



UNITARIAN  
UNIVERSALIST  
CHURCH OF  
CONCORD (NH)



2024  
2025

# UU CHURCH OF CONCORD YEARBOOK

[www.concorduu.org](http://www.concorduu.org)



UU CHURCH  
OF CONCORD



November 24, 2024

# WELCOME TO OUR 2024-25 YEARBOOK

## Our Mission:

***Connecting in Love and Service***

***Growing Spiritually***

***Transforming Ourselves and our World***

This Yearbook is  
dedicated to these special  
volunteers honored in  
June 2025:

Craig Whitson,  
Volunteer of the Year

Franz Vail & Janet Kelley-  
Vail, Unsung Heroes

Janet Kibbee,  
Children's Hero

Pat Hoertdoerfer,  
Elders' Hero

Trudy Mott-Smith,  
Lifetime Volunteer

# OUR VISION

Our church acts under a system of policy governance and has adopted the following Ends as the goals we wish to accomplish. The Ends were revised by the Board of Trustees in March 2025.

Our thriving congregation is living into a culture of belonging, centered in love, compassion, curiosity, courage, and joy.

Congregants give and receive care and support in times of joy, sorrow, and transition.

We have the facilities and a broad circle of effective leaders with resources to further our mission.

Our congregation benefits from the exchange of wisdom across diverse life stages and experiences.

Our rich and diverse worship and religious life nurtures, challenges and inspires us to daily practice of our values, lifelong learning, and transformation.

We are grounded in our Unitarian Universalist faith tradition and pass those values to the next generation.

We focus our outreach ministries to make a noticeable impact in the larger community.

We are full and active participants in the work of both the Greater Concord Faith Community and the larger Unitarian Universalist community.

We recognize, understand, and build bridges to dismantle systems of bias, oppression, and privilege within ourselves, our congregation, our community, and the larger world.

We live in harmony with the Earth and act to care for the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part.

The Yearbook highlights some of the ways we achieved these goals in church year 2024-25. What other examples do you recall? What other ways could we live into these goals?





UU CHURCH  
OF CONCORD

**Our thriving congregation is living into a culture of belonging, centered in love, compassion, curiosity, courage, and joy.**



2024-25 Board of Trustees, left to right  
Susi Nord, Craig Whitson, Arthoen Wolfe, Anne Meyers,  
Jim Curley, Larry Davis

## Board of Trustees

Submitted by Craig Whitson, Board Chair

Thanks to the help of the Wayfinder team - a group of randomly selected congregants - we created an update to the Ends Policies - the visionary goals for our Church. This was the culmination of the Powerful Question project which began in 2023. These are the insights we embraced:



We also "lived into" a new set of financial checks and balances along with ways to exercise our fiduciary responsibilities as a commitment of the entire Board. We plan to formalize these new ways of "financial working" in the coming church year.





UU CHURCH  
OF CONCORD

## Choir

Rev. Michael Leuchtenberger led a choir that grew in numbers, in range of ages, and in its joyful spirit. The number of choir members grew to over 60 people of all ages!



During Spirit Week (March 23 to 24) the choir and others participated in a unique Sound Experience. Rev. Michael Leuchtenberger directed the Sound Experience participants to use body percussion like snapping, clapping, and rubbing of hands to create a layered soundscape in the sanctuary. A Song Bath (pictured below) was another part of the Sound Experience.



## Octagon Dinners

by Ann West, Dinner Coordinator

Last spring, many of us took part in a series of three Octagon Dinners. We met in groups of eight in hosts' homes, shared delicious potluck meals, and got to know more of our fellow congregants. The time spent relaxing over a meal provided a wonderful opportunity for rich conversation. Look for the next series of Octagon dinners in spring 2026!



## Tuesday Welcome Table

Rev. Michael Leuchtenberger prepared a vegan meal every Tuesday evening. The Welcome Table started in April 2023 and has now grown to more than 30 people of all ages many weeks. Michael often shares a discussion topic, allowing us to share from our hearts, learn from one another, and make new friends.

In November 2024, we combined the Welcome Table with our annual Feedback and Ideas Forum (above), an opportunity for congregants to share their kudos, constructive criticism, and suggestions with the staff.



**Our thriving congregation is living into a culture of belonging, centered in love, compassion, curiosity, courage, and joy.**

## Celebrating our New Members

Submitted by Lea Smith,  
Director of Membership & Administration



Becoming a member of the church means moving from being an observer or participant to being actively committed to our church's mission to connect in love and service. Twenty-one new members joined the church after participating in our Exploring Membership group offered in fall 2024 or winter/spring 2025.

*Welcome to Deb Campelia, Lila Cate, Joe Cicirelli, Sarah Colombo, Star Dargin, Chelsea Drzymala, Karen Juall, Beeler Lile-Sexton, Jonathan Lile-Sexton, Shelley Moffatt, Chris O'Connor, Mary Ober, George Okuk, Teresa Okuk, Ann Parke, Bill Parke, Beverly Pietlicki, Cynthia Riley, Krista Robichaud, Nancy Wills, Rob Yager*

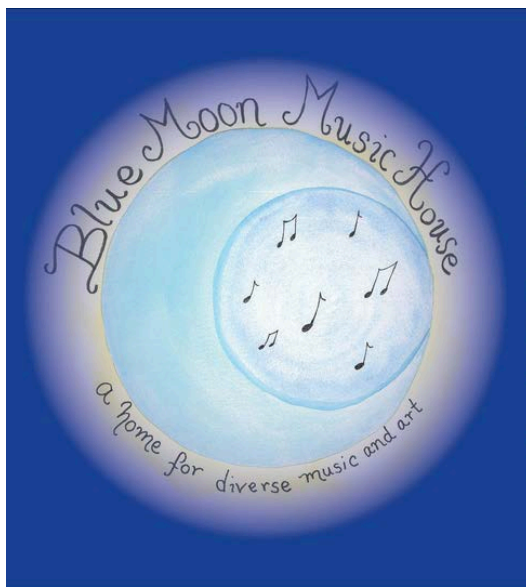


## 1970s Dance Party!

UUs of all ages pulled out our retro 70s attire to shake our groove thing in January 2025, as Fellowship Hall was transformed into a disco night club.







