

Annual Report 2024

Board of Trustees:

Donna Laidlaw, President
Teri Cornell, Vice President
Donna Rhodeback
Aaron Saling
Barb Lubberger
Chris Jones-Leavy

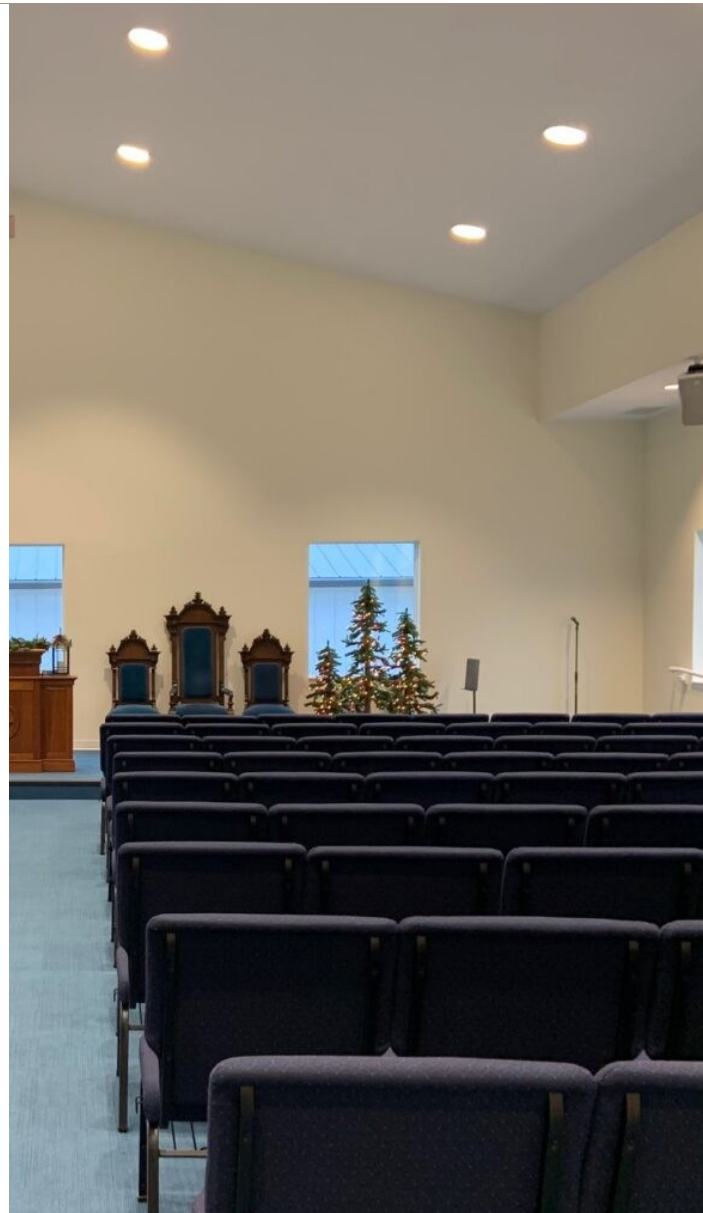
Treasurer: Aaron Saling

Minister: Rev. Susan Ritchie
Commissioned Lay Minister: Teri Cornell
Commissioned Lay Minister: Morgan Patten
Affiliated Community Minister: Rev. Joan Van Becelaere
Affiliated Community Minister Emerita: Rev. Chris Jones-Leavy

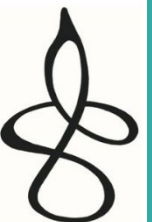
Molly Watson, Director of Music
Morgan Patten, Director of Religious Exploration
Holly Kessis, Pianist
April Smith, Custodian

**PRESENTED TO THE ANNUAL
MEETING MARCH 9, 2025**

PO Box 541 1574 Franklin Street
Lewis Center, OH 43035 www.nuuc.org



NORTH
UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST
CONGREGATION



WE WELCOME WE INSPIRE WE CONNECT WE ACT

Agenda for the Annual Meeting

Agenda Items:

- Congregational vote to elect two new members to the Board of Trustees to replace outgoing members Donna Laidlaw and Donna Rhodeback, for terms to run 2025-2028. The Nominating Committee is putting forward two candidates for these two positions: Roger Johnson and Jessie Lizak. You can read the biographies for these candidates below. –Donna Laidlaw
- Congregational vote to elect two new members to the Leadership Development committee, to serve from 2025-2028. The Nominating Committee is putting forward two candidates for two positions: John Daquila and Ted Hicks. You can read their biographies below. –Donna Laidlaw
- Congregational vote to elect Nancy Gamso to the Leadership Development Committee for a term to last 2025 – 2027. In 2024 Nancy was nominated by the Leadership Development Committee and elected by the Board to fill a mid-term vacancy. The Leadership Development Committee is recommending that she fill out the remaining two years of that term. –Donna Laidlaw
- Volunteer Recognition-- Donna Laidlaw
- Board Recognition-- Teri Cornell
- Updates on ongoing programs and projects -- Rev. Susan Ritchie
- Questions regarding Annual Report -- Rev. Susan Ritchie & Donna Laidlaw
- Move to Adjourn

