







2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT







UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF SANTA BARBARA

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VALUES

Community - Courage - Love - Diversity - Generosity - Joy

MISSION STATEMENT

Living with Integrity. Nurturing Wonder. Inspiring Action.

USSB ENDS STATEMENT

Living with integrity, we:

1. Support each other in life and life's transitions with loving care, joy, celebration and gratitude.
2. Care for the earth and its rich web of life for current and future generations.

Nurturing wonder, we:

3. Experience the transcendent that opens us to deep connection and life's mystery.
4. Cultivate spiritual practices and engage in lifelong learning, utilizing our hearts and minds.

Inspiring action, we:

5. Shift the larger culture toward justice and compassion through bold individual and congregational endeavors.
6. Welcome and connect with people across differences of identity and lived experience.

COVENANT OF HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Being mindful of how we communicate with and about others, we will:

- Listen actively
- Seek to understand the perspectives of others
- Attend to the impact of our intentions, words, and actions

When conflicts arise, in order to pursue a peaceful and constructive path to resolution, we will:

- If possible, communicate directly with the person(s) involved. If safety is a concern or if help is needed, consult the Committee on Shared Ministry as a resource to support communication and resolution
- Stay engaged with the process of addressing harm, repairing relationship, and establishing a resolution to the conflict
- Explore solutions through mutual learning and respect, trusting in others whose truths are based on their own lived experiences

Celebrating the diversity within our community, we will:

- Recognize and honor the variety of beliefs and spiritual paths within our community, including the words and ways others express their spirituality
- Honor the contributions of those who have been historically marginalized in the larger world and in our congregation

This Covenant of Healthy Relationships, grounded in the principles and values of this congregation and our Unitarian Universalist tradition, upholds the foundation of our community at the Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara and our commitment to one another as members of this community. Our goal is to be a safe and inspirational place in which we, as individuals and as a congregation, can live out our spiritual journeys.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES & STAFF

2024-2025 Board of Trustees

Lorraine Woodman, President
Nate Rich, Vice President
Becky Blake, Secretary
Buzz Moran, Treasurer
John Altman
Ellen Broidy
Judy Farris
Terri Stelzer
Kyle Stewart

Term Ends 6/30/2026

John Altman
Becky Blake
Buzz Moran

Term Ends 6/30/2025

Nate Rich
Terri Stelzer
Lorraine Woodman

Term Ends 6/30/2027

Kyle Stewart
Ellen Broidy
Judy Farris

2024-2025 Staff

Rev. Julia Hamilton, Lead Minister
Erin Wilson, Director of Administration
Charla Bregante, Dir. of Lifespan Religious Exploration
Angie Swanson-Kyriaco, Outreach & Membership Coordinator
Matthew Griset, Music Director
Carolyn Bjerke, Ministerial Intern
Gwendolyn Killfoyle, Community Choir Lead
Joanie Bear, Facility & Events Coordinator
Roberta Weighill, Office Manager
Jon Diaz, Sexton
Christina Boardman, Youth Coordinator
Rob Brown, Building Manager
Janey Madlani, Children's RE Coordinator
Alfonso Trejos, Multimedia Specialist
Heather Levin, Pianist

Notified Agenda for Annual Meeting: June 8, 2025

1. Opening and Call to Order	Lorraine Woodman, Board President
2. Chalice Lighting	Rev. Julia Hamilton, Lead Minister
3. Review of Voting Protocols	Lorraine Woodman, Board President
4. Approve Agenda, New Business (if 20% quorum)	Lorraine Woodman, Board President
5. Affirmation of Covenant, Values, Mission, and Ends	Nate Rich, Board Vice President
6. In Memoriam	Rev. Julia Hamilton, Lead Minister
7. Year in Review, Year Ahead	Board & Staff
8. Distinguished Service Award	Rev. Julia Hamilton, Lead Minister
9. Election of Nominating Committee	Kyle Stewart, Board Member
10. Election of Board of Trustees	Nominating Committee
11. Honor Outgoing Board Members	Board & Staff
12. Installation of Board of Trustees	Rev. Julia Hamilton, Lead Minister
13. Installation of Nominating Committee	Ellen Broidy, Board Member
14. Vote to Adopt Fiscal Plan	Buzz Moran, Board Treasurer
15. New Business (additional agenda items)	Lorraine Woodman, Board President
16. Closing & Adjournment	Lorraine Woodman, Board President

Voting Information:

- Members joining via Zoom should vote electronically or via paper absentee ballot. There are no in-meeting voting options for those joining online.
- Members who have signed the membership book on or before May 8, 2025, and made a financial contribution are eligible to vote. (Members may also receive ministerial exemption from financial commitment.)
- Absentee ballots will be available on request by calling the office at 965-4583
- Members may vote by proxy. Each member attending the meeting may hold one proxy. Proxies should be dated, signed and state the name of the member to carry the proxy. Contact the office if you need a proxy form.

Quorum:

- The quorum for an annual meeting is one-tenth of the membership counted as present, voting by proxy or absentee (electronic) ballot.
- Official Voting Membership at Meeting Notice: 337
- Quorum to conduct business: 10% of Total Membership: 34
- Quorum to make additions or deletions from Agenda: 20% of Total Membership: 68

New Members July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025

Eberhard Brunner
Drew Carmichael & Kat Consola
Sarah Davis
Brook Eiler
Maritza Fuljencio
Brad Gaffney
Ann Harbaugh
Mae James
Sterling Keeley
Dan Lane
Isaac Laris
Craig & Shannon Lewis
Rose Maher
Randine & Travis Manach
Solas McGettigan
Abbie Olson
Alex Overbey & Brent Wells
Tom Owen-Towle & Loretta Solsbery
Hope Riley & Peter Riley
Colaine LA Roepke
Whitney Rubison
Dmitri Siegel
Jamie Tate
Gene Urban
Rachel Yoder

2024-2025 Total Members: 377

Distinguished Service Awards
2025-2015

Year	Distinguished Service Award	Lead Minister
2025	Onolee Zwicke	Rev. Julia Hamilton
2024	Kathleen Boehm	Rev. Julia Hamilton
2023	Florence Michel	Rev. Julia Hamilton
2022	Keith Strohmaier	Rev. Julia Hamilton
2022	Onolee Zwicke	Rev. Julia Hamilton
2021	John Altman	Rev. Julia Hamilton
2020	Gail Fairburn	Rev. Julia Hamilton
2019	Beloved Conversations	Rev. Julia Hamilton
2018	Mike Noling	Rev. Julia Hamilton
2017	Joya Sexton	Rev. Julia Hamilton
2017	Astrid Nelson	
2016	Gunn Dukes	Rev. Julia Hamilton
2016	Ken Ralph	
2015	Ted Stern	Rev. Lee Bond-Upson
2015	Program of Distinction: Ministerial Search Committee	

For 2007-2014 honorees, please contact USSB staff.

