



The Flaming Chalice

The newsletter of The Unitarian Universalist Community Church
69 Winthrop Street ~ PO Box 8 ~ Augusta, ME 04332-0008

Fall 2024

The Flaming Chalice Newsletter

Newsletters have been a major part of the Unitarian and Universalist congregations in Augusta for generations to give a picture of what is occurring in the congregation. They are current documents when they are written, showing where we are going, and historic documents as we reflect on where we have been.

In September 2018, the Board of Trustees voted to change the newsletter in significant ways.

First, the newsletter moved from being published monthly to three times a year. The fall (October) Flaming Chalice newsletter is an invitation for committees and groups to share their startup activities of the new church year. The winter (February) newsletter will focus on how our work and ministries are evolving during this church year. The spring (June) Flaming Chalice will be the Annual Report with a focus on the Story of Our Church Year.

Second, the focus of the content moved from a record of activities and actions to more in-depth articles on our congregational life and outreach. We ask the writers to consider a perspective that draws us into deeper consideration of our church community as they write their articles.

For this fall edition, we asked committees and groups to *identify up to three top messages that they want the UUCC and broader communities to know about the ministry of their group*. The responses will be part of our “common collective” in this newsletter, on the website and in other places and ways we make our Unitarian Universalist faith known. Our hope is to broaden our reach and deepen our commitments.”

We did not give a specific format for the messages in this edition, but please note the responses as you read the articles and work with Rev. Donna Dolham in developing a “common collective” of the messages this year. Please also consider what messages you want to share about the UUCC community.

Third, with the changes noted above, we have been increasing the writership from all parts of the congregation. This is increasingly important as we are a community that is evolving and in a new phase of becoming a Beloved Community. We are all part of the community!

The Communications Work Group welcomes you to this newsletter! Enjoy!!

Worship at UUCC

Join us for these traditional services over the next few months.

Sunday, November 3rd: Music Sunday [Orchestra and Choir will be facilitating this special service]

Sunday, November 24th: The Open Table [Choir will be present]

Tuesday, December 10th: Quiet Refuge Service

Tuesday, December 24th: Hope in the Holidays [Orchestra and Choir will be present]

Sunday, December 29th: A way forward in the New Year

Minister's message

Finding the Path Together

August 1st marks the beginning of the shared ministry that you've called me into! Wow! It feels like yesterday when you called me to serve as your next settled minister. What a joy it is to find the path forward with all of you. Together we will navigate the ongoing possibilities of what it means to be a community church in Augusta, Maine. As we continue to develop structures to support growth, we will remain focused on weaving UUCC's covenant and commitment to the 8th Principle into all we create.

Every week we have new people arriving at UUCC! Some join us on Saturday or Sunday. Others join the orchestra or choir and still others participate in yoga or the sewing group to name just a few. There are people of all ages! In some ways we are prepared and in other ways we are not yet prepared. Some join us in person and some online! As we continue to prepare for growth, there are some areas of focus to tend to.

This fall and winter will include calling together the new personnel committee, which will be made up of three folks and myself. The committee will develop a covenant and mission for the work ahead. As we look at updating policies and making recommendations for procedures the committee will keep UUCC's values in mind.

The budget for 2024/2025 includes a position for a 5 hour a week Religious Education Coordinator. The focus of this role will be to offer a multi-aged child experience on Sunday mornings while helping to organize the revitalization of our nursery care. Please reach out to me if you'd like to participate in preparing for this revitalization. Some projects include, re-creating the family sanctuary room [Robins Room, behind the sanctuary] and going through and developing UU and UUCC materials for children to use during Sunday services as well as cleaning up and out and updating the nursey space! UUCC has not had a Life Span Faith Development Committee/Team the last couple of years. If you are interested in serving on this team, please reach out to me.

Administratively, Lynn Smith and I continue to explore ways to function efficiently while supporting a sustainable volunteer structure. Our work together includes some balcony work regarding the administrative tasks of a growing and full congregation. Lynn's portfolio is changing as she takes on some of the tasks of the volunteer treasurer. Nancy Fritz, UUCC's treasurer, will be fulling her service this year and it is vitally important that we transition some of the work that she has been doing to the paid staff in the effort to create ongoing sustainability. It is a bit of a domino effect requiring that some of Lynn's previous tasks be eliminated, adjusted or transitioned to volunteers. I ask that you bear with us as we navigate this time of change together. These shifts often require hours of invisible work to set up alternative structures in addition to training people to take over new ways of doing "Church."

A special note of thanks to the Installation Team, Martha Naber, Nan Bell and Nancy Fritz. And thank you to Michael Atkinson, Dir. of UUCC's Orchestra and Bridget Convey, UUCC's Music Director, and all the musicians who are sharing their gifts for this upcoming Celebration of Shared Ministry and Installation! May the covenant we commit to hold our shared ministry through joy and challenges.

Please reach out if you have questions, wonderings or pastoral needs. As we move through this adventure together, I invite you to notice the beauty, pause to drink in the small and vibrant experiences that love unfolds. May we travel the path in covenant and peace.

Love and Light,
Rev. Donna Dolham, she, her



UUC Board of Trustees

At our August Retreat, we homed in on seven areas of focus that will be further developed as the year progresses. We list them here in no particular order of importance.

1. Maintain our Physical Plant for safety and comfort
2. Continue to invest in Safety & Security measures
3. Expand and restructure our pastoral care ministry
4. Expand our community engagement (internal & external)
5. Support the Leadership Development Team in their task in developing congregational leaders
6. Explore children & youth ministry
7. Embed our Covenant throughout our church community

In the spirit of shared ministry and community building, this year the Board is inviting leaders involved in the areas listed above to meet and discuss their goals, ideas, and needs with us.

At the October Board meeting, we engaged with Kathy Shaw of the Leadership Development Team about the work she and Hilary Neckles are undertaking. Together, we will frame leadership as a form of ministry. In Kathy's words, our focus on Leadership Development will ask "new recruits to lean into leadership as ministry; leadership is inspiring and offers deep connections to our community." (To see more of this philosophy on Leadership Development, see Kathy's remarks to the Board on the Bulletin Board in the Church Lobby.)

