time commitment to pastoral care and we thank them for their many efforts on behalf of UUCS members and friends. We also added new member to our team. This new member brings energy and new ideas.

Many church members have not returned to attending in person services since the pandemic and now attend through zoom. One of our goals is to reach out to those we haven't seen at church for some time and offer a call or a visit.

Team member, Sue Stiritz, along with Doug Deaton formed an in-person support group to find support and reassurance that comes with connection to people who value and who want a decent society, who reject bigotry and who treat people equally and respectfully. The meetings have been held on Sunday at 12:30.

We sponsored and coordinated a workshop entitled "Are You Ready for the End of Your Life". This workshop was held on February 12, 2025, at Rockwood Retirement Community Theatre. Linda Moulder, facilitated the class with the help of Sue Stiritz. This workshop followed the Five Wishes booklet with conversation and information from other sources. Many members and friends attended the presentation.

Our team has also been honored to be of assistance in providing memorial services at UUCS for eight congregants who passed during this time. Time spent planning and organizing these services is our gift to the families of those who have lost loved ones. Our team thanks all the volunteers who have baked, served and cleaned.

We are using the Wheel of Life column in the SUUN newsletter to keep congregants informed of church activities. Please send information to Sue Stiritz or Bette Brattebo and we will take it from there.

The year has been busy for members of the Pastoral Care Team. We look forward to continue being an integral part of the life of our congregation going forward.



# UUCS Team Reports Continued

## **SHARED MINISTRY TEAM 2024–2025** **BY LYNN JINISHIAN**

This Annual Report is submitted on behalf of the Shared Ministry Team for the fiscal year 2024–2025. The Shared Ministry Team is charged with observing and evaluating the overall health and effectiveness of the church's ministry and shared leadership. We share our insights and recommendations with the Board of Trustees at least twice annually, and we offer ongoing counsel and support to the Senior Minister.

This year, the Shared Ministry Team has included Rev. Todd Eklof, Dick Gammon, Bob Bernstein, and Lynn Jinishian. We met monthly via Zoom, with each meeting lasting approximately 90 minutes. (Rev. Eklof is on Sabbatical from February–July 2025. The Team continues to meet.)

Our work this year focused on two primary issues:

### **Board Communication and Email Policy**

Recognizing the importance of transparency, equity, and sustainable practices in church governance, the Shared Ministry Team developed a proposed email communication policy for the Board of Trustees. This policy was intended to ensure that board-related communications remained transparent, limited in scope, and used appropriately—so that deliberations and decisions would take place in open, accountable settings rather than through extended email exchanges. The policy also aimed to respect staff capacity by minimizing unnecessary email volume. While the proposal was submitted with this intent, it was ultimately not adopted by the Board as written, due to concerns that it might hinder the Board's ability to complete its work efficiently. As a result, email conversations—often initiated in advance of meetings—continue to shape the Board's narrative and direction. In our view, renewed attention to the principles of transparency, along with clearer discernment between what is appropriate for email versus what should be reserved for open, publicized meetings, would strengthen the congregation's trust in its governance.

### **Congregational Input on UUA Affiliation**

On the Board's behalf, the Shared Ministry Team initiated a congregation-wide survey to gather feedback on whether UUCS should remain affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). The survey invited participants to share their understanding of the issue, raise questions, and express their preferences. In order to openly share the survey results, we hosted a congregational meeting on January 12, 2025, to explore the topic further and to provide space for thoughtful dialogue and clarification. A verbal report of both the survey findings and the congregational discussion was given to the Board of Trustees at their February meeting.

# UUCS Team Reports Continued

## SHARED MINISTRY TEAM REPORT CONTINUED

This report was intended to inform and guide the Board in facilitating further discernment and conversation within the congregation. However, the Board chose not to take any additional steps, and no further discussion or action has followed. The Shared Ministry Team believes that continued dialogue, education, and engagement around this important matter would have served the congregation well and remains a recommended path forward.