MEMBERS WHO PASSED

July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025



Albert Melkonian



Alice Edwards



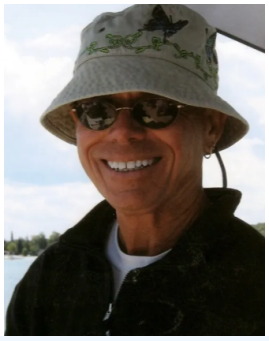
Claire Chytilo



Donnie Nair



Harlan Pedersen



Jack Stapelmann



John Isham



Marilou Shiells



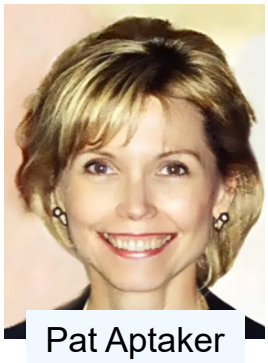
Marty Acree



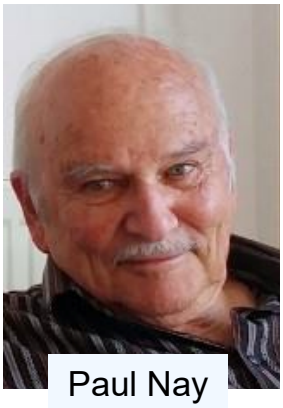
Mary Ann Jordan



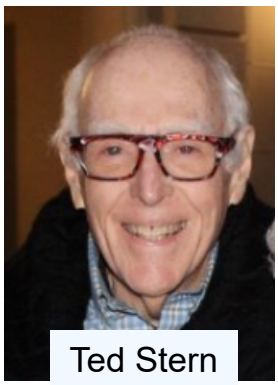
Mead Northop



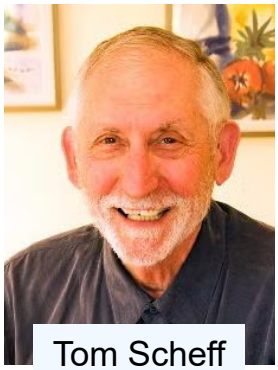
Pat Aptaker



Paul Nay



Ted Stern



Tom Scheff



Wade Volk

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Routine Practices

The Board of Trustees routinely reviews USSB policies to ensure that they are up to date, monitors the USSB financial status, monitors key developments associated with the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and Pacific Western Region, approves delegates to the UUA General Assembly, coordinates with USSB committees, and approves changes to membership of key committees. The Board also approves the annual budget that its ultimately voted on by the congregation and sets budget priorities. This year, ensuring fair compensation for our very capable staff was identified as the highest priority in light of the high cost of living in the Santa Barbara area.

Board Retreat

The Board typically begins each year with a weekend retreat. This year the retreat focused on issues relevant to the Strategic Plan that will be developed, including systems thinking and a review of strategic plan topics identified in the Visioning process held last year.

Board Leadership Training

Board members participated in Leadership Training targeted to the Capital Campaign that was facilitated by Onolee Zwicke and Deb Karoff, focused on *Leadership Styles and Spiritual Grounding, Power Dynamics, and Systems Thinking.*

Bridge to the Future Capital Campaign

The Board was actively engaged throughout the year in reviewing and discussing elements of the building plans/renaming process for the upcoming Capital Campaign. Board members presented a series of Sunday Reflections addressing why we support various elements of the Bridge to the Future and how they further our congregational vision and values. Topics included: *Why Now?, USSB Building Project History, Accessibility, Jefferson Hall/Blake Building Improvements, Sustainability/Resilience, Maintenance Reserve, Linkage between the Strategic Plan and Capital Campaign*, and *What's in a Name*.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES cont.

Strategic Planning

The Visioning process conducted the previous year resulted in planning for physical changes as part of the Capital Campaign, but it also identified a number of issues that relate to congregational programs and interactions. The Strategic Planning team includes Rev. Julia, Ellen Broidy, Nate Rich, Terri Stelzer, and Lorraine Woodman. The Strategic Plan is still in process, but the framework developed is consistent with the Capital Campaign themes (Building Community, Building Accessibility, Building Resilience), augmented with issues related to adult and children's religious education and worship.

Coordination with the Anti-Racism Commission (ARC)

The Board engaged in ongoing coordination with ARC, which is a commission of the Board, both through review of regular written reports and discussions with ARC members at periodic Board meetings. A key issue addressed involved the response to repeated vandalism of our Black Lives Matter banner. The Board agreed with ARC's recommendation to reaffirm our commitment to the principles behind the banner and to continue to display it in a publicly visible location. The Board also supported changing ARC's name to the Commission on Inclusion and Belonging to focus on a more positive statement grounded in love. Additionally, the Board supported the concept of Board members engaging in personalized programs related to anti-oppression rather than taking a standardized course.

Indigenous Reparations Team Coordination

The Board supported the payment of Reparation Team funds to an offsite organization to promote a film that is part of a series related to environmental and social issues. The Board also supported the Team's consideration of providing funds for an on-campus project in coordination with the Capital Campaign.

Lorraine Woodman, USSB Board President

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee is composed of six members. Each year, two members are elected for a single three-year term at the annual meeting by direct vote of the membership. Nominations for the Committee are made by petition of at least ten members submitted to the board in advance of the annual meeting.

The 2024-2025 nominating committee was comprised of the following members: • John Hartman (Term ends 2025) • Onolee Zwicke (Term ends 2025) • Susie DuPont (Term Ends 2026) • Colin Jones (Completing last two years of term, ends 2026) • Jack Rief (Term ends 2027) • Kathleen Boehm (Term ends 2027).

The Nominating Committee meets throughout the year to share their knowledge of the interests and talents of our congregants. This past year, we reviewed the list of all members in the congregation to identify potential leaders. In April of each year, after thoughtful consideration and much deliberation, we present to the Board of Trustees a slate of candidates to be considered and subsequently put forward for the vote of the congregation at the Annual Meeting.

This year, the Nominating Committee noticed that there are many congregants serving multiple roles on committees. This has resulted in many well-qualified potential nominees to state that they are not able to take on an additional role. Some of the current congregational roles, however, are temporary, such as those related to the Capital Campaign. In the next few years, and possibly beyond, congregational committees should be aware of this and be proactive with the recruiting of new members. The Nominating Committee and the Leadership Development Committee are aware of this situation and working to ensure the development of more leadership candidates in the future.

At the 2025 Annual Meeting, one Board nominee and two Nominating Committee nominees were put before the congregation and elected to serve. Board of Trustees: • Kelly Bedard 2025-2028 Nominating Committee: • Tammy Shorb 2025-2028 • Mike Ristow 2025-2028

If you feel this is a good time to serve your community, now is the time to contact members of the Nominating Committee for a confidential discussion about your interests. Those who have significantly contributed to other congregational committees can be considered for nomination to the Board or Nominating Committee in the next few years. We can also provide guidance to all congregants about how you can best serve the USSB community immediately or at a later time that works well for you. In our deliberations for candidates to the Nominating Committee and the Board of Trustees, we consider the qualifications of each candidate, the needs of the Board of Trustees, and the needs of the members of Unitarian Society in our deliberations. We welcome your input as we carry out this important process.

In service,
The USSB Nominating Committee Kathleen Boehm, Jack Rief, Colin Jones, Onolee Zwicke, Susie DuPont, John Hartman (chair)

DIRECTOR of ADMINISTRATION

Financial Giving

Generosity is a cornerstone of our congregation and a vital expression of our shared values. Your financial gifts make it possible to fulfill commitments to our ministers and staff, maintain and enhance our buildings and grounds, expand our presence in the wider community, support social justice initiatives, and enrich our programming.

For the 2024–2025 fiscal year (July 2024–June 2025), our operating income totaled $1.175 million. As in previous years, pledges formed the foundation of our income, accounting for 34% of total revenue. These gifts are essential to sustaining our mission and vision.

Unlike many religious or nonprofit institutions, our operations are funded almost entirely by our members and friends. Your ongoing commitment makes all the difference—thank you for your generosity in 2024–2025.

In addition to pledge gifts, other significant sources of operating income included:

Miscellaneous Contributions (non-pledge donations): Nearly $64,000, exceeding our $18,000 budget by $45,000—thanks to many generous one-time gifts and our End-of-Year campaign.

Plate Gifts: $18,000 for operations and $4,750 to monthly outreach recipients.

Fundraising: Fashion Fling and the 2024 Auction raised $35,000.

Weddings, Events & Room Rentals: $250,000 in operating income—$139,000 above budget.

Endowment Distributions: $102,000 from our USSB Endowment Fund.

Long-Term Leases: $200,000 from our two residential properties and two schools.