The Board also discussed with Buildings & Grounds Co-Chairs Bill Allen and Matt Foust priorities they foresee tackling over the next year. During the discussion, the Board decided it was necessary to immediately close the ramp to the Judd House so that necessary repairs may be made. The Board is grateful to Bill and Matt for making this a priority.

At November's Board meeting, Deb Mattson, Social Justice Chair will share her insights and observations based almost two years of the Saturday morning breakfast with our community of unhoused or marginally housed neighbors. This multi-faith effort is one way that our community puts our UU values into action.

We look forward to meeting with leadership throughout the rest of this year and, as always, all members are welcome to attend all Board Meetings.

Michaela Loisel, Board President

Board Members:

Michaela Loisel, President

Karen Allen, Vice-President

Cheryl Ring, Clerk

Nancy Fritz, Treasurer

Harry Grimmnitz, Finance Chair

Hal Booth, Member-At-Large

Jim Caldwell, Member-At-Large



MUSIC AT THE UCC Fall 2024

By Bridget Convey, UCC Music Director

It is definitely an exciting season at the UCC! The choir and orchestra have been rehearsing and preparing for Rev. Donna Dolham’s Installation service and celebration on October 26th, and our very special Music Sunday service which will take place one month earlier than in previous years, on November 3rd. Mark your

calendars!

Our music program is flourishing, we are so fortunate to have so many talented musicians offering their time to our church community. Michael Atkinson has brought a fresh and committed approach to leading our orchestra, and he continues to recruit new musicians into the ensemble. Our choir is growing, and their enthusiasm and dedication is inspiring.

For the first time in over ten years, together the choir and orchestra will be enriching our Christmas Eve service. They will feature a wonderful piece by Joni Mitchell and holiday favorites.

Our strong music program has been an integral part of our worship and community. Here are a few messages our choir members would like to convey to our community regarding our music ministry:

“Being part of and singing with the choir is one of my greatest pleasures at UCC.”

“Rehearsals are fun! We laugh almost as much as we sing.”

“We are loyal, hard-working, love our leader and accompanist, like the choir anthems chosen, strive to convey the message of our anthems to the congregation.”

“You do not need to be able to read music or have experience singing in a group. We have So.Much.Fun(!!!)”

“Our choir is a joyful community. I love being among the singers as we laugh, exercise our voices, and learn to express our music more deeply each week.”

“Besides being great fun, music with everyone is spiritual and has the power to bring us all together in deeper and mysterious ways.”

“Joyful! Joyful! Joyful! I look forward to rehearsals each week.”

“Choir is a gift, and it is sort of like its own special Small Group Ministry.”

“I feel like I can learn and grow in a safe atmosphere.”

“The power of music flows through us all-spirituality.”

The UCC choir and orchestra are eager to share music with you that will lift your spirits and invigorate your hearts and minds. We are always welcoming new members! If interested or have questions, please email Bridget Convey at: musicdirector@augustauu.org

More musical updates from:

Michael P. Atkinson, UUCC Occasional Orchestra Director

I'm honored to begin my second season leading the UUCCOO! This Fall, we will contribute music to the Installation service for Rev. Donna, Music Sunday, and Christmas Eve, featuring traditional orchestral standards, new arrangements I've made of music by women composers, and a wide assortment of popular songs/hymns which we'll play with the UUCC Choir. News of our little orchestra has found its way around the musical community in greater Augusta, and we now have a handful of new and eager members. We look forward to sharing our music with you throughout the season!

I'm also very excited to announce the UUCC Community Concert Series! This is a relaunch of a concert series which existed pre-pandemic, and the time is right to bring it back.

With the support and guidance of UUCC Music Director Bridget Convey, Rev. Donna Dolham, and the Board, the series will feature small ensemble concerts in the UUCC Sanctuary featuring local artists from many genres and musical traditions.

Our first program will take place on April 22, 2025. I will join forces on French Horn with UUCCOO collaborative pianist Morgan Lee, Augusta Symphony concertmaster Ryu Mitsuhashi, and bassoonist and UMaine professor Dr. Lindsey Wiehl to perform a selection of works for mixed chamber ensembles, including Brahms' Horn Trio.

This musical ministry will be self-sustaining by donations made by individuals to the UUCC. Your donations will cover musician fees, piano tuning, and associated logistical costs. We plan to keep admission free of charge as a gift to the community, so if you have the means, we welcome any amount of support. Please join us in April, and stay tuned for details on the 2025-26 season!

Building and Grounds Committee

Fall Notes from Buildings and Grounds

- Part of the linden tree came down this summer. I expect that the city will cut it down sometime this fall. One of our church members has offered to pay for a new tree, in the same area.
- Last year the sewer line in the Drew House got plugged, and we had a big mess in the cellar. To address the issue, we hired Augusta Fuel to replace the sewer drain. They put in the new drain on October 3.
- Marilyn removed the leaves from the compost pile, and dug up the roots which were under the pile.
- The annual leaf raking has been scheduled for Sat. Nov. 2 from 9am – Noon with a rain date of Sat. Nov. 9th.
- Bill replaced the batteries in the doorbell speaker, which is next to the door to the fellowship storage room.
- The Judd House ramp has been closed temporarily, due to safety concerns. Bill has secured the loose rail. Matt, Bill and Angie Blevins will work on the underlying support structure next week.
- Matt, Bill, and Hal Booth participated in a walk through at the Drew House, to see what we should fix before new tenants move in.

Bill Allen and Matt Foust, Co-chairs

Committee on SHARED Ministry

Ministry is another word for the life of this congregation. What we do here is all in service to one another. The Committee on Shared Ministry has been created to provide an ongoing process of evaluation of our ministries so that we know how we are doing.

Each month of the church year the committee will meet with one of our ministries. Using carefully constructed questions, we will explore with each group how they fit into the life of the church and what changes they may choose to make as they serve. The notes that are taken will form an evaluation of the group. By the end of the year, we will have a document that describes nine of our ministries.

The document we create will be valuable for each group as well as other leaders in the church. It will provide ongoing documentation of what is happening within and without our walls.

Our first focus will be creating the questions we will use. Then we will reach out and schedule meetings with the groups we have chosen. This is a new committee with a new mission, so we expect that we will adapt our process over time so that it continues to serve our church community.

We are excited!