Throughout this year, the Shared Ministry Team has engaged in its work with a spirit of collaboration and care. While the year has included moments of tension and challenge in working with the Board, we remain committed to fostering healthy communication, mutual respect, and shared leadership within our congregation.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lynn Jinishian, on behalf of the Shared Ministry Team

## PRIDE TEAM

The PRIDE Team serves as a resource for Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ) people and their allies in our church and in the larger Spokane community.

Our largest event is the Rainbow Parade and Festival which occurs on the second Saturday in June.

Since the beginning of PRIDE many members of the church have walked in the parade and volunteered in the family area which was created and "manned" by UU Volunteers in 2006 to include families in the celebration.

In February of 2018, the LGBTQ+ Seniors of the Inland Northwest was "born." That group continues to meet at UUCS every second Saturday of the month for a potluck and we continue to use the church's Zoom account to meet every Friday at 4PM just to stay in touch.

UUCS and the PRIDE Team hosted a gathering for about 16 different LGBTQ connected groups in Spokane earlier this year.

The most important thing our congregation can do is SHOW UP and, whenever there is a need to support the LGBTQ+ community, you are there.

We continue to provide a safe place for social and support groups of the LGBTQ+ community to meet. The LGBTQ+ Seniors of the Inland Northwest meet at UUCS the 2nd Saturday of every month for a potluck. They also continue to use the church's Zoom account to meet online every Friday. UUCS is a sponsor for PRIDE. This year the Spokane PRIDE festival and parade will be held in person on June 14th. The parade always begins at noon and is held on the second Saturday in June.



# UUCS Team Reports Continued

## SOCIAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL REPORT 2024-2025

The Social Justice Coordinating Council current members are: Pam Davies, Barb Stuebing, Karen Dorn Steele, Maurina Ladich, Susan Tyler-Babkirk, Peggy Eklof, and Nancy Avery. New members are welcome.

### Special Collections

This year our Social Justice Coordinating Council coordinated special collections for many local charities, such as Shalom Ministries, Crosswalk, Transitions, Spokane Aids Network, NAMI, The Ministerial Discretionary Fund (Sharing Fund), Odyssey Youth Movement, Veterans for Peace, Our Partner Church, Lewis and Clark High School Environmental Club, and City Concerns Meals on Wheels. Many of our Special Collection opportunities were also coordinated with our Guest Speaker Team.

### Meaningful Movies

We are a small group, and welcome new interested members. This year we hosted or co-hosted 7 events. We moved back to the church because of limited participation. Our focus was on housing, healthcare, nuclear power, prison reform. Most recently coordinated with the newly formed Black prisoners caucus in Airway heights to show Since I've Been Down. We are open to suggestions on films and new members. Contact us at [meaningfulmoviesspokane@gmail.com](mailto:meaningfulmoviesspokane@gmail.com).

### UU Justice in the Middle East

It's been a busy year providing education about Palestine. National UUJME hosted a 4-part education class on Why Palestine Matters in the fall. Several members of our church attended. The sessions were recorded and are available online. We have sold many bottles of Palestinian olive oil through the year. Several members worked on the Washington state vote ceasefire campaign. We also worked with the inland northwest coalition for Palestine liberation to put on a 5-film series this winter at our church and the magic lantern. We are looking for new members please contact us at [UUJME@uuspokane.org](mailto:UUJME@uuspokane.org).

Barb Stuebing

### Spokane Zero Waste

Spokane Zero Waste is working on reduction of plastics. Currently focusing on the reduction and repurposing of textile waste because of the amount that goes to landfill and the number of plastics that goes into synthetic fabrics. We also have another project, Woven, working with Afghani refugees sewing purses, tote bags and jackets using rescued fabrics. This allows the women to make money at home, while taking care of their children. A boutique of Woven products was at church this past year and hopes to be at church this fall.

# UUCS Team Reports Continued

## GUEST SPEAKERS TEAM REPORT REPORT 2024-2025

The UUCS Social Justice Coordinating Council in partnership with the guest speaker team, Maurina Ladich and Paul Lindholdt, hosted guest speakers on a wide range of social justice and other topics during 2024/25.