Investment Income: Over $10,000 from Certificates of Deposit (CDs).

2024–2025 Budget Bottom Line

Thanks to your generosity, an exceptional year for weddings and events, sustained Endowment support, and other revenue streams, we closed the fiscal year with a $68,000 surplus. Surplus funds are placed in interest-bearing CDs, which provide ongoing investment income for our operating budget.

USSB Endowment

Our Endowment Fund, managed for the past eleven years by Trillium Asset Management—a fossil-fuel-free investment firm—remains a strong financial pillar for USSB. Trillium delivers competitive returns while advocating for environmentally responsible corporate policies.

As of June 30, 2025, the Endowment was valued at $1.86 million and contributed $101,000 in distributions to operations this year. Since its establishment in 1984, the Endowment has provided $1.8 million in total support.

We thank our 2024–2025 Endowment Board members: Carol Schwyzer, Keith Strohmaier, Buzz Moran, and Onolee Zwicke.

Bequests & Planned Gifts

This year, we received over $95,000 in bequests and planned gifts. We honor the generosity and legacy of Nancy Andon, Pat Aptaker, Don Bushnell, and Paul & Joanne Nay, whose contributions strengthen our Endowment and ensure future financial stability.

Fundraisers

Our 2024 Auction, Surfin' Safari, was a vibrant success, raising over $33,000. We are grateful to the volunteers and donors who contributed more than 100 services, events, and experiences. Our beloved Fashion Fling fundraiser once again drew large crowds, turning Jefferson Hall into a lively community marketplace for sustainable fashion.





Maintenance Reserve Fund

Established in 2021 to plan for major facility needs, the Maintenance Reserve Fund supports large-scale projects beyond the scope of our annual budget—such as roof repairs, appliance upgrades, and major renovations. It is replenished annually through operating contributions and currently holds $31,000. We anticipate strengthening this reserve through capital campaign allocations.





Weddings, Events & Room Rentals
Following a refreshed marketing strategy—including a dedicated wedding venue website (www.venue.ussb.org) and targeted social media outreach—USSB hosted 30 weddings this year, generating $175,000 in operating funds.

Our campus also welcomed record-breaking room and event rentals, earning $93,000, well above the $60,000 budget.





OPERATIONS

Sponsored and In-Kind Room Use
Beyond paid rentals, USSB provides low- or no-cost space to community organizations whose work aligns with our mission. In 2024–2025, we hosted a wide range of groups, from social justice advocates to arts organizations. See the full list on our Giving Back webpage: https://ussb.org/justice/giving-back/

Freedom Warming Center
For the 14th year, USSB served as a host site for the Freedom Warming Center, opening our doors for 10 nights and welcoming an average of 30 guests per night. We thank our hospitality teams for providing warm meals and compassionate care.

Disaster & Emergency Preparedness
Since adopting our Disaster & Emergency Preparedness Plan in 2022, USSB has provided annual staff training to prepare for natural disasters, evacuations, and emergencies. This proactive approach reflects our commitment to creating a safe, resilient, and welcoming community.

Facilities & Maintenance
Owning a nearly 100-year-old campus is both a privilege and a responsibility. This year, we updated our deferred maintenance schedule to better plan for long-term facility needs, including our two residential properties.

Long-Term Lessors
Our partnerships with Starr King and Knox School continue to serve the educational and social-emotional growth of approximately 80 families. We value our ongoing relationship with these institutions and their leadership teams.

In all these efforts—financial stewardship, facility care, and community outreach—USSB thrives because of your generosity, commitment, and shared vision for a vibrant future. Thank you.

Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara

2024-2025 Budget (Fiscal Plan)

	2024-2025 Adopted
Revenue	
Pledges (net of fees)	$409,800
Fundraising	$25,100
Contributions	$32,750
Room Rentals & Weddings	$139,437
Long-Term Leases	$194,835
Investment Income	$182,316
Moved from Restricted	$38,500
Total Revenue	**$1,022,738**
Expense	
Staff Salaries	$585,931
Benefits, Professional Expenses	$125,180
Facility Maintenance & Contracts	$138,647
Administrative	$73,380
Supplements to Programs	$13,250
Denominational Support	$38,000
Interest & Principal	$48,350
Total Expense	**$1,022,738**

Bridge to the Future in 2024-2025

It has been an exciting and productive year for our Bridge to the Future Project. As we move into the new fiscal year, it's worth celebrating all that we have accomplished together.

Early in the year, members of the Vision Team, Building Team, and Board collaborated to organize the congregation's ideas into three preliminary "scope plans"—small, medium, and large—each representing what might be achieved at different fundraising levels.

The Building Team then worked closely with our architect to create detailed renderings of the new construction projects envisioned.

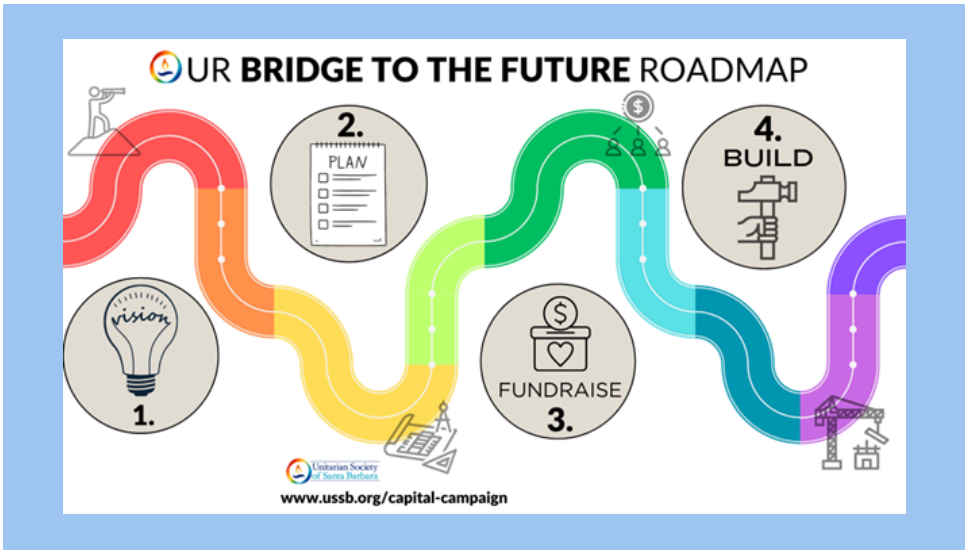
These concepts were shared at two well-attended Town Hall meetings in December and February, where congregants engaged in meaningful conversations, asked thoughtful questions, and explored how each plan reflects our shared vision for the future.

In April, we launched a new Campaign Team—eight dedicated members who, alongside our consultant, began the essential work of planning for fundraising to make our vision a reality. That same month, our consultant, Rachel Maxwell, met with 37 member households to conduct a Financial Feasibility Study. These conversations helped assess our congregation's readiness and capacity to successfully launch a capital campaign. Rachel's findings provided clarity, inspiration, and a clear path forward.

In June, Rachel presented the results to the congregation, revealing that a $2.6 million fundraising goal was both ambitious and achievable. With this strong endorsement, the Board recommended, and the congregation approved, moving forward with that target.

Meanwhile, the Building Team and architect worked to refine project priorities and develop more accurate cost estimates for the initiatives to be included in this goal.

As we turn the corner into the fundraising phase, it is a joy and privilege to work alongside such committed lay leaders. Together, we are focused, energized, and ready to take the next steps toward creating a lasting legacy for our congregation—one that will serve generations to come.



FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Finance Committee assists the Board of Trustees in its fiduciary responsibilities in two main areas:

1. The monitoring of the Society's financial resources to achieve its mission, and
2. The overall financial viability of the Society.

The Finance Committee met monthly with the administration during this last fiscal year, and I can assure the Society that the overall financial viability of the Society is sound.