## Blue Moon Music House

With all the musical talent in our congregation, why not turn our Fellowship Hall into a musical venue once a month? The Blue Moon Music House emerged in fall 2024. Open on the second Tuesday of every month, this supportive arts community invites anyone and everyone to share their songs, poetry, or spoken word. Coffee and snacks are shared and all ages are welcome!

The summer Music Houses were changed up a bit to offer sing-along or family-oriented fun, although it rained on the day we planned campfire songs.





**Congregants  
give and  
receive care  
and support in  
times of joy,  
sorrow, and  
transition.**



## Long Term Member Celebration

by Janet Kelley-Vail, Breakfast Coordinator

Our beloved Long Term Members gathered for breakfast April 28, 2025, and as you can tell from the photo above, we had a great turnout! This event grows each year, with everyone so happy to be connecting with other, sharing stories and eating terrific food. Spring is a wonderful time to celebrate this special group of folks, all of whom have contributed so much to our community over the years. It's an honor to be part of the team that hosts this event!

## Solace Circles

Pastoral Care Associate Jim Curley led Solace Circles August 2024 through February 2025, which included meditation, song, and prayer, to help connect with and uplift each other.

Renee West wrote in August 2024, "We've all been expressing the anxiety we're feeling about what's in the news—the murkiness and uncertainty of what might happen has been affecting our ability to sleep, read, concentrate, etc. I imagined others in our church community were also feeling this way, and so I reached out to our Pastoral Care Associates to see if we could create a small, simple, intimately human way of holding each other as we walk down this murky path."

## Election Watch Party

On November 5, 2024, we gathered together in Fellowship Hall and on Zoom to watch the presidential election results stream in. Donald Trump was elected the 47<sup>th</sup> president of the United States.



## Support for People with Parkinson's and Their Care Partners

Our wise and caring members, Peggy Herbert and Laurel Horne, created a new support group. People with Parkinson's from our church and the wider community, along with the people who live with or care for them, met monthly for support and resource sharing.

## Saying Goodbye to Beloved Members

We remember with love our members who died.

**Jane Lemeland**  
**Pat Dahme**

Before she died, our "Visiting Voices" choir visited Pat at Havenwood Nursing Home to share their musical gifts with Pat and other residents (photo below.) After Pat passed, a Grief Circle and Memorial Service were held in our Sanctuary.



As a community we also mourned the loss of **Natalie Duncan**, the young adult daughter of our members Laurel Horne and Andy Duncan.

## Pastoral Care Associates (PCAs)

Our team of Pastoral Care Associates are selected and trained by Rev. Michael Leuchtenberger to provide a listening ear to their fellow congregants. 2024-25 PCAs were Janet Kelley-Vail, Ann West, Judi Abbe, Bob Holleman, Jim Curley, Donna Moore.

Michael or a PCA visits the home of a grieving member or their family, to bring a Grief Kit that includes comforts such as a shawl and a book about grief.

## Caring Network

The Caring Network is an informal list of congregants who offer practical help to congregants who are experiencing illness, injury, or other crisis. Renee West coordinated meals for several people who were ill or injured. She also coordinated receptions after the memorials of members or friends who passed away.

## Elder Circles of Healing and Wholeness

Elder Circles were held once a month on a Friday morning, with a light lunch. We are grateful to Linda Williams and Pat Hoertdoerfer for creating this meaningful source of support.

Photo above: the Elder Circles created a free library of books for elders - take one, leave one.





# Senior Singles Social Group

Submitted by Martha Mae Emerson

The Senior Singles Social Group has been celebrating life in spite of their age since its first meeting on March 9, 2025. Sharing food, fun, and companionship, culture and crafts, and a multitude of activities to keep our minds and bodies active and healthy all the while having good times together – that's what we do! We also have been collaborating with other UU groups by volunteering to support each others' contributions to the UU community and beyond.

Here are some highlights of our less than a year as a new UU group.

## **Sharing Food and Fun**

Monthly Social Hour, field trips to the Hay Estate and Wadleigh State Park, Cooking Club and cooking for Bevan and his boys, Cool Pool Party and Potluck, 96th Birthday Party for Ugo

## **Sharing ways to keep our minds and bodies active and healthy**

Stay Active Group meets every Wednesday. Weekly activities include walking and hiking, swimming, kayaking, croquet, parlor games, arts and crafts projects (creating an accordion card, learning to make origami boxes with 48 folds!)

## **Sharing Cultural experiences**

Going to concerts and local music venues, Poetry and Pie (reading favorite poems and poetry written by members), Red River movie matinee, Artist Studio Tour, art exhibit openings

## **Supporting each other and the church community through service and support**

Provide a Ride List for members who need rides or may not have a car, Green Burial presentation for all UUs, Birthday Cupcakes celebration for All UUs, volunteering/collaborating with other UU church groups: Friends of Refugees, grounds work, family engagement project, Family Promise, Elders Circle luncheon







UU CHURCH  
OF CONCORD

**We have the facilities and a broad circle of effective leaders with resources to further our mission.**

## 2024-25 Staff

It was a transition year in some of our staff positions, both by design as we changed our programming, and by necessity as employees moved on.