June 2024: Larry Cebula, a professor of history at Eastern Washington University and assistant digital archivist at Washington State archives, gave a guest presentation on "The Changing Face of Local History". He spoke about a "revolution in the understanding of local history", the expansion of accessible primary sources, and a national racial reckoning. Professor Cebula discussed examples from his projects with the Spokane Historical Society, and efforts to remove the statue of John Monaghan and mapping/removing racial covenants.

July 2024: Retired minister Reverend Craig Moro gave a guest sermon titled, "You're Not What You Once Were". Rev. Moro gave a lighthearted sermon on aging, bringing in the story of King Solomon in his youth and old age.

August 2024: State Appellate Court Judge George Fearing gave a guest presentation on Christian Nationalism. He gave examples of attempts to implant Christian nationalism as a guiding force for the operation of government and discussed whether the architects of American government, living in the age of Enlightenment, intended the new nation to be a Christian nation.

September 2024: UUCS congregant Joe King, former speaker of the Washington House of Representatives, gave a presentation titled, "What to Make of our Political Opponents: We can't just shoot the Brown Shirts". In this presentation, Joe King stated that figuring out how to reunite our country is one of the biggest issues we face. In his summary, he wrote: "We can't solve climate change, income disparity, or homelessness without figuring out how to communicate with folks on the other side of the political divide."

October 2024: In an eleventh-hour presentation due to the unexpected illness of the scheduled guest speaker, Gordon Diddons, the lay leader for that Sunday, gave a moving guest sermon on "Care of the Soul" based on the Thomas Moore book of the same title.

November 2024: Linda Lauch, the executive director of the American Indian Community Center (AICC), along with Karen Stratton, and Stephanie Sijohn presented the history of the AICC in a guest presentation titled, "Forever Home for American Indian Community Center; the Hope for a Permanent Facility".

December 2024: Ryan Louise, along with a panel of other members of the small collective, Books To Prisoners, gave a presentation about the work of their organization. The members shared stories about prisoners who had been impacted by receiving requested books from the organization, and discussed the importance of empowering incarcerated people with access to books and knowledge.

January 2025- No guest speaker, Requiem Service

February 2025- Larry Luton, professor emeritus of Public Administration at Eastern Washington University, gave a review of climate change in Spokane with a focus on the history of climate action in Spokane.

February 9 and 16, 2025: Reverend Craig Moro presented a two-part sermon titled, "The Epic of Gilgamesh: An Old Story with New Pauses". Rev. Moro noted, "[The Epic] is one of the oldest stories in the world, yet its insights into human mortality and human nature remain fresh enough to inspire a sci-fi story set thousands of years from today."

February 23, 2025: In a guest presentation titled, "No More Stolen Sisters! What we are doing to stop Murdered Missing Indigenous Women and People", Dr. Margo Lee Hill, a lawyer and Spokane tribal member, spoke about the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's project that she spearheads locally.

March 2025 - Mery Noel Smith, Spokane's 5<sup>th</sup> Poet Laureate, gave a guest talk titled, "Poetry as Salvation". In this presentation, Mery Smith shared some of her poems and talked about the power of words to heal and her goal to bring poetry to spaces like jails and recovery centers.

April 2025: On April 27, our church hosted a panel discussion among several speakers who are members - or their allies - of the national umbrella organization "Jewish Voices for Peace". Panel members discussed recent developments in the U.S. and Middle East, responded to critiques of Israeli policies, and provided ways that Spokane citizens can work for peace in the Middle East.

May 2025: No guest speaker, Bloomsday

# UUCS Team Reports Continued

## **SPOKANE ALLIANCE TEAM REPORT 2024-2025 SUBMITTED BY KAREN DORN STEELE**

Our congregation stayed active with the Spokane Alliance this church year as one of the Alliance's member organizations that seeks to leverage our power by acting collectively.

Last December, UUCS members contributed to an important conversation on the issues the Spokane Alliance could confront in the turbulent political climate of 2025. Your suggestions were conveyed to a Discernment Assembly on January 14, where over 150 people met on the Spokane Community College campus. UUCS delegates Barb Stuebing and Karen Dorn Steele acted with other delegates to form four new Research Action Teams:

- Housing and Homelessness
- Youth and Education
- Inclusive Economic Justice
- Early Learning

These teams began to meet in late January and early February 2025, organizing to build power and arrive at winnable solutions.