From the Leadership Development Committee

Nominees for Board of Trustees

Roger Johnson

A UU for 40+ years, 15 of that here at NUUC. Has served on various Congregational committees to include Finance, Leadership Development, and Building during our most recent building upgrade and expansion. Looking forward to applying his experience thru service on the NUUC Board. Interested in expanding our marketing footprint in the community

Jessie Lizak

Jessie Lizak is a marketing strategist and founder of Reveting, helping individuals and businesses increase revenue by building authentic personal brands with social media livestreaming, podcasting, and digital marketing. She started her career in politics working on the Obama campaign in 2008, universal healthcare campaigns, environmental campaigns and human trafficking campaigns before transitioning into B2B marketing and later entrepreneurship. A believer in visibility for both business

and social change, she values NUUC's commitment to inclusivity and growth. Honored to serve on the board, she brings leadership and communication expertise to help amplify NUUC's mission and community impact.

Nominees for Leadership Development:

Ted Hicks

I am a newcomer to Ohio, having arrived from Florida in January 2019 to take a position with Subaru of America in Dublin, OH. Margo and I, being old house lovers since our first antiques in Baton Rouge (ca.1918) and Hammond, LA (ca.1910), found a lovely brick Italianate in Delaware that dates to 1869. We moved in during a Level 3 Snowpocalypse! Temps fell below zero the next week. Welcome to Ohio! Who does that at 64? THIS happy idiot!

We have three grown children and two grandchildren, none of whom live closer than a day or two drive from here. We've lived in Louisiana, where I spent my first 42 years, North Smithfield Rhode Island, Houston, Texas and Palm Bay, Florida.

It was in Woonsocket, Rhode Island that we first joined a UU congregation and became active. We stayed in New England long enough to see (on TV) the Red Sox win the World Series (2004) and in 2005, my career took us to Houston. We had little luck finding a church home in Texas because, well, Texas.

Our youngest child, Lonnie, moved with us to Florida in early 2012 and found the UU Church of Brevard in West Melbourne, FL, where we became very active in church life. Margo and I both served on the Board of Directors at separate times, she as secretary, and later I served as a Board member, Vice President, then President, a position I held until we moved to Ohio.

At NUUC, I have served as a member of the Board of Trustees and President. I sing in the choir and am the chairperson of the Building and Grounds Committee. As past president I sit on the Leadership Development Committee and seek your approval to continue my role there.

I am a graduate of the LSU Manship School of Journalism. I spent my work life as an automotive technician (15 years), then as a technical training instructor, training center supervisor and regional manager for two automakers. I retired in June 2024. Since then, I have been keeping busy making sawdust in my woodshop and attending to the NUUC Building and Grounds.

John Daquila

John Daquila is a member of NUUC, and has previous been part of, as a member and leader, Delaware Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. As a self-described "Amateur Theologian At-Large", he enjoys exploring many avenues of religious though, literature and experience. A husband and father of two, he believes that a strong UU presence in the world is needed to build community and forge inroads to a more compassionate world.

Nancy Gamso

Nancy Gamso has been a member of NUUC since 2005 and a UU since 1989. Since retirement from OWU in 2021, Nancy has become more active at North, rejoining the choir, joining the Building Maintenance team and serving in a replacement appointment role on the Leadership Development

Committee. She looks forward to supporting her North UU community in the coming years. Nancy still performs professionally with many area orchestras, with her two jazz bands and with the CAPA Broadway series. Her husband, Pete Mills, is a jazz musician in Columbus and professor at Denison. Her daughter, Abi Tapia, a lifelong UU in Nashville, is an edible landscape professional and musician.

Current members of the Leadership Development Committee

Donna Rhodeback (chair), Morgan Patten, Roger Johnson, Lorraine McReynolds, Nancy Gamso, Melissa Woodard, Ted Hicks (participating as immediate past President).

From Your Minister

A highlight and real turning point in this year was the dedication of our renovated kitchen to the memory of beloved member Jan Bourke during our Ingathering Service on September 8. Not only was it lovely to honor Jan and her family in this way, but being able to celebrate the opening of the new kitchen marked the last milestone towards being able to fully support all the programming, celebrations, and rituals we want with the resources of our new building. Worked related to our renovation and expansion continues—most notably, landscaping, including the memorial garden and our children’s playscapes, is not completed, but slated for development this spring.