Senior Minister and Choir Director: Rev. Michael Leuchtenberger

Director of Membership & Administration: Lea Smith

Church Administrator: Becky Bosse

Accompanists: Mike Annicchiarico, Heather Maconaghy

Young Explorer Guides: Jana Flynn-Padick, Sosa Machaba, Dory LeCount

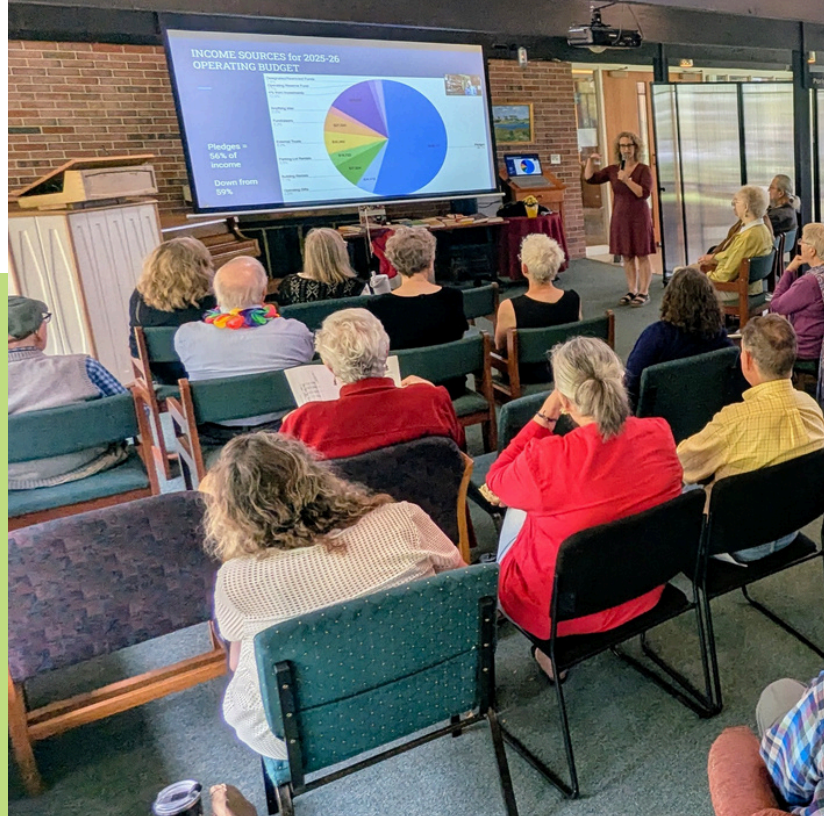
Family Engagement Coordinator: Dory LeCount

Sexton: Miguel Andrada, Russell Lilley

Custodian: Agnes Sesay

A/V Assistants: Clay Donachie, Gavin Robichaud

Childcare Providers: Patrick Yehle, Bayshay Bruss



## Finance Committee

The Finance Committee was led by Jack Wakelin and Lea Smith. Its purpose is to provide support for the annual budget process, ensure the church's assets are protected by writing and reviewing financial procedures, and help the congregation understand the financial operation of the church.

In 2024-25, the Church divided up financial responsibilities among various volunteers and staff, in lieu of a Treasurer.

The Committee helped to establish policy or procedures on:

- allocating dividends among the restricted funds in our investments
- use of church credit cards
- Memorial Garden spending

The Finance Committee explored options for completing a financial audit, which proved to be exceptionally costly, so the committee helped consider alternatives.

Staff in photo at left, clockwise from bottom left: Mike Annicchiarico, Heather Maconaghy, Lea Smith, Becky Bosse, Dory LeCount, Rev. Michael Leuchtenberger



# Operations Leadership Team

The Operations Leadership Team (OLT) includes eight congregants, appointed for four-year terms by Michael. In 2024-25 the members were Franz Vail, Jennifer Star, Renee West, Chris Soule, Lorraine Ellis, Dariel Thompson, and Susan Casey. Michael and Lea are also ex-officio members of the OLT. The OLT had one vacancy.

The OLT was involved in a wide range of activities to support Michael and the staff in achieving our church goals, from allocating resources to developing operational policies and procedures. A few examples:

- established priorities for Sunday meeting times and spaces to balance the needs of many different people and groups
- planned the fall 2024 Membership Fair (photo at right), so newcomers and long-timers can learn everything there is to do at Concord UU
- recruited or provided leadership for holiday activities like our Deck the Halls party and Christmas Eve
- discussed when terms lengths or limits might benefit various committees and teams
- gave thought to the competing space needs of renters and church community service activities
- helped decide on the future use/storage/disposal of four surplus pews
- initiated a new Why My Heart Is Here column in Parish Notes, to enable congregants to share what connects them to Concord UU

The OLT endeavors to develop a culture of gratitude in our congregation. OLT members write dozens of thank you notes throughout the year to thank our congregants for all they do for the church, and the OLT developed a procedure for thanking first-time and extraordinary donors.