Kathy Kellison, Chair

Communications Work Group

The Communications Work Group was established in 2016 by the Board of Trustees to address the goal: "We are a congregation that is transparent in its decisions and actions. We strive for communication that is abundant, clear, compassionate, and inclusive."

Communication is a key factor in how well our church works. Publicity about the events, ongoing activities; and what is happening within the community is shared through the twice-monthly E-Blasts, the three Newsletters each year, announcements, and special communications. We all are part of ongoing communication by our presence, sharing, listening and contributing in community life.

Messages from Communications Ministry

We were asked to share messages that we want the community here at UUCC and the broader community to know about the ministry of our group. Communication is a shared ministry:

Communication through the calendar: With the growth of the congregation in size and diversity, we are ever aware of the need for connections, opportunities and support to participate in the community. The calendar on the website has been reformatted to be easier to read. Awareness of how we all can help with communication is a ministry and covenantal process. Shared needs, shared space.

How Our Church Works: This is a critical document for a vibrant community. It encourages us to be part of the community, to share celebrations and challenges, and to work together in changing and enhancing our community.

Communication of involvement: More people are more involved in more ways in the work and mission of the community. Share your connection with the community, invite others to join you and let others know the opportunities that you can create together.

Communication Work Group Activity

We are the current chapter of our history!

The Communications Work Group meets monthly. We are excited about the events that are occurring, the involvement of the community, and attention that is given to communications in all of its forms.

Communications Work Group: Kathy Kellison; Lynn Smith, Administrator; Helen Zidowecki, Chair.

Congregational Engagement Team

Happy Fall from the Congregational Engagement Team (CET). Wait, who are we? We are the reincarnation of the Restorative Justice Committee (RJC).

As you may recall, the Board appointed the RJC, and it started meeting in the summer of 2021. Our charge was to follow up on recommendations made by Rev. Paul Langston-Daley following his Listening Circles in May, 2021. These two congregational gatherings allowed members and friends of UUCG to speak to our two-years of community conflicts in a structured, compassionate manner. Rev. Paul's resulting, comprehensive report began the work of the RJC.

The hallmark work of the last year and a half has been the development of our congregational covenant and a series of monthly, topical, and intimate Sharing Cafés. Our goals are to be in a more loving place, accessing our deeper levels of spiritual health and embracing our beloved community.

Rev. Paul will be back to serve in our pulpit sometime this winter, after having delivered to us a profoundly healing service on October 29, 2023 following the mass shooting in Lewiston earlier that week. Following a service this winter, he will offer another session looking at covenant, conflicts, and where we need to go moving forward.

So back to our new name: CET, why that and why did we all carry over from the work of last year? We work well together with a shared commitment to congregational healing. We want to serve, and we look for input from the congregation. We are looking forward to working with and/or assisting the Board in their larger goal of broadening outreach into the congregation.

The Sharing Cafes will definitely continue. They will now be scheduled for the second Sunday of the month. In the next two months you can look forward to discussions about: the joys or concerns over UUCG's work with the unhoused; and learning skills for dealing with episodes when the covenant is "bent" or "broken". We are exploring how to develop guidelines for other church groups wanting to "use a Sharing Café slot" and exploring how the Sharing Café model can be used for leadership development. Lastly, we want to ensure that Sharing Café's explore deep spiritual grounding along with their given content.

We have some other ideas too that we are beginning to flesh out during our monthly meetings. We continue to be a work in process ... that's a good thing ... and look forward to continuing to serve.

The Congregational Engagement Team,
Rev. Donna Dolham, Michaela Loisel, Susan Claska Burnett, June Zellers, and Kathy Ann Shaw

Covenant Engagement Team

Background: This Team began as an ad hoc group charged to implement the recommendations of an outsider facilitator who worked with our congregation in the spring of 2022. Together with the congregation, we helped to create our UUCC Covenant so that we could be intentional, thoughtful, and caring about our relationships with one another. Last year, we approved the language of the Covenant. This year, we are practicing what it means to live the promises we have made by doing so. Paying attention to how we are in community with one another reflects our central UU Value of Love.

Current Project: Our small team is excited about this year's plan to engage fully with and grow into our Covenant. But to paraphrase from a 12-Step motto: It will only work IF YOU work it!

Each month our congregation as a whole and our members individually will be called to engage deeply with one Covenant promise. Thus, there is both a public and a private dimension to this work. Here's what we've seen so far.

The *September promise* was to: "Display and recite these promises to each other on a regular basis, exploring them in our hearts and mind and refer to them when difficulties arise." We saw various versions of the Covenant appear throughout our building, reminding us of this promise, and encouraged each of you to display the Covenant somewhere in your home.

The *October promise* is to: "Listen to each other with intention and curiosity and respond thoughtfully." We offered tips in the E-Blast about listening (which really is a mindfulness practice). And we had a wonderful worship service on 10/13 focused on deep listening.

In *November*, we will explore what it means to: "Forgive ourselves and others when we do not live up to this Covenant and begin again in love." More on this in the next E-Blast.

As part of the public practice, all leaders of the church have been encouraged to weave each month's promise into their interactions as leaders. For instance, Committee Chairs and Small Groups are encouraged to invite members to include a reflection on their experience with the current Covenant promise as part of their usual check-in. Small Groups may see discussion questions based on one of the Covenant promises. And the promises may surface in Lectio Divina, and are recited as part of Sunday worship. In fact, we invite everyone to engage creatively with the Covenant in all church settings.

Privately, all members are encouraged to weave each month's promise into their spiritual practice. We really want to hear about your experience.

In fellowship,
Michaela Loisel and June Zellers

Eighth Principle Task Force

Notes from the Board Vice-President and 8th Principle Task Force

I am five months into my new role as your Board Vice-President and they have been busy ones!

As VP I also chair the Committee of Committees and convene the 8th Principle Task Force. The Committee of Committees gathers UUCC lay leaders and interested community members to share information and consider how we all contribute to the work of the church. At our meeting on September 29, twenty of us talked about what is new in each of our areas of responsibility and shared what would be helpful from the church and each other. You will be hearing from some of those leaders elsewhere in the newsletter. We also talked about moving forward on implementing the 8th Principle.