Our goal with the expansion of the building was always to support the congregation with more robust programming. And indeed, we were able to deliver on that this year, offering an unprecedented number of opportunities for religious exploration, service projects, and socializing (these are detailed below in the “programming” section of this report). The efforts paid off. Don’t miss Director of Religious Exploration Morgan Patten’s report below, noting that we currently have 30 children and youth from 19 families participating in our programs, an enormous increase over the year before. And don’t forget to look at the choir on Sunday morning, stretching from one side of our long cancel all the way to the other.

If you have a chance, please help me congratulate our staff on their excellent work this year. After having some staff turnover in the year before, we are now blessed with a complete roster of excellent people. Morgan Patten has contributed her energy and talents to the revitalized RE program; Molly Watson’s thoughtful leadership of the music program and choir is why we need all that space for the choir each Sunday and why each worship is supported by inspiring music; Pianist Holly Kessis delights us each week with her work; the entire building sparkles under the rigorous care of Custodian April Smith; and, Teri Cornell provides excellent support to the office, handling our deposits and orders of service each week in addition to other tasks.

I can’t wait to see what another year brings.

--Rev. Susan Ritchie

Leadership & Staff Reports

From Commissioned Lay Minister Teri Cornell

The Annual Report regarding my role as a Commissioned Lay Minister at NUUC came around seemingly fast this year. Every year I promise myself I will write down what I do as a CLM that year so it is easier to do this report. But alas I did not.

First and foremost I do remain committed to my ministry at NUUC. And I continue to love to be the face of Unitarian Universalism in a world where things are so complicated at the moment. And even though my involvement in our congregation involves many other things besides being a Commissioned Lay Leader, I feel they are woven in that calling to be a CLM as well as CLM work is salt and peppered in the other things I do here. (Administrative Assistant, Board Member, Fundraising Committee etc..) In saying that:

- I continued to facilitate a former Soul Matters Group, now a small group ministry group, with the same people. We meet monthly and explore many topics and have great discussion. (zoom)
- I was able to do the chalice lighting, benediction and some readings as part of some of the worship services at NUUC this year as well as lead 2 services, most recently one on Wintering.
- I was able to provide Pastoral Care to some church members and reach out to new people in welcome and to ask if they have any questions. We continue to have the traveling chalice and I keep an eye on who might be in need of it for awhile and make sure it gets there. (The traveling chalice is a cut glass chalice in a frame that was donated by Mary Ann Wojton and purchased at one of our auctions. Made by my sister-in-law and I. It is given to congregants who could use a reminder they have a whole congregation that cares about them and supports them while they are going through a very difficult time.)

I feel there is a place for me as a CLM in helping us all center and learn in an unpredictable political time where so many are being attacked, and anxiety is high. What form that will take I don't know but it is on my mind often.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you for your ongoing support of my ministry.

Warmly,
Teri Cornell

From Director of Religious Exploration Morgan Patten

Last year when I was writing this report, we were in the beginning stages of rebuilding our program after the pandemic and building renovation. At that time, we had about 17 children from 9 families, and we were, for the first time since the pandemic, offering two classes.

A year later, we have about 30 children and youth from 19 families. (I counted that three times because I couldn't believe it either.)

This year, our youth have been learning skills from you, members of our congregation, in a class we are calling CommUnity Care. They have learned to sew, balance a budget, and make ice cream. They have practiced having difficult conversations and working together. I can tell that we are a congregation that values our youth because I have had so many of you volunteer to teach a class. Thank you!

Our children are exploring ecosystems in a class called Wandering Ohio. Through collaborative storytelling and play, they are discovering how Ohio's forests, plains, and rivers have changed and how to care for the natural world. In the fall, we also offered an OWL class for 5-7 year olds.

Of course, religious exploration doesn't only happen during RE. We have a thriving D&D group that includes adults of all ages, as well as youth. In addition, we recently began First Friday for Families to give our families and young people time to connect and deepen relationships.

In the coming year, I am looking forward to hosting our first-ever NUUC summer camp. I am hoping to find more ways to include our youth in worship. In addition, I'm eager to explore ways to grow our teaching teams.

From Building and Grounds Chair Ted Hicks

In the past year, NUUC's long-awaited kitchen remodel was completed. The antique sanctuary received a new roof and the broken gutters and downspouts on Fellowship Hall were replaced. Gutters on the entire building were cleaned and provided with gutter guards. In addition, overhanging trees and encroaching shrubs were trimmed back, protecting our investment in the building. Building and Grounds volunteers pressure-washed the older sections of the building, repaired sidewalks, installed whiteboards and shelves, redistributed gravel and parking stops around the parking lot, moved new chairs in and stored the old ones. A team also hung the beautiful quilt behind the dais.