**We have the facilities and a broad circle of effective leaders with resources to further our mission.**



## Operations Leadership Team 2024 / 25

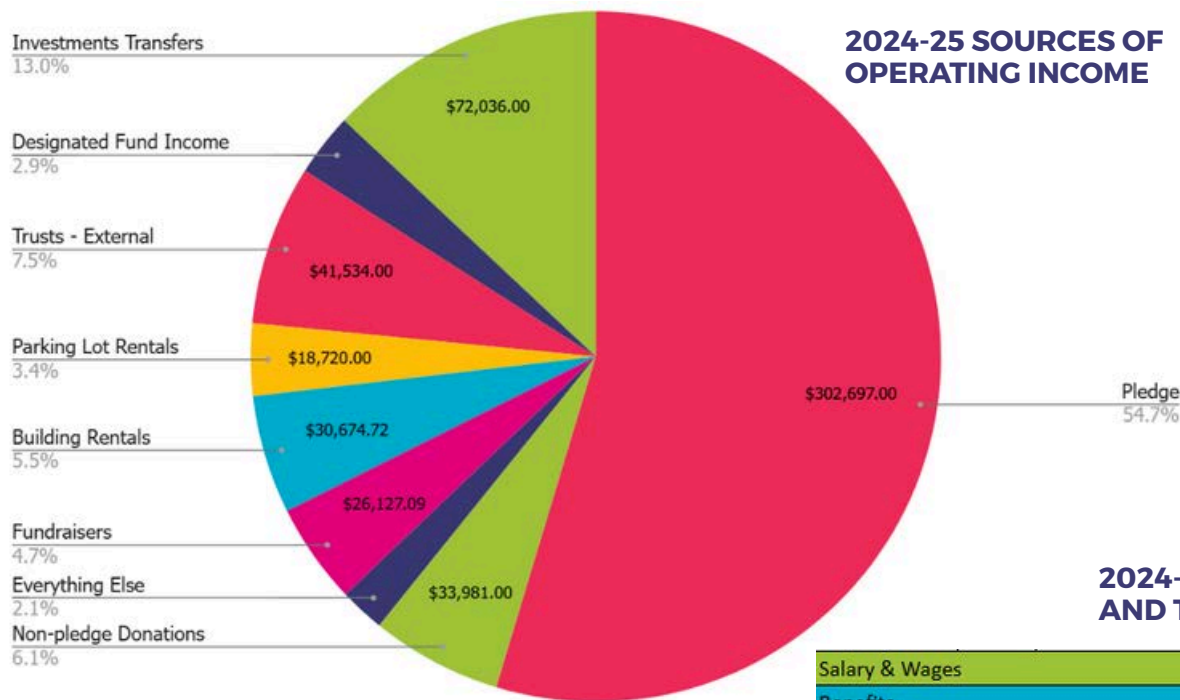


# OPERATING BUDGET RESULTS

Submitted by Lea Smith, Director of Membership & Administration

2024-25 Total Operating Expenses plus transfers to Reserves | \$551,012  
2024-25 Total Operating Income plus planned Investment Draws | \$553,802

Our operating budget had a wonderfully successful year. Our operating budget ended the year with an operating surplus of \$2,790. However, we spent \$2,615 on a capital expense (tech deck computer) using operating income, as planned. In essence, we ended the year with a surplus of \$175. We had budgeted for a shortfall of about \$11,000, which would have been covered by the Operating Reserve Fund (ORF). No withdrawal from the ORF was needed. In addition, we received a windfall of \$17,434 from the George Griffin Trust, which would have made the surplus that much larger. Instead, it was transferred to the Operating Reserve Fund as the congregation voted at the 2025 Annual Meeting. Therefore, the total in the Operating Reserve Fund as of July 31, 2025 increased to \$48,147.



**2024-25 OPERATING EXPENSES AND TRANSFERS TO RESERVES**

Salary & Wages	\$ 270,278
Benefits	\$ 85,231
Office & Administration	\$ 27,461
Ministry	\$ 15,562
Lifespan Faith Exploration	\$ 7,285
Building & Grounds	\$ 62,653
Dues	\$ 30,992
Music & Worship	\$ 6,621
Board of Trustees	\$ 2,001
Outreach & Justice	\$ 8,706
Fellowship	\$ 6,815
Healing & Helping	\$ 113
Stewardship & Fundraising	\$ 3,950
<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$ 527,668</b>
<b>TRANSFER TO RESERVE FUNDS</b>	
Transfer TO Intern Minister Fund	\$ 3,000
Transfer TO Sabbatical Fund	\$ 2,000
Transfer TO Audit Fund	\$ 1,000
Transfer TO Operating Reserve Fund	\$ 17,343
<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSE + TRANSFERS TO RESERVES</b>	<b>\$ 551,011</b>



# FUNDRAISING AND FUN-RAISING

## Lean Mean Stewardship Team

Submitted by Jim Curley

- We launched a new pledge campaign for the 2025-2026 church fiscal year titled "Sustaining Our Flourishing Community" by submitting a Parish Notes article, sending out about 218 Appeal emails, speaking about our needs from the pulpit, making phone calls & holding individual conversations.
- We mailed 85 thank you cards for those who initiated, confirmed or increased their pledges!
- We harangued & cajoled, pleaded & begged, and unapologetically asked for more.
- With all that, we met our goal and submitted a pledged amount of \$308,000 (rounded) to the budget makers.
- All in all, we had a pretty good pledge drive!



## Plant & Yard Sale

Led by Jim Downie and Betsy Kennedy, the 2025 Plant and Yard Sale was an extraordinary success, netting over \$6000!