Members of the Finance Committee for 2024-2025 are Buzz Moran (Treasurer), Erin Wilson (Director of Administration), Gunn Dukes, Mike Ristow, Laura Haston, Maurice Wada, Joe Fior, and Onolee Zwicke.

After a $10K budget surplus in 2023-2034, the congregation adopted a balanced budget in June 2024.I am pleased to report that the surplus for 2024-2025 is over $60K. This is due primarily to some extraordinary gifts from members of the congregation, as well as a large demand for room rentals and weddings. In June 2025, the congregation voted to role over $20K of this surplus into the 2025-2026 budget in order to achieve a balanced budget going forward. In calendar 2024, the Endowment Fund, currently at approximately $1.7M, contributed $103K to the operating fund. In addition, the Fashion Fling and Auction were very successful, contributing $24K to the bottom line.

The administration took several steps to maximize interest income to USSB during the last fiscal year. We now park our excess cash in a combination of interest bearing savings accounts and certificates of deposit in two banks, allowing us maximal flexibility combined with income to USSB. Average interest rates earned during the year were approximately 4%. We also completed a successful audit of our books, with no negative observations reported.

During the year, a temporary but mandatory sewer repair was completed and charged to the maintenance reserve. A complete repair will be implemented during the capital campaign, when we extend the sewer line to connect into Jefferson Hall. The maintenance reserve currently stands at approximately $31K.

FINANCE COMMITTEE cont.

We enter 2025-2026 with the capital campaign in full swing, entering the fundraising phase. In preparation for this project, the administration fully completed all financial transactions related to the prior 2009 capital campaign, and closed this out. New QuickBooks accounts and separate checking and savings accounts were set up to segregate the new capital funds from operating funds. Preliminary discussions were held with several banks to begin the process of financing the capital campaign. A deposit was placed with a specialist vendor for stained glass window repair, to facilitate the restoration of the leaded stained glass windows in the Sanctuary. Due to some early generous gifts from members of the congregation and the addition of Board designated funds from a previous donation, we enter 2025-2026 with approximately $80K for the new capital campaign in the bank. The Finance Committee looks forward to working with the Administration to facilitate the smooth rollout of the campaign during the next fiscal year.

I personally want to thank the members of the Finance Committee for their work over these last twelve months. All members of the Committee have agreed to continue their work over this next fiscal year. I especially want to thank Erin Wilson, Director of Administration, and Cindy Young, our bookkeeper, for their attention to detail, their dedication to USSB, and their energy and good humor in getting everything done that is required of the administrative team. The congregation benefits greatly from their behind-the-scenes activities, and they are a pleasure to work with.

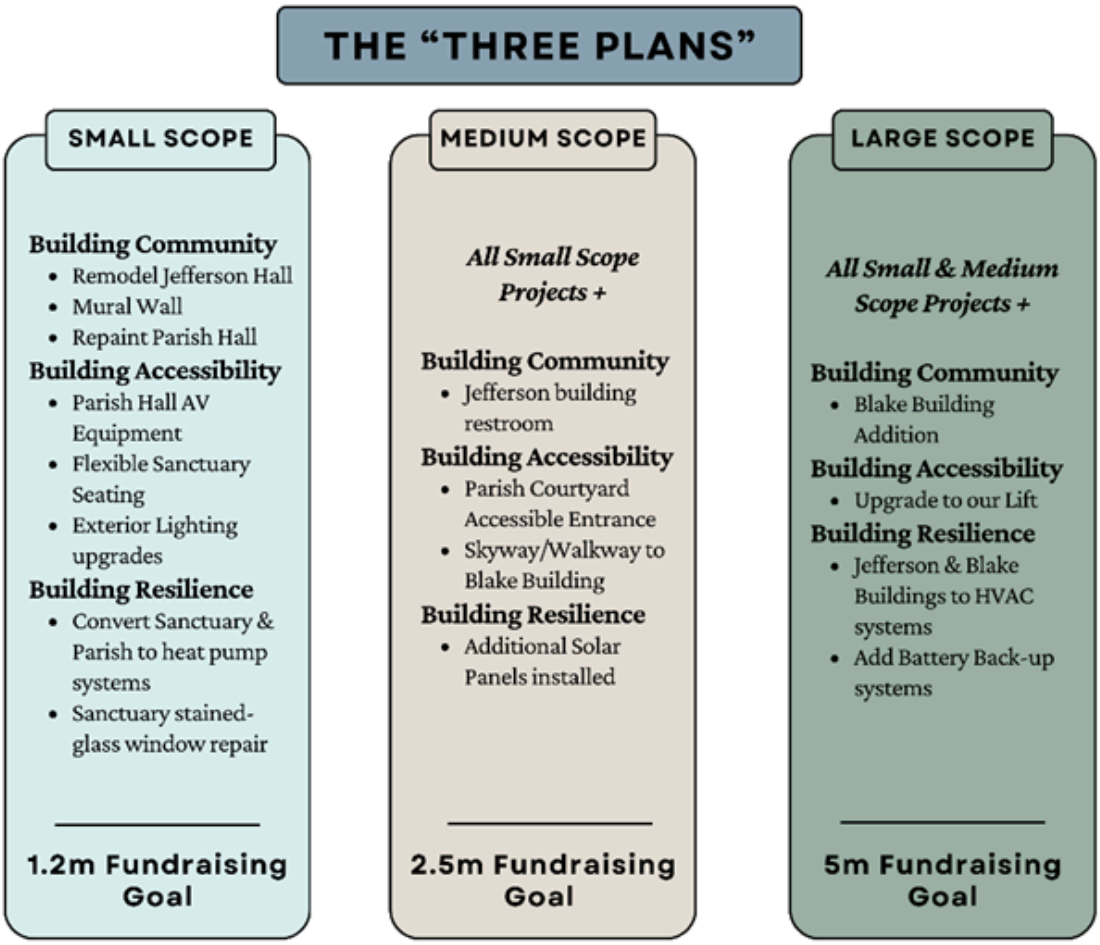
Respectively submitted,
Buzz Moran, Treasurer



Building Team

The 2024-2025 Building Team—Craig Woodman (Chair), Ken Beisser (Co-Chair), Erin Wilson, Kathleen Boehm, Ed Bookin, Catherine Callahan, Nate Rich, and Melinda Stavely— is primarily tasked with identifying and eventually managing building projects to implement the congregation's inputs regarding the Bridge to the Future capital campaign. The Vision Team synthesized congregant comments and shared the resulting priorities with the congregation on April 21, 2024. Based on these priorities, the Building Team identified potential building projects and established working groups to research and further refine the projects.

On May 19, 2024, Rev. Julia Hamilton led a joint meeting of the Building and Vision teams to further discuss, clarify and provisionally categorize major potential projects into Small, Medium and Large scopes of work that could be implemented, depending on financial feasibility and congregational giving.



It's one thing to write the name of a project on a whiteboard but quite another to understand just what it entails, where it might go, how it could be designed and engineered, what it might cost, its permitting requirements and timeframe, etc. Ultimately, we would need to hire an architect, but we were determined to minimize architectural costs by providing the architect with draft project descriptions, preliminary plans and design guidance, and other written information.

Building Team cont.

As a result, the Building Team spent the summer of 2024 developing the details. As part of that process, Ken, a retired mechanical engineer and Co-Chair, prepared scaled floor plans and other technical drawings and later designed the new electrical, mechanical and plumbing systems to support the Jefferson Hall remodel and the campus-wide conversion of our old gas-fired furnaces and equipment to electric versions, including installation of modern heat pump HVACs. Ken's work saved a great deal of money that otherwise would have been spent on architectural services.

By August of 2024, we were ready to search for an architect. Ken, Craig, Erin and former team member Ivor John interviewed four highly qualified architectural firms and in October 2024 we unanimously selected Elise Garcia of Garcia Architects as our Capital Campaign architect.