Several drainage projects were completed in the parking lot as well as behind and around the outbuilding. Contents of the outbuilding are gradually being organized and optimized.

We are currently working on installing and painting trim in the kitchen, as well as a very cool coat rack for our little ones in Room 2. Pulls are on order for the kitchen cabinets and drawers and will be installed after they arrive.

Upcoming projects include replacing the large, unsightly boarded-up windows in the three multipurpose rooms, formerly the old sanctuary. While costly, several NUUC members have expressed a willingness to help with this endeavor. We are exploring repairing or replacing the vinyl siding outside the kitchen and mechanical room. There are many more projects on our radar.

In conjunction with the Landscape Team, we are working toward realizing plans to make our grounds attractive to young families with a planned playscape, as well as those who come to remember our departed ones in the planned memorial garden. Members are working on rehabilitating our existing benches for these outdoor spaces. Also in the plan is adding paths to ease walking in from certain areas of the parking lot.

As a reminder, mowing season will soon be upon us, and we're going to be scheduling volunteers to mow starting the second week of April. Please contact tedhicks54@gmail.com, or call or text Ted at 832-465-4207.

2024 Programming

The following programs were offered in 2024:

A Space for Reflection. Once a month, trained Interspiritual Companion Karen McGuire brings a mix of poetry, music, breathwork, silence, or meditation to create a space for you to relax (held virtually on Zoom)

Beyond Words Covenant Group Pam Spence has been coordinating a new covenant group, "Beyond Words." The group explores a variety of paths that help deepen spiritual connection focused on "whole body" experience by participating in local initiatives. Experiences include, singing bowls/sound baths, drum circles, chanting, labyrinth walking, heart-centered meditation, Dances of Universal Peace, animal assisted prayer and meditation.

Brown Bag Books Discussion Group meets monthly at noon on the Third Tuesday of each month, lead by Ruth Rusk.

Deepen Your Connection to Yourself Through the Poetry of Mary Oliver. Karen McGuire offered this opportunity this past fall.

Elections Vespers. Following the election, Morgan Patten and Rev. Susan gathered a group for some simple spiritual reflections and to provide a safe place to talk.

Empty Bowls. NUUC held an all soup lunch, with all proceeds benefitting the Mid Ohio Food Bank.

Putting Down Roots. Rev. Susan gathered a group after worship to learn more about how to be involved at NUUC.

Mindful Writing meets monthly, with members sharing a variety of written pieces and thoughts. Our gratitude to Marty Keith organizes this group.

Spiritual Leadership. Members of the Leadership Development Committee and the Board of Trustees took part together in the “Spiritual Leadership” program offered by the UU Institute.

Sunday Intergenerational Game Play. Play games with persons of all ages the second Sunday of the month. This group has been meeting after worship the second Sunday or each month for both board games and role-playing games. Cara Greenberg, Morgan Patten, and John Daquila have been organizing these sessions.

Suppressed and Sabotaged; Vote Forward Letter Writing. This past September, Rev Joan VanBecelaere gathered members and friends to watch the video “Suppressed and Sabotaged: The Fight To Vote” which sounded the alarm on voter suppression and election subversion ahead of the November election. This was followed up by a letter writing event to help get out the vote.

What Moves Us: Unitarian Universalist Theology --Rev. Susan led this group the first Sunday of the month each month starting in October 2024 and concluding in February 2025. Through shared direct experiences and reflection exercises, readings and lessons, and ethical deliberations, What Moves Us creates an adult faith journey for those people who want to be able to better articulate their beliefs and understand how they connect with Unitarian Universalism.

Our Financial Health

While we no longer hear financial reports at the March meeting, given our fiscal year now runs July 1-June 30, you might be interested in Treasurer Aaron Saling’s report about our status at the close of the second quarter of our fiscal year:

January marks the mid-way point of our fiscal year. [Click here](#) for a report that provides a high-level summary of income and expenses through January. I'm pleased to report that the congregation is in good financial shape to-date. Our income (pledge and non-pledge) has come in \$33K ahead of budget (we've received 60% of our budgeted income by the mid-point of our fiscal year). In the past our income has fluctuated a bit from month to month, so I'll continue to monitor things as we make our way through the latter months of the fiscal year. Our expenses are slightly over budget (approx. \$1,000) primarily driven by higher than anticipated repairs/maintenance (tree trimming), security system maintenance (fire prevention service charges and setup) and our property insurance bill (which was paid in one lump sum at the beginning of the year). Offsetting these higher-than expected expenses are savings in some of our smaller expense accounts.