## New Induction Stove and Convection Ovens Installed

Under the leadership of Bob Gabrielli, our 60-year-old gas stove was finally replaced. We were sad to see the dependable old beast go, but are delighted with our safer, more environmentally friendly new equipment! Significant unexpected electrical work was required, which was paid for through a combination of generous designated gifts and a withdrawal from investment funds.





UU CHURCH  
OF CONCORD

# Our congregation benefits from the exchange of wisdom across diverse life stages and experiences.

## After-Worship Offerings

Nearly every Sunday, we offered enriching programs, such as:

- Sermon Dialogues
- Watercolor as a Spiritual Practice with Bobbie Herron
- Step-parenting Discussion with Karen Cox
- Drumming & Spirituality with Matt Meyer
- Ecstatic Dance
- How to Be an Emissary for Truth & Justice with Barbara Keshen & Michael Leuchtenberger
- Creativity Show and Tell

On the second and third Sundays of every month, we offered "Second Hour", featuring multiple tracks of programming, including a Contemplative Practice each week. Some of the Contemplative Practices were Eco Dharma with Margaret Fletcher, Happiness is a Muscle with Betsy Black, and Yoga with Craig Whiston and Susan Casey.

Second Hour is followed by a simple luncheon hosted by a variety of church groups such as Covenant Groups or committees.



## Teaching Garden

Leah Powers and Bianca Rivera-Berry led in the creation of vegetable gardens on the front lawn, tended by people of all ages.

Below: Political turmoil at the national level called upon us to be radical emissaries for truth and love. Michael Leuchtenberger and Barbara Keshen led a discussion about how our church can best answer this call in these challenging times.





# Our congregation benefits from the exchange of wisdom across diverse life stages and experiences.



## Intergenerational Faith and Fun

by Dory LeCount, Family Engagement Coordinator

We continued the children-embracing traditions of the no-rehearsal pageant during the 5pm service on Christmas Eve, the Easter egg hunt on Easter Sunday, and the UU Village Camp-In in June, and our community continued to grow.



Photos above and to the right are from our rather wet Village Camp-in.

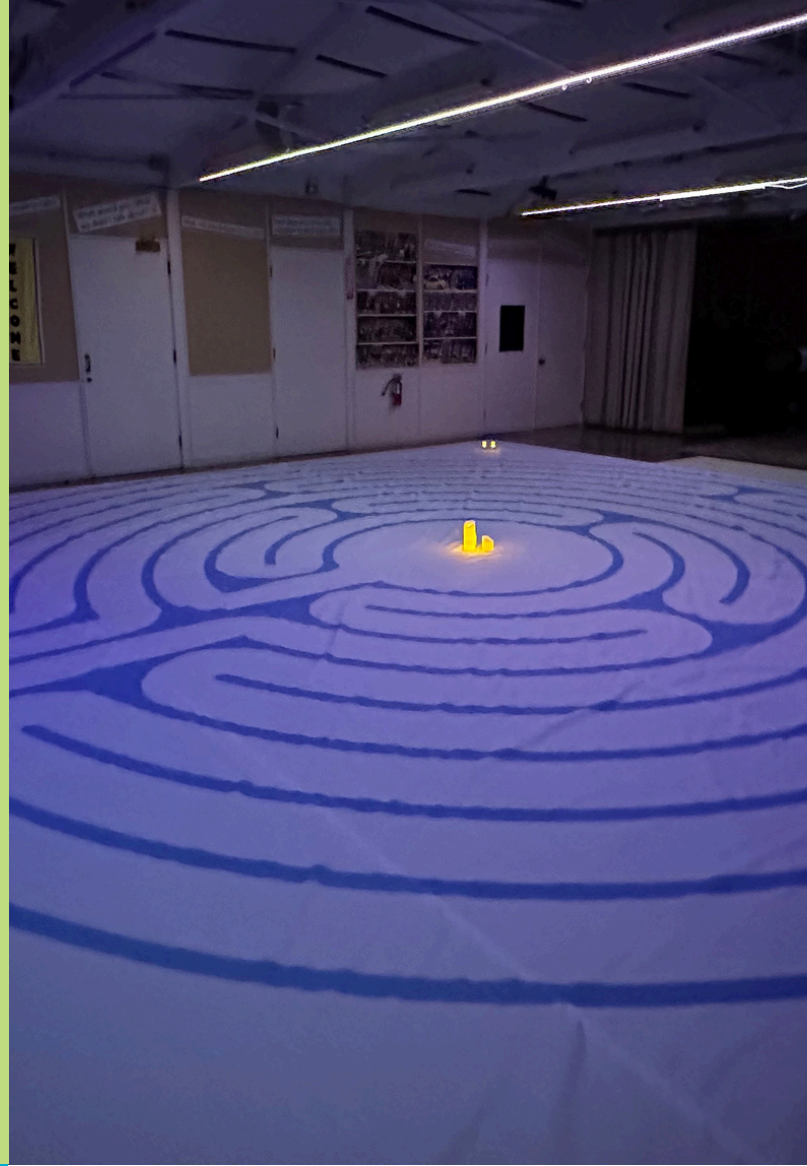






UU CHURCH  
OF CONCORD

**Our rich and diverse worship and religious life nurtures, challenges and inspires us to daily practice of our values, lifelong learning, and transformation.**



## Worship

The monthly themes from Soul Matters, a UU subscription-based resource library, informed topics for worship and Covenant Groups. The themes were:

September 2024 Invitation  
October 2024 Deep Listening  
November 2024 Repair  
December 2024 Presence  
January 2025 Story  
February 2025 Inclusion  
March 2025 Trust  
April 2025 Joy  
May 2025 Imagination  
June 2025 Freedom

photo at right:  
Worship Associates plan  
worship services

## Taizé Services and Labyrinth Walk

Our monthly Taize service on the first Sunday evening of each month, October through April, offers a soul-soothing hour of chants, silence, and candles. In addition, a portable fabric Labyrinth was set up in Fellowship Hall for people to experience before or after the Taize service.