Craig, Ken, Erin and Rev. Julia met with Elise almost weekly to make decisions regarding the design of our major projects in Jefferson Hall and the Blake Building. Once made, Garcia Architects prepared full-color renderings of our major projects to reflect congregational comments and requests made during the Visioning Process. For example, Jefferson Hall was reimagined to make the interior more sacred, more aesthetically pleasing and functional with stained glass windows, new cabinetry and storage, updated audio-visual equipment, a new bathroom/shower and kitchen, and a heat pump HVAC system. The Blake Building was redesigned with a new second-story addition to provide more much-needed meeting rooms and office space. An elevated "skyway" from the terrace behind the Sanctuary to the current Blake Lounge would provide easy access to the new second story rooms and at long last provide an accessible access to Blake Lounge.

Making USSB more sustainable and resilient is a major Capital Campaign goal and we are making great progress in determining how to electrify our campus powered by a new solar and battery storage microgrid. Craig Lewis, USSB member and CEO of Clean Coalition, a local firm that designs microgrids, has donated his talents and those of his staff by modeling our electrical and gas use and designing a microgrid project for our campus. Craig is providing invaluable guidance in helping us navigate the technical, financial, and regulatory hurdles to achieve our sustainability and resilience goals. Other key USSB members working with him include Erin, Lorraine Woodman, Buzz Moran, and Craig W.

Recognizing that we now face a drastically shortened timeline for qualifying for federal incentives that would reduce costs of our solar and battery storage system by 30%, Lorraine, Erin, Craig W., Buzz, and Craig L. met with multiple companies and financing institutions to understand how to best accelerate the project and maximize our benefits while minimizing our costs.



Building Team cont.

Members of our team, along with Ivor John, also met with 2nd District Supervisor, Laura Capps, Community Environmental Council, and the County Office of Emergency Management to discuss the use of USSB as a Resilience Hub in times of power outages, heat waves, and other extreme events. Our team also met onsite with the City's Historic Landmarks Committee architectural historian to review our projects so that our final plans receive quick review and approvals.

On July 20, the congregation overwhelmingly voted to support the Capital Campaign fundraising goal of $2.6 million. This was the amount recommended by our consultant, Rachel Maxwell, and approved by the Board of Trustees. Based on her interviews with representative members of the congregation, which showed a high level of awareness and enthusiasm for all aspects of the campaign, along with expected financial commitments, Rachel felt confident that this target could be achieved. This level is expected to support Small and Medium Scope Projects.

This summer Craig W. and Ken have been working closely with Erin, our architect Elise Garcia, and outside consultants to develop professional cost estimates for designing, permitting, managing and constructing these projects.

Once preliminary costs are in, all scope issues are resolved, and all congregants have been canvassed for their pledges, the Building Team will work with Erin, Rev. Julia and the Board to select the projects that best fulfill the Capital Campaign's priorities within funding limits. At that point, our architect can prepare permit applications and associated construction drawings.

Although we won't know what projects we can actually fund until permits are in hand and construction bids have been received in 2026, we expect the $2.6M in funding will allow us to pursue many (but perhaps not all) of the projects comprising the Small and Medium scopes of work, such as:

- Remodeling Jefferson Hall
- Adding a skyway/walkway from Parish Hall to Blake Building
- Adding solar panels and battery storage (creating a microgrid) to increase our resilience and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, making USSB a "Resiliency Hub"
- Replacing gas-fired equipment with electric versions where possible
- Creating an accessible entrance to the Parish Hall courtyard and replacing the existing patio surface so it is level
- Repainting Parish Hall and upgrading its AV equipment
- Adding flexible seating to the sanctuary
- Upgrading exterior lighting
- Repairing the stained-glass windows in the Sanctuary

Respectfully submitted,
Craig Woodman





LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION

Children's Religious Exploration



The 2024-2025 year in Children's Religious Exploration began with the return of our summer Makerspace program. Our culminating project - the construction of a Cardboard Arcade - was during coffee hour following the September Ingathering service. To the delight of everyone, congregants of all ages enjoyed the games the children created over the summer. We also enjoyed two Pizza Church Summer Picnics in local parks.



In a creative exchange for use of space at USSB later in the year, staff from Wilderness Youth Project provided a nature playdate in Alice Keck for CRE kids on a Sunday morning in early September. Also in September, a new tradition was born when Santa Barbara and Unitarian Universalits San Luis Obispo families met up at Lake Lopez in Arroyo Grande for a weekend of camping. Our two congregations came together seamlessly to play, make new friends, share a potluck meal, watch the deer and wild turkeys that roamed through our campsite, roast marshmallows over the campfire, and even celebrate a birthday! We already have reservations for September 2025!

Janey Madlani was our lead CRE teacher. We continued to use the UUA Soul Matters curriculum this year for two lessons a month around a theme. On alternating Sundays following a chalice lighting, our group of kids (most between the ages of 4-7) enjoyed Playful Souls Sundays in the Starr King playground. Our monthly Friday evening Pizza Church continued throughout the year. Families met in parks or Parish Hall to enjoy pizza and community. We also gave parents a couple of afternoons off this year with a Parents' Day Out in December and February. Thanks to our wonderful childcare staff for their help with this popular offering.







Speaking of our wonderful childcare staff, Sydney Tomlinson, Childcare Coordinator, and staff, Emma Parent and Dillon Masri provided consistent, loving care for our youngest children in Starr King throughout the year on Sunday mornings and for congregational events and adult programs.



As always there were lots of celebrations, multigenerational services and holiday traditions at USSB (Ingathering, All Souls Day, Thanksgiving, the Holiday Play, Burning Bowl, and Flower Communion). In December, we had a great turnout for our annual holiday craft party and a multigenerational pageant production of The Bare Tree for the congregation. On Christmas Eve, we returned to tradition with our walk-on nativity pageant in the 5:00pm service. We celebrated Easter with our annual hunt for justice, distributing proceeds from the March offertory to three local non-profits – BUNS, Transition House, and Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation!



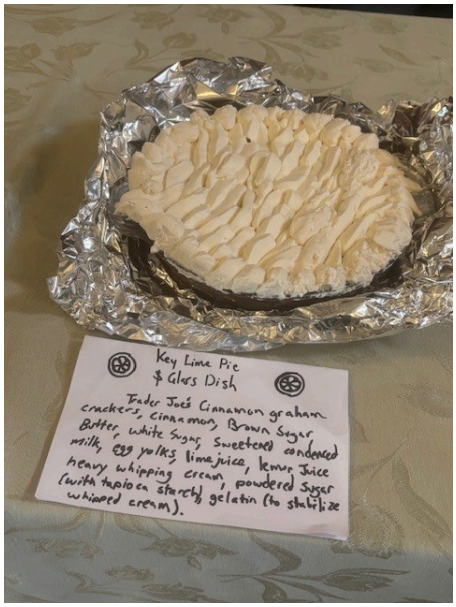




LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION cont.

Youth Programming

Christina Boardman continued her service as Youth Coordinator for the 2024-25 year. Once again, USSB youth carried the USSB banner for the Santa Ynez Valley Pride Parade in June. They also served as the Friday Warming Center Meal Team for the season.



Other highlights from the first part of the year included a miniature golf fieldtrip with the UU Ventura youth group, a Tai Chi and Rori's Artisanal Creamery field trip in Carpinteria, an afternoon movie, a pie auction fundraiser for their service trip, and participation in the Holiday Craft Party and Holiday Play, *The Bare Tree*.