If you are newer to UUCC you may not be familiar with the 8th Principle, which states: "We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions." This Principle has been adopted by many UU congregations, including UUCC at our Annual Meeting in June 2023. The Task Force was established by the Board this year to help the UUCC community implement the 8th Principle. Members of the Task Force besides myself include Hilary Neckles, Martha Naber, and Jamez Riot.

The idea of "Beloved Community" is at the heart of the 8th Principle. The term was popularized by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during the Civil Rights Movement. As described at www.8thprincipleuu.org, "Beloved Community happens when people of diverse racial, ethnic, educational, class, gender, abilities, sexual orientation backgrounds/identities come together in an interdependent relationship of love, mutual respect, and care that seeks to realize justice within the community and in the broader world."

The 8th Principle recognizes that realizing Beloved Community requires action. Many at UUCC have already been active in supporting social justice. As one example, Saturday morning breakfast has become an important ministry here. However, there is more to do toward building a truly diverse, multicultural Beloved Community. The Task Force encourages everyone to look at UUCC and all we do here "through a multicultural lens." We plan to help that process visually with displays of photos and banners that demonstrate UUCC's commitment to actions that "accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions." We will continue working with the Committee of Committees and others on further action.

Implementing the 8th Principle will be a long-term process; such transformation doesn't happen overnight. Those of us on the Task Force do not see ourselves as experts -- we will be learning along with all of you -- but we are committed to the work, and we aim to help with resources and encouragement to engage in the process. We look forward to sharing the journey with you.

Submitted by: Karen Allen, Vice President, UUCC Board of Trustees

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee has oversight of multiple areas of the church's fiscal health.

Finance:

- A balanced budget was presented to the congregation and unanimously approved at the Annual Meeting.
- The Committee recommended and the Board approved providing tuition assistance to members representing UUCC as delegates to the UUA General Assembly.
- The Committee recommended and the Board approved transferring \$3,655 in unspent money from our new, settled minister's moving expenses into a Sabbatical fund. This money will defray expenses the church will incur for ministerial services when our minister qualifies for and takes a sabbatical.
- UUCC was reimbursed \$17,000 by Maine Emergency Management Agency for work already completed under our federal security upgrade grant.
- The Committee completed our semi-annual financial review and found no issues.
- The Committee reviewed our rental agreement for Drew House with the Capital Area New Mainers Project.
 - The current tenants will be moving out the end of October.
 - We will utilize the month of November to make necessary repairs to the house.
 - The new lease will:
 - Increase the rent to \$1,300 a month
 - Make the tenant responsible for all snow removal.
 - Clearly specify that there will be a minimum of two semi-annual walk through inspections of the house conducted jointly with CANMP

- The Committee reviewed and recommended changes that the Board approved to our fiscal agent agreements with the United Community Living Center and MUSSAN (see below).
- The Committee is working to formulate changes that will simplify the job of the church volunteer Treasurer. This job now requires nearly ten (10) hours a week of time and highly specialized skills and is no longer compatible with a volunteer position.
 - The Committee recommended and the Board approved directing MUUSAN to obtain their own 501(c)(3) status, relieving our treasurer of oversight for that account.
 - The United Community Living Center has received their 501(c)(3) status and will soon be off of our fiscal agent oversight.
 - Rev. Dolham, our church administrator, and our treasurer have been meeting regularly to make changes allowing our church administrator to take on a number of jobs currently assigned to the treasurer.

Invested Funds:

- The Committee compared our return on investments between the UUA Common Endowment Fund (UUACEF) and the Maine Community Foundation (MCF).
 - The UUACEF consistently underperformed the MCF by 2-3%.
 - Much of this difference seems to be due to the UUA fund making heavier investments in minority and women owned businesses which are frequently smaller and do not provide as much of a financial return.
 - The Committee and the Board weighed our fiduciary obligation to optimize the financial return on investments with our commitment to our UU principles.
 - The Board voted to transfer \$100,000 from our endowment with the UUACEF into a new endowment fund with the MCF and to maintain \$225,000 with the UUACEF.
 - All future repayments of our solar farm self-loan will be paid into the MCF endowment.
- An email from the Social Justice Committee prompted a review of our endowment investments in fossil fuels.
 - We reached out to both the UUACEF and the MCF for information on how much of our endowment portfolio is invested in fossil fuels.
 - Neither endowment account has any direct investment in fossil fuel related stocks. Both endowment accounts are invested in mutual funds.
 - The MCF reported that 4.5% of our endowment is invested in fossil fuel related investments and that 4.1% is invested in alternative energy investments.
 - The UUACEF reported that 0.921% of our endowment is invested in fossil fuels.
 - The UUACEF also noted that they are active mutual fund investors voting all of their proxy shares and introducing resolutions at shareholder meetings to influence climate change decisions.
 - As noted above, the Finance Committee and the Board recently reviewed the UUACEF's mission and practice and voted to maintain a significant portion of our endowment with them because of the numerous ways they live and reflect our UU values in their investment strategies. We believe that these positive practices outweigh any concerns about divesting from the UUACEF.

Fundraising:

- The Spring Auction and work crew sale raised \$8,500.
- The tomato/plant sale exceeded expectations and raised \$1,128.
- The Hannaford card program raised over \$4,000. If you haven't participated, you should talk with any of the many members of our church community who do.
- The Committee reviewed the spring Yard Sale and determined that it takes an enormous amount of volunteer hours for the amount of fundraising that results.
 - We will not hold an annual yard sale.
 - As an alternative, Tom Waddell and Marilyn Dunn have volunteered to accept items worth >\$35 and offer them online with the proceeds going to UUCC.

Stewardship:

- The spring Stewardship campaign was a tremendous success.

- A record \$180,280 was pledged by 81 pledge units.

Planned Giving:

- The Planned Giving sub-committee has been renamed the Planned Giving and Legacy sub-committee.
 - They will work with the Worship Committee to periodically spotlight past benefactors and ministers of the Augusta Unitarian and Universalist churches.
 - They are working on creating a trifold brochure of the UUCC Guide to Holistic Stewardship to distribute to the community.