UU CHURCH  
OF CONCORD

**Our rich and diverse worship and religious life nurtures, challenges and inspires us to daily practice of our values, lifelong learning, and transformation.**



## Contemplative Practices Group

Aligning the peace, love and compassion we aspire to find in the outer world, with the peace, love, and compassion within each of us, we offer a broad array of contemplative practices to the UU and wider communities, such as...

- New Year's Self Directed Retreat on Jan 4, 2025
- Walking in Fear Retreat with Rae Houseman on Feb 8, 2025
- Spirit Week March 23 to 30, 2025
- Weekly Monday yoga or mindfulness (read more below)

### Centered in Community: UU Yoga in Review

by Susan Casey and Craig Whitson

During the past church year, our mindful yoga program has evolved and is now called "UU Yoga". UU Yoga integrates our monthly church themes with a variety of asana (posture) practices, providing members with a unique contemplative practice.

Classes have been designed to be accessible to all, offering an ongoing series of gentle chair and mat-based sessions throughout the Church year (both in-person and on-line).

We were delighted to see consistent growth in attendance at the hour-long sessions, which are now held in the Chapel on the 1st, 3rd, and any 5th Monday of the month. These sessions offer a dedicated space for members to experience contemplation and meditation in motion, fostering both personal centering and a collective sense of community.

Thank you to everyone who joined us in exploring this intersection of physical practice and spiritual reflection. We look forward to continuing to nurture this vital program in the year ahead!





# 2025 Summer Services

June 15 - Rick Mitchell, *You Are Here*

June 22 - Barbara Keshen, *Revisiting Siddhartha*

June 29 - Rev. Dr. Nicole Kirk, *Meet the Moment* (UUA General Assembly Sunday Worship)

July 6 and 13 - no services for a summer break

July 20 - Renee West, *On Brokenness and Grace*

July 27 - Rev. Jim Curley, *A Potpourri of Prayer*

August 3 - Karen Thomas, *The Relationship Between Spirituality and Religion*

August 10 - Dan Frye, *Faith and Trust: Close Conceptual Cousins That Help Guide Our Spiritual Journeys*

August 17 - Linda Williams, *Lessons from the Serviceberry*

August 24 - Rev. Bevan C. Tulk, *The Power of Humble Inquiry*

August 31 - Susi Nord, *The Dignity of Labor*



## Earth Centered Spirituality Group

Submitted by Rich T, group leader

The Earth Centered Spirituality Group has been expanding our offerings and growing our team. Whether it be through large events like the annual Winter Solstice celebration and the Fire & Ice dance or our regular seasonal events, from our first outdoor ritual in the spring to honoring the final harvest at Samhain, we're here to serve our community throughout the year. Since last summer we've expanded our offerings to include regular full and new moon rituals, sacred circle dances, and art workshops such as creating mandalas. We even started a book club.

What really stands out is seeing how the community has grown and deepened. We love how we keep bringing in such a broad and diverse group of people, and at least one new person each time, sometimes as many as a dozen. It's been really lovely watching the care, connection and support people bring to our gatherings. In particular we have enjoyed witnessing our community become more engaged over the year and witnessing folks find their spiritual home with us.



photo at left:

Our newest banner for the Sanctuary features handprints and fingerprints from children and adults. Thank you to Jenn Star for putting the finishing touches on it.





UU CHURCH  
OF CONCORD

**We are  
grounded in our  
Unitarian  
Universalist Faith  
tradition and  
pass those  
values to the  
next generation.**

## Children's Auction

by Dory LeCount, Family Engagement Coordinator

In April the children participated in the first ever UU Children's Auction, concurrent with the Goods and Service auction happening for adults at the same time. Children were able to make "donations" in the form of play money in exchange for toys and games. Their "donations" were then backed by adult donations in support of the purchase of new furniture for the Armenia White room.



Photos on this page are from the May 2025 service, *Youthful Creativity*, led by our High School Youth Group.





# Children's Ministry

In the fall of 2024 we launched the **Young Explorers** program for 5 to 13 year olds on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Sundays of the month in addition to continuing the tradition of childcare for our youngest children in the Rainbow Room every Sunday morning.

Led by two staff members, the Young Explorers program gives children the opportunity to spend time playing together while creatively exploring, through crafts and games, some of the same topics adults explore during worship.

During the summer months, on the 3rd Sunday of the month, **Summer Smoothies** invited children 5-13 years old to learn about different cultures and religions through stories and new smoothie recipes each session. This was part of the Summer Passport program which included other events like a Fairy and Fae Solstice Party, a scavenger hunt, and Christmas in July.



This page was written by Dory LeCount. Dory joined the staff as Young Explorers Guide in October 2024, and was promoted to Family Engagement Coordinator in February 2025 to support and expand our offerings for families.



Above: Family Covenant Group, a unique Covenant Group that offers dinner and childcare

## Pancakes, Play, and Planting Peace

Pancakes, Play, and Planting Peace continued to provide children and families with a monthly time of gathering for pancakes and service projects, and to deepen their relationships with one another and the church.