YoUUth group for January and February was centered on the annual interfaith service trip to the La Cobina Posada migrant shelter in Mexicali, which took place January 17-19. 5 youth from USSB participated, along with 4 adults were joined by 5 youth and 3 adults from Trinity Episcopal Church, and 3 adults from the Catholic Church of the Beatitudes. This was our 3rd interfaith trip with youth. I am always so impressed with the maturity and depth our youth bring to this experience. We shared stories, reflections and slides from our weekend with Trinity Episcopal on February 2, 2025, in a full service at USSB on February 9, 2025, and in the online service for the Church of the Beatitudes on February 15, 2025.



Three youth from USSB joined five youth from Trinity for a sleepover in March. They ate dinner and had a scavenger hunt and chalice lighting ritual at USSB. After dinner, the group headed to Trinity for games, a Eucharist (followed by a discussion about faith and religious practices), and a movie. They finished with Sunday morning breakfast at IHOP! This event was well organized and supervised by YG Coordinator, Christina Boardman and Theo Patterson from Trinity.

In addition to YoUUth Group, we offered 8th-9th grade Our Whole Lives (OWL) programming in the fall of 2024. Under the facilitation of Chrissie Cable, Kyle Stewart, Woodwyn Koons, and Christina Boardman, this 8th-9th grade cohort of nine youth met from September - November. Of the nine participants, three were from outside the USSB community. All nine youth completed this invaluable, inclusive, sexuality education program.

Adult Religious Exploration

Connection Circles is a beloved small group ministry program for our congregation. Thank you to Carol Schwyzer and Becky Blake for their leadership and organizing skills. Carol, Becky, Mimi Bradley, Joe Fior, and Sarah Davis and Kyle Stewart facilitated circles this year, with offerings in person and online. The Sunday 11:30am circles with childcare continue to be popular with Religious Exploratoin parents.

Under the leadership of Jack Eisenhauer and John Warnock, the **Contemporary Issues Forum** (CIF) enjoyed continued popularity this year. Speakers included Dr. Julien LaBarre, political science professor from Cal State Dominguez Hills, Dr. Heather Stoll, political science professor from UCSB, Dr. JoAnn Kuchera-Morin, Director and Chief Scientist of the AlloSphere located at the Center for NanoSystems Institute at UCSB, and our own Rev. Julia Hamilton. Gratitude to Jack and John for providing this enlightening lecture series for our congregation again.

Shared Values Journaling Group was co-facilitated by DRE, Charla Bregante and Justine Sutton, this six-week online group explored the recently adopted UUA values of interdependence, equity, transformation, pluralism, generosity and justice through journal prompts and group sharing. This online course was open to other UU congregations in our area as well. There were six participants. One participant was from Live Oak UU congregation in Goleta, and one participant from the San Luis Obispo UU congregation joined as well.

In spring 2025 a new series was introduced--**Lunch & Learn**. Lunch & Learn was a series of individual workshops on Sundays afternoons lead by USSB staff and members. Offerings for this first workshop series were *My Personal Theology*, facilitated by



DRE, Charla Bregante, *UU History 101*, facilitated by Rev. Julia Hamilton, *Befriending your Mortality*, facilitated by USSB member, Eileen Bunning, *Reflection Writing*, facilitated by USSB member, Peter Hale, and Our Money; Our Values, facilitated by USSB member, Gary Welterlen. Average attendance for the workshops was 18 people, with a range from 8-29. Thank you to all of our facilitators for this rich program. We look forward to offering a new series for the fall of 2025.

Gratitude to our Adult RE Council. Thank you to Joan Ariel, Becky Blake, Nancy Edmundson, Jack Eisenhaur, Scott Kipp, Ken Ralph, Justine Sutton, Keir Zecher, and Angie Swanson-Kyriaco for serving on the 2024-25 ARE Council.

***

As always, I welcome your ideas for classes or programs you would enjoy participating in AND facilitating for children, youth, and adults. Your time and talents make our RE programs for all ages robust and rich in community. I look forward to what we will get up to in the coming year.

Charla Bregante, Director of Lifespan Religious Exploration

Music Ministry

The USSB Music Ministry program seeks opportunities for connection, community, spiritual exploration, and education through the collaborative endeavor of making meaningful music. This is done through the passionate efforts of many volunteers and leaders within the USSB congregation and beyond.

Chancel Choir has continued under the direction of Matthew Griset, our part-time music director. Matthew works with the choir members, the Music Ministry team, Rev. Julia, the Worship Associates, guest speakers, our accompanist Heather Levin, and other musicians to ensure that the music for each service reflects the tone and message of the service themes. Matthew has also provided monthly music theory sessions for choir members to learn more and ask questions.

Our Chancel Choir has brought a wide range of choral music to our worship; including modern classical choral pieces, pop tunes, folk music, and songs in a variety of languages and from various religious traditions. The choir has the responsibility to sing an average of two services per month. On alternate Sundays, many singers choose to participate in optional small ensembles, leading hymns, or singing back-up or pop-up pieces. The choir has sometimes been challenged to sing some of Matthew's own compositions and the congregation has enjoyed Matthew's piano improvisations for Sunday worship, as well as his special music vocal solos.

Our Community Choir, under the direction and coordination of Gwendolyn Kilfoyle, meets in the song-circle tradition.
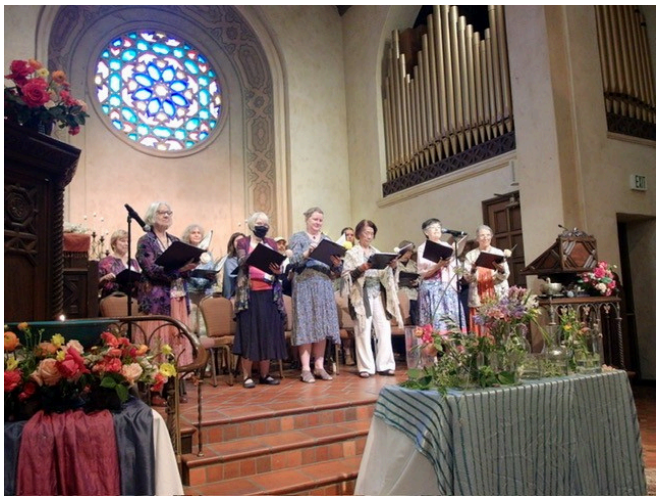
Many participants come from the community outside the congregation. This year, singers enjoyed a 6-week fall session, monthly song circles in December and January, and February, as well as a 6-week spring series. The Community Choir made several joyous appearances at Sunday Services and kept participants informed of other song circle events locally, including an invitation to join in singing inclusive and inspirational pieces at the No Kings rally in June.

Our drumming group, led by John Altman, continues to grow in numbers and skill, enriching several Sunday services with rhythms from cultures around the world.

This year, we have made full use of a new electronic drum set, expertly played by drummer Brent Wells. We are also grateful for the services of choir member Ken Beisser who sometimes serves as guitarist.



MUSIC MINISTRY cont.
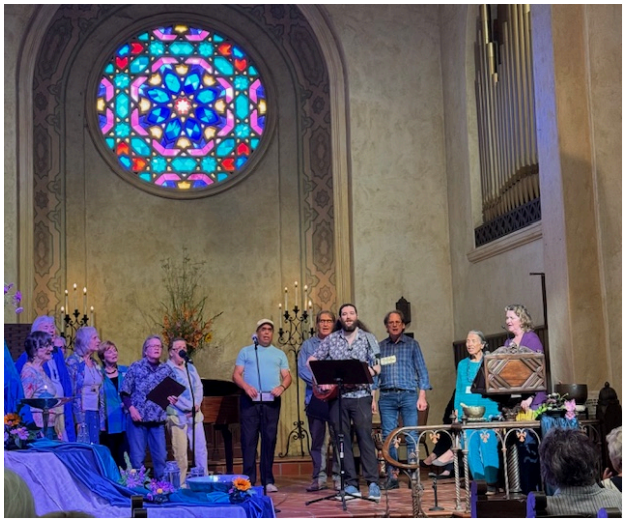


The steady stream of joy that all of our musicians bring to each rehearsal and Sunday worship service is infectious and nothing short of an inspiring display of our UU principles. They bring their compassion into every song they sing, and welcome all who wish to participate.