The Finance Committee:

Betty & Terry Cairn – Stewardship
 Marilyn Dunn – Invested Funds
 Karen Foust & Nan Bell – Fundraising
 Nancy Fritz – Treasurer
 Harry Grimmnitz – Chair
 Marsha Stone– Member at Large
 June Zellers – Planned Giving & Legacy

Global Hospitality Committee

In September, at the beginning of the church year, the Global Hospitality Committee launched a new, experimental pilot program with goals of building community, and providing opportunities for all members to offer service and make new connections at UUCC.

Individuals were randomly selected from the Directory to host Fellowship Hour in groups of four. Then they were notified, mostly by email unless they didn't use it, a few weeks before the dates for which they had been chosen. One of the four was designated as the "lead," someone who had experience with fellowship hour, and who was familiar with the kitchen and all the tasks involved in organizing, setting up, serving food and beverages, decorating, and cleaning up.

After six weeks, the feedback is very positive. Here is a sample of remarks received from participants:

"I think it is a great idea and not so overwhelming for folks who never did fellowship hour before; I very much enjoyed participating in coffee hour! It was a good experience and a great way to connect with fellow members. I think it is a great idea to get others involved so that the duties don't always fall on the same people. With everyone taking a turn, it becomes something to look forward to. It's a good idea to give people the option rather than feeling they don't have a choice-- and more people will want to participate."

"I very much enjoyed being part of a team and sharing the responsibility with others. Appreciate the sign you post that acknowledges those participating. Luckily, K. knew how to make coffee - a skill I have no interest in acquiring - and I know how to run the dishwasher. J. provided lovely brownies and dishwasher assistance - perhaps coffee too, I wasn't watching. We all know each other pretty well . . . "

"I think the new 'Experiment' is a good idea and should be continued. Our "skills" complemented each other well and as you say, it is good to have the chance to work with someone you have not worked with before and get to know them a bit better. The coffee maker is not a high level skill needed machine but it is a little intimidating the first few times you use it and same with the dishwasher. So, it is a good idea to have someone in the group or at least assisting who has done the kitchen work before."

"This is a very nice follow up email that you send out. Thank you for all you're doing for this behemoth that is the coffee fellowship coordination role."

“I was pleased to see that my response was welcomed and I felt on equal footing with the others on the team. Coffee hour was perfect and all looked lovely and inviting. I will always be willing to help, as long as it doesn't require me to stand on my feet too long.”

The program has not been without wrinkles and challenges, however. For example, people simply don't respond to the initial email(s); one team apparently did not understand that the dishwasher must have a final run to get rid of food that has fallen off the dishes; and one team did all the dishes by hand because it turned out that they didn't understand how to run the dishwasher (despite posted directions on the wall in front of it).

Here is some additional feedback:

“The only challenge I foresee is the challenge that existed before. Filling the slots with folks doesn't guarantee that's going to happen. Life happens, and it's filled with unexpected challenges or prearranged events. I mostly suspect that's why slots were so difficult to fill before the new plan. I was fortunate that my calendar was clear for that Sunday and I was also fortunate to find two other people who could make it. I have to say, a few months ago I signed up for fellowship coffee but no one else had. I went in that Sunday and figured I'd be working alone. Lo and behold two of my friends said they saw I was solo so they showed up to help. So there you have it, I really have no opinion on the matter because there will be challenges either way. I can say that having designated teams didn't make it any easier than my previous time. Of course I'm not on the managing end of things, I just show up. Quite possibly designating teams might be easier for someone and if that's the case then it's a better choice!”

“I think the idea is great and very workable. I know there are some who may want/need to be excluded for various reasons. Maybe it could be mentioned in the e blast that some may be excluded from the list and/or offer a different way to participate.”

So, in conclusion, we're off to a rollicking start with the new, experimental pilot program for providing Coffee Fellowship as part of Global Hospitality. Stay tuned as we journey through the rest of the church year!

By Stefanie Barley, Hospitality Coordinator

Susan O'Keefe, Chair

GODDESS/EARTH CIRCLES

Goddess/Earth Circles usually meets on the fourth Sunday of the month from 1-2:30pm in the Fellowship Hall and Zoom, unless noted otherwise. All ages and genders are welcome. Resources are found in the Library in the Committee Room. Scripts and schedule of gatherings are on the website. Announcements of programs are in the E-Blast.

Messages about Goddess/Earth-circles

Cycles of the universe: Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature. (Seventh Principle)

Freedom and responsibility for one's own life and beliefs:

Encouraging the creative potential and involvement of all participants, with awareness, sharing of our own wisdom and receiving the wisdom of others.

Non-authoritarian approach of Unitarian Universalism historically and currently: Shared leadership, freedom and responsibility for one's own life and beliefs, safe places to be appreciated, to learn and to be connected.

Goddess/Earth-Circle Activities

Goddess/Earth Circles gatherings this Summer and Fall have engaged with the phases of the Goddess life phases (Maiden, Mother/Nurturer, Crone and Sage) and our life phases. This includes the Samhain celebration of Wisdom of Women (WOW) of all phases and the writings for this year. We acknowledge the Crowning of twenty-six women in the Augusta Unitarian and Universalist churches since the 1980s, including new Crones, Anniversary recognition for those crowned over the years. We will have memorial recognition of Goddess/Earth-Circle participants who have died.

In the New Year, we plan to focus *Pagan and Earth-Centered Voices in Unitarian Universalism*, by Shirley Ranck and Jerrie Hildebrand, Skinner House. We will be integrating earth celebrations. The theme for this session is the impact earth-centered spirituality and Unitarian Universalism have had on each other, respectively.

Contact for more information: Helen Zidowecki (207-582-5308. hzmre@hzmre.com)

History Committee

Capturing our history as we make it.

The History Committee collection of Unitarian Universalism is in Judd House, with timelines and more information on the website. (Universalist Church of America was founded in 1793 and the American Unitarian Association was founded in 1825, and they consolidated in 1961 to become the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). In Augusta, the Unitarian Church organized in 1825, the Universalist Church in 1836, and the two consolidated in 1992 as UUCC.)

Messages from our living History

Unitarians and Universalists, as individuals and community organizations, have been actively involved in the Augusta area for over 200 years. This includes working collaboratively with other organizations and individuals in food and clothing collections and services.

Unitarians and Universalists internalize values, culture and beliefs as a lifelong evolving process: various approaches to God, feminist and earth-centered traditions, sexual education for all ages, involvement in social justice/action and covenantal relationships. This internalization is the basis for how we live out our faith together and beyond our church.