In April, the Spokane Alliance Delegate Council met at UUCS to vote on additional campaigns to improve our community. Voting UUCS delegates were Karen Dorn Steele and Richard Steele, with assistance from Peggy Eklof (also a Spokane Alliance-affiliated Spokane Education Association member)

The meeting's main focus was a decision to support the Spokane Public Schools' bond and the Spokane Park Department's levy, both of which will be presented separately to Spokane voters in November 2025.

Spokane Alliance delegates agreed that support for the bond and the levy should be accompanied by a "Community Workforce Agreement" that would ensure strong benefits for all publicly-funded jobs resulting from the passage of the park bond and the school levy. The Spokane City Council and the Spokane Public School Board would need to vote to approve the Community Workforce Agreement before the fall election.

The delegates also agreed that Spokane Alliance support for the municipal levy and bond should be contingent on passage of the workforce agreement. Similar agreements have been approved in Seattle and Tacoma to ensure that funds from publicly-approved projects benefit local workers and neighborhoods.

In addition, the delegates endorsed a proposal to hire a second full-time Spokane Alliance organizer, with a fund-raising event at St. John's Episcopal Cathedral scheduled this fall.

## **MEALS ON WHEELS TEAM**

This team works to provide food security to many in our community by delivering hot meals every Tuesday to senior citizens in the near northwest neighborhoods of Spokane.

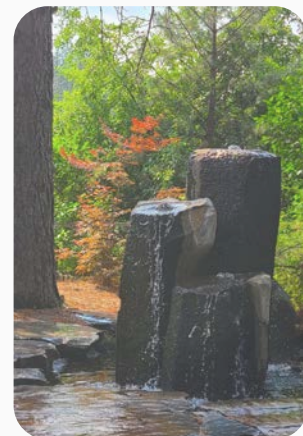
Team Coordinator: Judy Gammon

# UUCS Team Reports Continued

## MEMORIAL GARDEN TEAM

The purpose of the Memorial Garden is to maintain and steward the UUCS Memorial Garden in perpetuity. The team is responsible for preserving the garden's appearance to assure a peaceful environment for those who wish to pay their respects to their loved ones. We keep a record of all contracts for members who wish to be remembered in the garden, arranging for the engraving of their names and life dates on the basalt columns. This year we are engraving 13 new entries on the columns. After our Requiem services in January we had an information table, answered questions and gave guided tours of the garden.

Members: Linda Greene, chair, Jean Larson, Lynn Jinishian, Jan Strobeck and Judy Gammon



## BOOK CART TEAM

-Maintains the carts of used book in the Friendship Hall. Do you have any books to donate to the weekly book sale? If so, please bring them to the church!

Team Members: Millie Roberts, Mary Lou Lewis, and Judy Gammon

# UUCS Fundraisers

## ANNUAL FUNDRAISERS AT UUCS

### COMMUNITY AUCTION

Each year in the fall we hold a Community Auction. This event relies on donated items from our church members and community to provide items to then bid on and buy. Popular items include: parties, concerts and social events, cabins and weekend getaways, tickets and gift certificates, homemade baked goods, meals and treats, handmade (by you!) arts and crafts, service items such as yard work, fitness classes or lessons, and themed gift baskets. There are so many possibilities. How creative can you get and what can you donate? Start thinking about it now, donations open in August for the auction in the fall. This is our church's biggest fundraiser of the year, we hope you will participate this year!

### MAKER'S MARKET

Join us every Sunday in between and after services for the new Maker's Market. From fresh baked breads to hand made crafts, come see what you might find at the Maker's Market!

### GENEROSITY CAMPAIGN

Each year in the month of April we hold our annual generosity campaign. Filling out your pledge form each year helps us to plan for the next fiscal year. This is an important part of being a member (and friend!) of UUCS. This month long drive is to let us know what you plan on donating for the next year and allows us to set our budget accordingly.

### "FUN" DRAISING TEAM - NEW!

Our new FUNdraising team is currently forming and brainstorming creative ideas to promote our church through community wide fundraisers. Have some ideas or interested in helping out organize some fun events? Contact the church office for details.