We were saddened by the passing of Community Choir singer Marty Acree and longtime Chancel singer, Mary Ann Jordan, but privileged to participate in a celebration of life for her.



Other special events this past year provided camaraderie and celebration through music:
·Summer 2024 Sunday hymn singing and pop-up choir presentations
·Flash-mob singing at the congregational potluck following the 2024 election
·Multiple holiday services, including one with guest jazz musicians from the community
·Observances of the usual holidays and a Blessings of the Animals service
·And the annual choir pizza party!



The Music Program looks back on this year with appreciation and excitement as we build on old and new traditions, plan for the future, and strengthen our community through our dynamic faith.

Matthew Griset, Music Director

Community Choir

This year, the USSB Community Choir, previously the Justice Choir, was renamed to better reflect the focus of the group on building inclusive community through the medium of singing. Under the continued direction and coordination of Gwendolyn Kilfoyle, singers of all levels of experience and musical background had the opportunity to experience the benefits of singing due to the accessible format of oral tradition teaching methods. The group consisted of about 30 members each season. The autumn series focused on the theme of Transitions, while the spring series focused on the theme of Hope. During each season, members of the Community Choir shared songs with the congregation during Sunday service and invited the congregation to join in the joy of learning and singing songs. Summer brought two special events, an Irish Ceili with live music and group dancing, which stoked the fires of joy and community and a 3-part series focused on empowering community members to bring songs into public settings such as marches and demonstrations.



Drumming Circle

The USSB Drumming Group continues to meet every Thursday afternoon in the Sanctuary. Now in its fifth year, the drummers have practiced and improved their playing together and formed a cohesive group.

We performed during services on May 11, 2025. We played our version of Rastafarian Nyabinghi trance music as folks entered the sanctuary and got comfortable. We also performed the West African “welcome” song, Fanga during the offertory. We don’t perform in services very often, but appreciate the congregation’s enthusiastic response.

The real focus of the Drumming Group is classic “drum circle” communication among the members leading to inspirational group improvisation. As one member pointed out, the most important thing is to have fun, and we certainly do.

-John Altman



PROGRAM REPORTS









Commission for Inclusion and Belonging

The Commission for Inclusion and Belonging (CIB), formerly known as the Anti-Racism Commission (ARC) affirms USSB's commitment to dismantling systemic racism and oppression while fostering a beloved community grounded in equity, inclusion, and spiritual growth. We do this through collaboration, reflection, and action.

CIB met monthly on the third Wednesday. For FY2024-2025, members included Anna DiStefano (Justice and Equity Team), John Altman (Board Member, Justice and Equity Team), Kathleen Boehm (Nominating Committee), Nancy Edmundson (Justice and Equity Team and Indigenous Reparations Team), Chuck Wolfe appointed February 2025. Joey Samora (Music Ministry), Cheri Runge (Justice and Equity Team), Keir Zecher (Worship Arts Team), were appointed June 2025 and Rev. Julia Hamilton (Lead Minister, ex officio).

This year, CIB hosted two well-attended Conversation Circles in February and May. These gatherings invited members, friends, and visitors to reflect on how we respond to social change with spiritual resilience and justice-rooted vision. Topics included spiritual preparation for shifting national contexts, communal support, and imagining community-led action rooted in equity. These circles have provided space for dialogue and mutual support. This input is shaping the future direction of our work.

In June, CIB collaborated with Rev. Julia and the worship team to design and participate in the Juneteenth Sunday service and the re-dedication of USSB's Black Lives Matter banner.

CIB worked closely with the Leadership Development Committee and other teams. We offered input to the Board of Trustees and the Capital Campaign Team regarding the importance of representing multiculturalism in our facilities.

Our focus is supporting spiritual formation in anti-oppression work and fostering dynamic and inclusive communities. Internally, we revisited our working covenant and affirmed the renaming of the commission to "Commission for Inclusion and Belonging." We believe this more accurately reflects the positive, forward-moving, and relational tone of our work. As part of this process, we plan to review and revise our charter in the coming year.

Through this work, CIB continues to support USSB in living out its deepest values. We remain committed to building a congregation where equity is spiritual practice, justice is shared responsibility, and all people are welcomed, valued, and beloved.



The Alliance of the Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara

The Alliance of USSB is made up of cheerleaders who have incorporated as a non-profit organization to be of use to USSB and other good causes. We are supported by dues of $25 year to give stipends to speakers' organizations and pay USSB staff fees. Members are USSB congregants and friends who come together to socialize and learn. We donate to local non-profit causes and special needs of USSB. Anyone is invited to hear speakers and have snacks at 2:00pm, the first Friday of the month, October through June. Usually, attendees bring a snack to share. We especially embrace the community who no longer goes out for night time events.

The Alliance is seeking to replace its program chair by forming a committee. The committee members would recruit presenters from our own USSB family or affiliate organizations. If you have wisdom and experiences to share and a program suggestion, we would love your participation. Talk to any of the Alliance Board Members about your ideas. The board members elected for 2025-26 are Kathleen Boehm, Florence Michel, Anita Blume, Gunn Dukes, Janet Brinckmann, and Sylvia Abualy.

This past year we heard from Rev. Julia Hamilton for an overview of what is happening around USSB. League of Women Voters representatives explained current election issues. Anita Blume graced us with Luxemburg Holiday Stories and Larry Williams led us in caroling. Angie Swanson-Kyriaco, co-founder of Reproductice Justice in Adoption, spoke about looking at adoption through the lens of Reproductive Justice. An expert trust, probate and wills professional brought us up to date on current laws. We had the advice of a DA dealing with Senior Scams. Among The Alliance's donations in 2024-25 are the new chairs with arms used after Sunday services. Thank you to the members who made it happen.

We hope to entice those, who may be available for a Friday afternoon gathering, to join us starting October 3, 2025 as we embark on another year of good works and enjoyment together.

Kathleen Bohm, The Alliance



Solo Connections

Solo Connection is a where single USSB members can socialize and support each other. It is a social group, not a dating group. Solo Connection began on New Year's Day 2020 with a potluck for members who are single. With the onset of the pandemic, we began meeting weekly via Zoom. Since then, we have had a small, dedicated group of weekly attendees along with others who occasionally show up. We share what is going on in our lives and what is on our minds. We support each other. This has continued throughout the 2024-25 congregational year. At this time we remain an online group, though if circumstances change, we will explore in-person events.

In Service,
Keith Strohmaier



The Care Team

When a crisis hits or a major life transition happens, sometimes we need a little extra support. Members of the Care Team represent the congregation when they reach out to care for fellow congregants in need. They are extensions of the pastoral arm of the ministers and work in partnership with the ministers. They also help connect members to the larger Care Network for rides, meals or other help.

Members of the congregation can get in touch with the Care Team by sending an email to ussbcareteam@gmail.com or by calling the warmline, 805-666-2879. Care Team members take turns monitoring the incoming messages and responding within 24 hours. The team also receives information about congregant needs from other congregants, and from staff members.

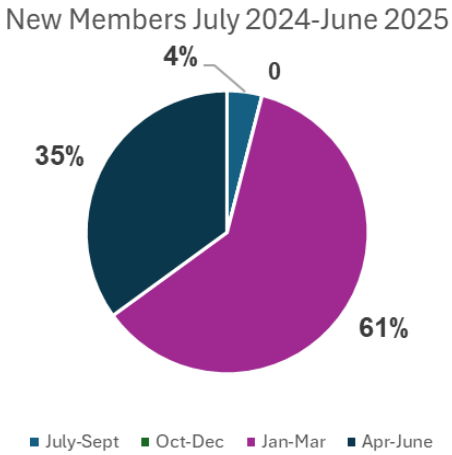
On Sundays after the service a Care Team member is available at the Care Team table in the garden to talk to congregants and to send greeting cards.