We are part of our history: we hear and keep or forget stories of the past; we create how we are together; allow the past and the present to enhance or hinder our movement toward a future we envision as a faith community. We are in this together.

First we hear about UUCC from others -- from our families, others. As we make a connection, we tell others from our own experience and perspective. The community history is enriched as our stories mingle. The more open and transparent our writing, actions, events and sharings are, the deeper our understanding of life in the community that we call UU Community Church becomes.

For additional information, please contact: Richard Bridges, Chair (207-626-8134 H, 207-458-3784 C, Auglaw78@gmail.com)

Leadership Development Committee

Submitted by co-chairs Hilary Neckles and Kathy Ann Shaw

Startup activities

We enter this church year with intentions to move the culture of Leadership Development from “fill the slate” to “create leaders of beloved communities”. In consultation with Rev. Donna and our Board President, Michaela Loisel, and Vice President, Karen Allen, we see our role as inviting people to lean into leadership as a fun and inspiring opportunity that offers deep connections to our community. We will strive to be thoughtful and deliberate in recommending candidates for leadership roles.

As the Leadership Development Committee (LDC) recruits congregational leaders (i.e., committee (co)chairs and Board officers and members-at-large) we will seek individuals who are interested in growing their connections to our church community through leadership opportunities. We will recruit individuals who are, of course, skilled in a certain segment of church life and are enthusiastic about leading work in this area. But there is more to our shared leadership ministry! We hope that all congregational leaders will be eager to help nurture future leaders within their area of church expertise. In addition, we expect congregational leaders to be interested in examining their church work through a multicultural lens to help UUCC accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our church. In this way, our committee work helps diffuse the 8th Principle throughout all sectors of our church.

Our first steps on this LD journey are to collaborate with our Vice President to offer, through the Committee of Committees, tools and skills to current leaders for growing future leaders and living the 8th Principle in our collective work. We look forward to working with the entire congregation this church year, both by honoring and learning from the work of long-time leaders and by engaging newer members of our community on this journey.

Top messages for the UUCC community and the broader community about the Leadership Development ministry

The role of the LDC at UUCC is to develop, support, and promote strategies for the congregation to grow into leadership as a spiritual practice. Through this work, we seek to fill a slate of candidates for annual congregational leadership positions who embody the following characteristics:

- Embracing leadership as a ministry that offers personal inspiration and deepened connections to our church community;
- Leading the work of our church in a certain area or sector;
- Helping others to acquire skill sets needed to undertake work in a certain area of UUCC, and nurturing future leaders of this work; and
- Viewing and conducting the work of our church through a multicultural lens to help UUCC accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our church.

Pastoral Ministry Team Report

The Pastoral Ministry Team has been very busy this fall! We would first like to say a heart-felt “thank you” to our helpers. Many of you have given rides to appointments and church events and have provided meals when needed. We also appreciate the compassionate listening shared among church members and friends day in and day out. This, too, is pastoral care.

We warmly invite all UUCC members and friends to consider offering rides or meals, as you are able. Please take a moment to consider what you have to offer. It does “take a village,” as they say, or in this case, an entire church community, to care for each other. Our covenant recognizes the need for shared ministry, so that we all feel supported during difficult times and valued always.

Our team’s start-up activity this fall is an online volunteer spreadsheet where folks can indicate the kinds of services they would like to offer, as well as preferred times and locations for rides and meals. We are working to expand that database, so that pastoral care will be shared among more people. As the Pastoral Ministry Team looks to the future, we continue to work on defining the scope of our work and on communicating that to our UUCC community.

Blessings,
Martha Pelletier, Pastoral Ministry Team Chair

PEACEFUL HEART SANGHA



**Peaceful Heart Sangha members helped to create an October Day of Mindfulness at UUCC with 4 monks and 4 nuns from the Buddhist tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh (the Plum Village Tradition).
Such a sweet gift!**

Peaceful Heart Sangha

We are a mindfulness meditation community free and open to all. We practice stopping, calming, resting and healing which helps us to settle so that we can respond more skillfully to the challenges in our lives and in the world.

We gather every Monday evening (6:30-8) and Thursday morning (8-9:30) for a time of meditation, learning, and sharing. Every Monday we meet on zoom and we are also experimenting with in person/hybrid gatherings at UUCC on 1st and 3rd Mondays. We will have a meeting in November to decide whether we will continue with our hybrid gatherings.

Thursdays we meet in person at River Studio, 332 Water St, Hallowell, except on the last Thursday of the month when we meet on zoom.

This winter we will again invite those who would like to join us to practice for one month with our **January Intentions Practice**, beginning and ending with a half Day of Mindfulness. *Our basic practice is 1) decide if there's a mindfulness practice or teaching you'd like to try out or experiment with for a month; 2) form a plan for trying it, which you can tweak along the way; 3) state your intention in some way – by writing it down or sharing with the sangha or sharing with a friend; 4) try it out for a month; 5) review how it went at the end of the month, perhaps with a friend or with sangha.*

We will share dates and more details about this practice as we move into winter.

If you have questions, please contact peacefulheartsangha@gmail.com or martysoule@gmail.com

Read, Learn, Share Book Group

Reading and discussing books is a mind-expanding opportunity. You will be amazed at what others find in a book that completely escaped your notice and completely alters your opinion of the book. Or the world.

If you like to read a variety of books, some of which you might not have encountered otherwise, consider our book group. We read one book a month, alternating fiction and nonfiction. We meet on the first Thursday of the month, in Fellowship Hall and in the church Zoom room from noon until 1:30. Discussions are lively, lightly facilitated and very interesting. The titles are nearly always available through interlibrary loan so there is no need to buy anything. We welcome you for one discussion or all of them.

The following are the books we have chosen for this church year:

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| November 7: | <u>How to Read a Book</u> by Monica Wood; |
| December 5: | <u>Tattoos on the Heart</u> by Gregory Boyle; |
| January 2: | <u>How Beautiful We Were</u> by Imbolo Mbue; |
| February 6: | <u>Grandma Gatewood's Walk</u> by Ben Montgomery; |
| March 6: | <u>The Frozen River</u> by Ariel Lawson; |
| April 3: | <u>Following Ezra</u> by Thomas Fields-Meyer; |
| May 1: | <u>Wandering Stars</u> by Tommy Orange and |
| June 5: | <u>Moon in Full</u> by Marpheen Chann. |

For more information, please contact June Zellers at jzellers@roadrunner.com or Kathy Kellison at kell6787@gmail.com.