# UUCS Programs and Outreach

## GET INVOLVED AT UUCS!

There are a number of teams and groups you can participate in to enhance connections and create community here at UUCS. Below you will find a list of some of these. For more information please visit our website at [www.uuspokane.org](http://www.uuspokane.org).

## OUTREACH – IMPLEMENT OUR VALUES IN OUR LARGER COMMUNITY

- **Spokane Alliance** – works with other churches and organizations to promote positive change in our community
- **Partner Church** – working with members of other local churches, coordinates support of communication and sharing with our partner church in Felsorokos, Romania
- **Social Justice Coordinating Council** – coordinates social justice efforts conducted by various teams within the Spokane community
- **Pride Team** – resource for our LGBTQ+ members, friends, allies at UUCS and in the larger community. Participation in PRIDE Spokane each year.
- **Meals on Wheels** – coordinates delivery of meals to seniors and others in need
- **UUJME** – UUs for Justice in the Middle East – working with UUs worldwide to promote a peaceful and just resolution to the Israel/Palestine conflict
- **Meaningful Movies** – coordinates screenings of films regarding social justice and environmental issues at local theater. Currently being held in-person in our Chapel.
- **Bite-2-Go** – encourages and coordinates donations to provide food to Balboa elementary students in need
- **Raised Beds** – adopt a garden bed in our community garden and grow fresh food for our local food banks, community kitchens, and our very own Little Free Pantry.
- **Buildings and Grounds** – join us the last Wednesday of the month at 10 a.m. to help keep our building and grounds looking beautiful and welcoming. New volunteers needed!

## ADULT ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

For more information on the groups below, please visit the "Programs" section of our website at [www.uuspokane.org](http://www.uuspokane.org)

- **UU Women's Group**
  - **Second Wednesday Lunch** – opportunities for UUCS women to socialize over lunch
  - **Third Thursday Book Club** – monthly book discussion group for women
- **UUCS Men's Breakfast, Third Saturday** – breakfast and discussion group for men
- **Problem Solvers** – weekly coffee and discussion on various topics
- **Buddhist Meditation** – weekly meditation sessions led by nuns from the Tibetan Buddhist Sravasti Abbey
- **Kerdcera Dojo** – The Kerdcera Dojo means, "The practice of heart and mind," meets weekly on ZOOM. Rev. Dr. Todd Eklof guides participants in the practice of logic and Emotional Intelligence techniques.
- **Senior LGBTQ+** – gatherings welcoming all, especially those identifying as senior LGBTQ+
- **Zoom Room Sundays First Service** – join near or far for an interactive online viewing experience!

# UUCS Annual Report 2024-2025

## DONATE TO OUR LITTLE FREE PANTRY

Our Unitarian Universalist Church has joined hands with Growing Neighbors and now has a Little Free Pantry onsite. This neighborhood resource helps those dealing with food insecurity. It provides a safe place, free of judgement to come and get a little extra food when in need. UUCS has long committed to being a place that helps those less fortunate in our community. From participating in Bite to Go and fundraising for 2nd Harvest, we now can stock our own Little Free Pantry with nonperishable food items to help our neighbors and people in our community.

This year we have provided hundreds of pounds of food to our community in need. We still have neighbors in need and supporting our Little Free Pantry provides an accessible option for resources. We are continually collecting food donations from those who are able to do so and restock the pantry with items listed below. You can leave items in the donation box in the foyer or place directly into the Little Free Pantry. Please try to donate unopened and unexpired nonperishable foods only.



4340 W WHISTALKS WAY  
SPOKANE, WA 99224  
509.325.6383  
WWW.UUSPOKANE.ORG

**OFFICE HOURS: MONDAY - THURSDAY 10AM - 2PM**

MINISTER: REV. DR. TODD EKLOF

OPERATIONS MANAGER: REBECCA ADAMS

OPERATIONS ASSISTANT: MICHELLE CALDWELL

BOOKKEEPER: LYNN HURT

MUSIC DIRECTOR: RACHAE THOMAS

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SPECIALIST: STEPHANIE GRONHOLZ