## First Annual Family Meet & Greet Breakfast January 5, 2025

The first Family Meet and Greet Breakfast was held to gather families all in one place, provide a meal for children and adults before the worship service, and to hear from families about the ups and downs of their experience with the church in hopes of learning how the community can better serve them. Check out our family photo below!







UU CHURCH  
OF CONCORD

**We focus our outreach ministries to make a noticeable impact in the larger community.**

## UU Friends of Refugees

Since forming in 2008, the UU Church of Concord has formed 17 circles of support for newly arrived refugees from a variety of countries. The process changed this year. Working through Welcome Corp, in December 2024 we were certified as a Private Sponsor Group to be matched with refugees. Then in January 2025, our Circle 17 welcomed a Venezuelan family, and supported them as they settled in Concord.



To make a noticeable impact, we focus on three issues:

### homelessness

- hosted homeless families through [Family Promise](#)
- donated \$1000 annually to Family Promise
- donated \$1000 annually to [Concord Coalition to End Homelessness](#)
- provided up to \$175 monthly for clients at the [Homeless Resource Center](#) to access transportation
- cooked a monthly meal at the [Friendly Kitchen](#)

### environment

- our solar array generated enough electricity to meet 100% of our needs
- brought in a recycling dumpster for the first time
- managed our property with ecology in mind
- hosted [WindowDressers](#)

### refugees and immigration

- collaborated with [Project STORY](#) on field trips for new American children
- formed a circle of support for a newly resettled refugee family
- hosted Deepawali celebration



# Unitarian Benevolent Fund

The UU Church of Concord is pleased to administer the Unitarian Benevolent Fund, which was established in 2022 as an unrestricted, Board-designated fund to provide support to “the poor and indigent women and children in the Concord community and those UUCC members who are housebound due to age, illness or disability.” In 2024, the UBF made grants to these organizations:

- Backpack Program \$500
- Equality Health Center \$808
- Family Promise \$500
- Reproductive Freedom Fund of NH \$800
- Concord Human Svcs Teen Xmas Fund \$800



# Community Plate

- **A grand total of \$38,074 was collected in church year 2024-25!**
- Of this total, \$30,719 was sent out to other non-profits selected by our Community Plate Committee.
- Nine of the plates were designated as Outreach Offerings. These plates totaled \$7,355, which was used for our church's community service efforts such as Family Promise and UU Friends of Refugees.
- 112 individuals or families contributed to one or more plates (not including unidentified cash donations)
- The average weekly collection (excluding summer) was \$809.

Thank you to Deb Bruss, who stepped down as Community Plate Committee chair, after leading the Community Plate for 13 years.

Deb wrote, “At the end of the year, I passed the Community Plate baton to Cathy Menard who grabbed it and ran full tilt into the current year. If she tripped or floundered, I didn't witness it. Since Cathy continues to pick up the pace, I wonder if she has a few tricks up her sleeve. But who am I to judge? Thank you, Cathy! I know you'll continue to make our congregation proud of supporting many worthy causes.”

# Sharing our Building with the Community

Concord UUs are often involved in non-church organizations or projects that have missions that reflect one or more church Ends statements. Church members and pledging friends looking for space for a group that is in alignment with our Ends statements, may apply to use the church building for free or a reduced rate. Community Partners that were approved or used our space this year included:

- PFLAG | monthly meetings
- CASA of NH | monthly volunteer meetings
- Third Act Central NH | monthly meetings
- NH Sierra Club | NH 10 Year Energy Strategy
- NH Peace Action | Peacekeeper Trainings
- AFSC | Annual Meeting

**We are full and active participants in the work of both the Greater Concord Faith Community and the larger Unitarian Universalist community.**

## Greater Concord Interfaith Council

Submitted by Rev. Suzanne Rude,  
UU Representative

Council representatives from over 20 faith communities meet monthly to support community outreach, mutual education, and shared interfaith programs.

The Council held an Interfaith Thanksgiving program for the community at which Council representative and church member Linda Williams spoke, as well as five Lenten Lunches with speakers.

Photo below: Rev. Suzanne Rude and Rik Yeames at the CROP Hunger Walk. The Walk raised over \$14,000 for local food pantries and resource development efforts.



## UUA Annual Program Fund

Our church's 2024-25 contribution to the Unitarian Universalist Association was the full requested amount of \$30,317, earning us the status of Leadership Congregation, designating us among the fifty highest contributing Honor Congregations each fiscal year.

## Downing Grant

Lewis Downing, an early member of the Unitarian Church in Concord, established a trust with instructions that some of its proceeds must be distributed annually to "strengthen the societies of the Unitarian faith in New Hampshire." In the past, a subcommittee of the Board of Trustees, led by the Treasurer, administered the grant process. In 2025 this responsibility shifted to the Operations Leadership Team (OLT), as it was deemed an operational matter (not a governance matter.)

The OLT decided to award grants to intern ministers serving NH, and to UU Action NH. Furthermore, they decided that going forward, grants going should be given to attract incoming interns to NH, not as a surprise to outgoing interns, as has happened in the past. Therefore these grants to interns will be paid in the fall, not in the spring. The total awarded in 2025 was \$17,886.



**Unitarian Universalist  
Action New Hampshire**

UU Action NH is the statewide social justice platform for UU congregations, members, and partners. Our church hosted the Annual Meeting of UU Action NH, featuring a program entitled *Equity and Justice in a Changing Climate*.