We would love to have you join us!

Safety / Security Committee

The good news from the Safety Committee is that the church has been reimbursed for the work done by O&P Glass to install impact resistant film on all church windows as well as installation of closed-circuit television (CCTV) at the church entrances by Seacoast Security. This work, along with other improvements to the church building, began with an award from a Federal Emergency Management Agency grant of up to \$34,540 approved in 2023. Receiving the reimbursement is an affirmation that the grant process including the follow up forms with photos of the work, and receipts, all formatted in painstaking detail was worthwhile. A huge thanks to those leaders that persevered!

Additional projects that are part of this grant award include improved outdoor lighting, keyless entry security locks with keypads at the Summer Street and Winthrop Street entrances. The grant also includes an insulated steel door to replace the existing door leading from Fellowship Hall outside to the yard area. It is comforting to know that the government funding works (with time and diligent effort from our church volunteers).

Submitted by Jim Caldwell

Seasoned Souls

Seasoned Souls is a group of UUCC-associated people 65 and older. We meet twice a month [the second and fourth Wednesdays] in the Fellowship Hall from 1:00 to around 2:30. We start the meeting with a reading of our covenant and the lighting of a chalice, followed by check-in where we share the happenings in our lives.

There is a special emphasis of the various challenges that ageing can bring. The check-ins frequently provide material for further discussion, or a specific issue can be raised.

Submitted by Hal Booth

Small Group Ministry Updates



Messages about Small Group Ministry

We were asked to identify up to three messages that we want the community here at UUCC and the broader community to know about Small Group Ministry (SGM). SGM is a regular gathering of up to ten participants per group exploring their faith and spiritual journeys with session plans on life issues.

We polled the five ongoing SGM groups and summarized their reflections for discussion at a committee meeting of SGM participants. We came up with the following three messages:

Bonding: Being together in a Unique Way.

Going Deeper: Session Plans as UU Literature, our own and from the SGM Network

Opportunity to serve UUCC and greater community

Small Group Ministry Activities

Stay tuned. And join us for the Small Group Ministry Annual service on November 17, 2024, for more information from the groups themselves.

The brochure about Small Group Ministry is available in the front hallway.

Co-Chairs: Linda Findlay, Helen Zidowecki

If you would like to learn more about Small Group Ministry, or have a suggestion for a service project, you are welcome to contact the co-chairs Linda Findlay at linda.findlay@gmail.com 207-377-8028 or Helen Zidowecki hzmre@hzmre.com 207-582-5308, or anyone involved with SGM.

Social Justice Committee

Startup activities and plans of your group in the new church year.

The Social Justice Committee works toward translating our eight UU Principles into action by responding to current needs in our local community, Maine, United States, and the world.

Augusta Community: This year, we continue our focus on our unhoused neighbors by providing a nutritious breakfast every Saturday morning. This continues to be a partnership with St. Michael's Parish and Temple Beth El. We have deepened our relationships with our guests and respond to their requests for clothing, camping equipment, first aid, hygiene supplies, rides to and from breakfasts, and rides for emergency medical needs.

We partner with many organizations as we work to reduce barriers to housing. These organizations include: United Community Living Center, South Parish Warming Center, Lithgow Library, LINC, University of Maine School of Social Work, KVYMCA.

We have initiated a Capital Area Interfaith Social Justice Group.

Maine: We are active with the legislative ministry of MUUSAN. Each year we choose a Maine non-profit recipient for the Rev. Carie Johnsen Social Justice Award. Many of the "Share the Plate" recipients are Maine organizations. These monthly and annual gifts help web our organization into the social justice fabric of Maine.

United States: The Social Justice Committee joined other Maine UU churches by hosting a postcard writing event. The postcards were scripted by Reclaim Our Vote and reminded people that their rights were on the ballot November 5. The postcards were addressed to voters in North Carolina and Florida. The postcards to North Carolina were sent to irregular voters that may be unregistered without notice. The postcards to Florida were sent to registered Black women voters urging them to vote early.

World: Worldwide organizations are also the recipients of the Share the Plate. Often the recipient is an organization providing humanitarian relief to countries experiencing large scale natural disasters, climate disruptions, and wars.

We are also asking committees and groups to identify up to three top messages that you want the community here at UUCC and the broader community to know about the ministry of your group.

We continue to prepare, serve (& clean up after) breakfast for 50-60 members of our Augusta community every Saturday. Our guests are helpful, thoughtful & thankful; our volunteers are amazing, dedicated and kind; our contributors are very generous.

An exciting development for us is the ongoing regional interfaith group focused on social justice issues, which is meeting quarterly to share ideas, hopes, stories and frustrations. Over eight faith communities are represented.

We are working with others in UUCC to bring the UU Climate Justice Revival to our church community beginning October 20, 2024. Joining with over 350 congregations across the US, we can make a difference in our communities. Please join us! Looking ahead, we are excited to have Miriam Neilson and Josh Caldwell bring us their perspectives on climate issues at a special service in March.

SUSTAINABLE HEALTH & QIGONG – DROP IN CLASS

Sustainable Health & Qigong – Drop In Class

We started this group as a class to teach [*Energy, Everybody, Everyday*](#), a qigong routine developed by Dr. Nan Lu, OMD. **Three simple movements and a standing posture that can bring health benefits, once learned and practiced regularly.** Susan Roberts, who leads the group, has studied with Dr. Lu for 12 years and written a book, [*Sustainable Health: Simple Habits to Transform Your Life*](#), based on the [*Five Element Framework*](#) from traditional Chinese medicine.

As a “drop in” class you will have an opportunity to learn and practice the routine with others. **The movements seem simple, but attention to detail (quality) paired with regular practice (quantity) employs the quantum energy inherent in our natural world to balance and harmonize body, mind, and spirit, transforming a variety of complaints and discomforts.**

Each class begins with lighting a chalice, singing a hymn, learning the movements, the elemental meridians for self-diagnosis, and a seasonal “hack” to transform your life.

Please join us Tuesdays from 4-5 in the Fellowship Hall.

Comments from participant: Lori Milner: *"I enjoyed learning about qigong and practicing it each week. Susan is a great teacher, patient and relaxed. Performing at the talent show was fun!"*

The 3 Top Messages

- 1) Sustainable Health & Qigong focuses on healing the body, mind, and spirit.
- 2) This group focuses most on healing by working through spirit/energy/qi
- 3) The practice reflects our shared UU values.

Submitted by: Susan L. Roberts

Website Work Group

The Website Work Group is a major communication network with focuses on outreach, internal communication, and technology. The UUCC Website has two primary functions:

--Inviting people who are searching for information about Unitarian Universalism in the Augusta area to come and see who we are and what we have to offer.

--Providing a communication network for people who are involved with UUCC. Orientation for updating the site will be offered by the Website Committee and the webmaster.

Messages from the Website

Outreach to visitors and newcomers, broader community. The website provides an overview of what the UUCC has to offer and how to connect.

Leaders have opportunity for website support. Leaders of committees and related groups, and programs, and congregational leaders have input on the information on and structure of this website.

Technology. We are in the process of upgrading the UUCC platform and hosting. The Website Work Group works closely with the technology; the Minister, church leadership and Administrator.

Website Work Group Activities

We are considering the function and process of a Website Work Group. This would combine technology and content, availability and accessibility as we develop our capability. It is being done in conjunction the minister and administrator in consideration of administrative changes in technology and process.

Helen Zidowecki

Worship Arts Team

Greetings from the UCC Worship Arts Team! Our busy team works with Rev. Donna and guest worship leaders to bring you meaningful, inspiring worship services. As the new chair of the team, I'm learning the ropes of the position and following in the very able footsteps of Karen Allen. We have new team members and our processes are constantly evolving. Our amazing team includes Nan Bell, Angie Blevins, Hanna Brown, Priscilla Jenkins, Kathy Kellison, Lori Milner, Marty Peters, Cheryl Ring, Jamez Riot, and Lindsey Wiehl.

New members are always welcome to join us as it's a great way to become involved in the church community and develop deeper connections! Please contact me if you're interested ([sorrowhodgkins@gmail.com](mailto:samorrowhodgkins@gmail.com)). We have scheduled a Worship Arts team retreat at the church on November 16 for our members to connect, reflect and learn together. To create better efficiencies within Worship Arts, we have a goal by January 2025 to split our large group (and its meetings) into two groups, each with a team lead: a worship associates' team and a tech team.

I'm thrilled to report that we have scheduled worship leaders from September 2024 through June 22, 2025 and will be working with Rev. Donna to fill worship leaders for next summer! If you have any ideas about someone you would like to hear speak, or a theme for a service, please let me know.

-Sara Hodgkins, Chair, Worship Arts Team

Three messages the Worship Arts Team wants the UCC and broader communities to know are:

- We seek to create a worship environment that is safe, welcoming, and inclusive of all people who seek out the UCC community
- We continually work to improve the worship experience both in-person and online through inviting feedback and making changes wherever possible
- We strive to incorporate diverse voices in the UCC pulpit in support of the 8th Principle: *"We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions."*

*** If you have any questions about the work of the Board of the committees OR have an interest in joining with a committee or group, please reach out to the leaders as listed below. ***

Committee Chairs

Board Members

President, Michaela Loisel
592-5655 (C)
michaelatloisel@gmail.com

Vice-President, Karen Allen
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Clerk, Cheryl Ring
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Treasurer, Nancy Fritz
213-3047
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Finance, Harry Grimmnitz
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Member-at-Large (2025) –Hal Booth
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Member-at-Large (2026)–Jim Caldwell
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Matt Foust, Co-Chair
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Committee on Shared Ministry

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Global Hospitality Committee

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Hilary Neckles, Co-Chair

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Orchestra

Michael P. Atkinson, Director

Pastoral Ministry

Martha Pelletier, Chair
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For Pastoral Emergencies, contact:

Reverend Donna Dolham
P.O. Box 8
Augusta, ME 04332-0008
623-3663 (W)
701-1581 (Pastoral Emergencies)
minister@augustauu.org

Caring Cooperative**For meal support:**

Vacant – Contact Martha Pelletier
Pastoral Ministry Chair

For card requests:

Peggy Lamb
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plambflowers@outlook.com

Safety Committee

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Mary Kane (Co-Chair)

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Augusta Food Bank & Bridging the Gap

Stef Barley (Co-chair)
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stefbarley@gmail.com

Susan Shaw (Co-Chair)
215-6790
susanmaine@gmail.com

Capital Area New Mainer's Project
UUCU has a number of Mentor Teams
that work with CANMP

Kennebec Advocacy Team**Maine Unitarian Universalist Social Action Network (MUUSAN)**

Saturday Breakfast for Unhoused
Held at UUCU each week

<Feel free to reach out to the Social Justice chairpersons for more information on UUCC's involvement in any of the social justice endeavors>

Website Workgroup

Now part of the Communications/
Website Work Group—SEE ABOVE

Worship

Sara Hodgkins, Chair
446-9378
saramorrowhodgkins@gmail.com

Newsletter Submissions

Submission Deadline for WINTER newsletter is February 19th

Submissions received after this date may not be able to be published.

Please submit all articles as an attachment in a Word document using Arial font size 11. Don't forget to give your article a title and sign it. Send an email to admin@augustauu.org with the article as a word attachment! ***Photos of church activities are welcomed! *** You will receive a confirmation e-mail as receipt of your submission.

Contract Minister: Rev. Donna Dolham

Board President: Michaela Loisel

Choir Director: Bridget Convey

Church Administrator: Lynn Smith

Phone: (207)622-3232 or email:

<mailto:admin@augustauu.org>

Office hours: 8:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. (Tues, Wed & Thurs)

No office hours: Monday or Friday

Rev. Donna Dolham

Call or email to set up an appointment:

(207) 623-3663

minister@augustauu.org

Contact the minister for pastoral emergencies by phone.

She will return your call as soon as possible.

(207) 701-1581 (pastoral emergencies)