**We recognize,  
understand, and  
build bridges to  
dismantle systems  
of bias, oppression,  
and privilege within  
ourselves, our  
congregation, our  
community, and the  
larger world.**



Friends of Refugees Circle 17 children



Youth Group cleans up homeless camp

## Building Beloved Community Beyond the Binary

In collaboration with the Nashua UU church, our church was a host site for "Building Beloved Community Beyond the Binary" (BBCBB) on Saturday, April 26, 2025. BBCBB was a collaborative, multi-site, justice-making event: a day of creating community with transgender, nonbinary folx, and our allies. This conference was an opportunity for LGBTQIA+ folx in our local communities to gather, laugh, create joy, and find partnerships in our local communities, and for folks not in the LGBTQIA+ community to learn effective, appropriate allyship through a Unitarian Universalist lens. The keynote speaker, Spencer Bergstedt, is a consultant, public speaker, educator, and author specializing in LGBTQ workplace, health care, and educational inclusion issues.



Deepawali Celebration hosted in our Fellowship Hall



**We live in harmony  
with the Earth and act  
to care for the  
interdependent web of  
existence of which we  
are a part.**



## Ecological Land Management (ELM)

submitted by Laurel Horne for the ELM Steering Committee: Andy Duncan, Dana Sansom, Fran Philippe, Laurel Horne, Nancy Wills, Nancy Wood

The ELM steering committee worked hard but joyfully, in close collaboration with the Grounds and Memorial Garden committees, as well as the Green Sanctuary committee, on several projects related to the wonderful section of earth (18+acres!) we steward.

- Hosted 2 regular workdays each month during the growing season (usually 2nd Thurs AM and 4th Sunday after service) focused on removal of invasive plants. We dug up a lot of non-native invasives!
- Organized an area for on-site composting of UU Kitchen recyclables, wrote up instructions and trained volunteers
- Established area for managing church brush and compostables
- Provided information about the importance and availability of native plants at the spring plant sale, and sold some native plants provided by Foundwell Farm
- Tested the soil in the front lawn in preparation for possible meadow/native plantings
- Sent ELM emails regarding upcoming activities and webinars of interest
- Interviewed landscaper Michelle Fischer and worked with her to assist with Memorial Garden maintenance
- Met with ecological forester Matthias Nevins, and developed an outline for the forest and grounds visionary plan that will benefit wildlife and humans
- Presented to OLT regarding funding needs for forest vision plan
- Hosted a community luncheon with Green Sanctuary
- Led 2 Second Hour nature walks in the woods for the congregation
- Purchased and planted native plants for native plant entry garden

## Grounds Committee

submitted by Dana Sansom and Fran Philippe, Co-Chairs

Yearly projects are the all-church grounds clean-ups in fall and spring. We had leaves blown and raked around the church and in the parking lot; gardens cleaned; the brook along the west boundary cleaned; the lilac garden cleaned and pruned; the Emerson entrance cleaned; the yews along the solar array trimmed - and more. Grounds gratitude to all who participated.

On the fourth Sundays of the month, and the second Thursday, spring to fall, Grounds and the Ecological Land Management team (ELM) worked together mostly to eliminate invasive plants on our church property. Fourteen different species have been identified on UU grounds, with the most prevalent being Autumn Olive, Bittersweet, Callery Pear, Burning Bush, and Bristly Locust. This is a continuing process that would welcome more volunteers. Plans are to replace those invasive plants with native and naturalized species. Grounds and ELM also worked with the Memorial Garden Committee and a landscaper to rejuvenate the Memorial Garden,





# Green Sanctuary

by Margaret Fletcher, lead for the Green Sanctuary Steering Group

The 2024-2025 church year brought new activity and some good successes for the Green Sanctuary teams! We celebrate the new End that the Board of Trustees adopted this year: **We live in harmony with the Earth and act to care for the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part.** Many, many congregants are providing leadership and action in these efforts. We hope each of us can do more and more to live in greater harmony with our Mother Earth. Here are some of the many church efforts we celebrate this church year:

The Ecological Land Management team progressed on many important goals they hold for us: education around ecological land management practices and responsible land stewardship; working with our church land to bring it ever closer to its native habitat; developing a viable organic waste management plan for the church.

A new Environmental/Climate Resource List has been developed and published on the church's website, a place for all church members to identify how they might best serve the Earth's needs at this critical time.

The Plastics Reduction team streamlined plastics collection, measurement and delivery for Trex transformation and toward encouraging reduction in single-use plastics.

This year a new effort began, the Green Legislative ADVocacy (GLAD) team. The team set up a process to encourage our congregants' participation in the democratic process to reduce carbon fuel usage, increase renewable energy sources and advocate for conservation and responsible land use in the state of NH.

The WindowDressers effort was begun in 2024, designed to provide low/no cost insulating window inserts to community members who need help reducing their carbon footprint and making their homes cozier and warmer for their families. The team tried out the build process at the Canterbury build and did a great deal of fundraising, training, customer development and home measuring trips, to prepare for our first upcoming build in the fall. (photo top left)

The Geothermal team completed consulting reviews and determined that the best approach for now is to identify building upgrades to make our space more energy efficient.

Hearing the Songs of the Wind Meditation Retreat with Lama Liz encouraged us to attune our hearts and minds to the great living resource of our Mother Earth.

Lastly, during the In Harmony with the Earth Sunday Service for Earth Day, we were each encouraged to identify our prayers for the Earth and determine how we can put our faith into action to benefit all living beings who share this planet. (photo top right)





The 2024-25 Yearbook was edited and designed by Lea Smith.

Unitarian Universalist Church of Concord  
274 Pleasant Street  
Concord, NH 03301  
(603) 224-0291  
[www.concorduu.org](http://www.concorduu.org)