The team met monthly with Rev. Julia Hamilton to report on activities and to share and learn about Care Team work. Carol Schwyzer served as chair this year. Those who served on the Care Team during the FY2024-2025 year were Ed Bookin, Alan Edmundson, Joe Fior, Carol Schwyzer and Maurice Wada.



Membership Ministry Team

The MMT have been enthusiastic supporters of USSB's new way of inviting people to become members that was launched on January 26, 2025. In FY 2024-2025, 31 new members were welcomed to USSB. This is a 94% increase from the number of new members in FY 2023-2024!



The MMT was thrilled to host a New Member Luncheon that followed the worship service on June 1, 2025. The luncheon is an opportunity to celebrate new members and their loved ones and learn more about one another.

The MMT continues to explore new ways to engage with new members and visitors such as mentorship and small group activities. A new Connection Card debuted in January 2025 that collects a bit more information from visitors to help identify their interests. All visitors who complete a Connection Card receive a "welcome" email within 1-2 days from the Outreach & Membership Coordinator, Angie Swanson-Kyriaco.

You will find the MMT every Sunday at the Welcome table and greeting members, friends, and visitors outside of the Sanctuary before the worship service.
In Community, Laraine Gray & Sally Hamilton, MMT Co-Chairs

Connection Circles

Connection Circles are groups of eight to ten members who meet twice a month for five months. Each group has a trained Connection Circle facilitator. Members share from their experience based around monthly themes, and they learn to listen deeply to one another without interruption or response. The format and continuity allow for deep and meaningful connections which sustain the group members and strengthen the community. Practicing the art of listening opens the doors to deeper connections in all our relationships.

Now in its fifteenth year, the program is open to members of USSB and to those who are exploring membership. Younger or older, whatever your orientation or background, you are welcome! It's a great way to make meaningful connections. This year both in-person and teleconference meeting options were offered, and childcare was provided for one of the groups. About 42 group members participated in each of the two five-month sessions.

The themes for 2024-2025 were Invitation, Deep Listening, Repair, Presence, Story, Inclusion, Trust, Joy, Imagination, and Freedom.

In 2024-2025 the coordinators of the Connection Circles were Carol Schwyzer and Becky Blake. Facilitators were Becky Blake, Mignon Bradley, Joe Fior, Kyle and Sarah Stewart and Carol Schwyzer.

Holy listening-to listen another's soul into a condition of disclosure and discovery, may be the most important service that any human being ever performs for another.-Douglas Steere

Committee on Shared Ministry

Throughout FY 2024-2025, the Committee on Shared Ministry (COSM) has continued to receive appreciations and concerns from the congregation in its role as the conduit from the congregation to the lead minister. During its monthly meetings, the members have also supported Rev. Julia with upcoming issues.

The present members of COSM are Nancy Beisser, Treasa McGettigan, Kate Mead, Gail Stichler, and we welcome our newest members: Sally Faulstich and Maurice Wada. We wholeheartedly thank Deborah Wolfe and Susan Neufeld for their many years of service on the team.

With a twice-monthly table in the courtyard during coffee hour, we have received notes to COSM in person, in addition to receiving notes submitted online through the website at ussb.org/community/cosm/. Each note is discussed at the meetings and a member of the team responds to the note's author.

Our monthly meetings were suspended in July and August, while Rev. Julia has been away. We will resume meetings in September.

Submitted by Nancy Beisser, COSM member

Contemporary Issues Forum

The Contemporary Issues Forum returned for the 2024-2025 season with six excellent events. Our three-part series on democracy featured discussions on threats to democracy, post-election refocusing, and ways to rethink our democratic processes. We partnered with the League of Women Voters in December (*Rethinking Democracy*) and February (*Protecting Our Immigrant Community*). We also heard from the President of Santa Barbara City College about the role of community colleges in education, and about UCSB's Allosphere Research Facility, an immersive sphere that helps visualize massive amounts of digital data.

We eliminated our entrance fee in FY2024-2025 and began to partner with like-minded organizations. Thanks to John Warnock, Chuck Flacks, Richard Dow, and the USSB staff for making this a terrific season.

October 2024 Pathologies of Democracy
Dr. Julien Labarre, Assistant Professor of Political Science, California State University, Dominguez Hills

November 2024 Where Do We Go from Here? A Post-Election Conversation
Reverend Julia Hamilton, Lead Minister of the Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara

December 2024 Rethinking Democracies: Comparative Lessons for America's Electoral Future
Dr. Heather Stoll, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of California, Santa Barbara (cosponsored with the League of Women Voters)

February 2025 Protecting Our Immigrant Community: How Can Santa Barbara Help
Julissa Peña, Executive Director, Immigrant Legal Defense Center
Primitiva Hernandez, Executive Director, 805 UndocuFund (cosponsored with the League of Women Voters)

February 2025 The Great Recipe for Community Colleges: It's Not Just the Cooks, It's the Ingredients Too
Dr. Erika Endrijonis, Superintendent and President, Santa Barbara City College

March 2025 A New Visual Language for Communication, Education, and Empathy
Dr. JoAnn Kuchera-Morin, Distinguished Professor, MAT and Music, Director and Chief Scientist, AlloSphere Research Facility, University of California Santa Barbara

Contemporary Issues Forum is a monthly event that promotes understanding, enlightenment, and engagement around complex societal, technological, economic, and political issues that shape our world. We explore contemporary issues to build a better understanding of current affairs and implications for the future. Recognized experts and progressive thinkers share their knowledge, the state-of-the-art of research, the context in our society, current and future challenges, and possible paths forward. Employing a combination of lecture, Q&A, and facilitated discussion, we seek to improve our knowledge and explore strategies to overcome challenges to achieve productive outcomes.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES FORUM
UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF SANTA BARBARA

Justice & Equity Team

The Justice & Equity Team (J&E) is dedicated to learning about and advancing social and economic justice and engaging in compassionate outreach on issues that impact our various communities and that reflect the values and principles of our Unitarian Universalist faith.

The J&E Team meets on Zoom at 10:00am every Friday to exchange information about issues and coordinate activities. Gail Fairburn serves as the notetaker; other members rotate as discussion facilitator on the weekly call. Frequent facilitators include Nancy Edmundson, Charla Bregante, and Joanie Jones. Justine Sutton is our usual Zoom host and leads our opening and closing centering rituals.

Recurring Activities

Justice Café – J&E hosted gatherings during Sunday “coffee hour”. The gatherings offered opportunities for congregants to share what social justice work they are passionate about, opportunities to learn more about specific issues, and any calls to action.

Outreach Offerings – J & E volunteers keep the calendar for the monthly Outreach Offering recipients and provide the organizational information for USSB’s different modes of communication. Outreach recipient rganizations share 25% of the Sunday plate donations for their assigned month. For 2024 and 2025, the congregation-selected recipients were: PFLAG (March); Wilderness Youth Project (April); and Transition House (May).

Calls to Action – J&E volunteers join other congregation members when appearances at vigils, rallies, marches, or public meetings such as the No Kings rally and Transgender Unity March.

Worship Service – The J&E members coordinated with the Worship Arts Team and Rev. Julia to sponsor and present a justice-themed worship service on 8.18.2024. Thinking Globally, Acting Locally focused attention on the importance and power of local justice action.

Following policy and activity changes at the Federal Government level since January 2025, one f J&E top concernsfwas our migrant and immigrant neighbors, including our Asylum Family have escalated. Driven by urgency, the majority of our weekly focus has been on Immigration Justice. To support and strengthen that work, J&E coordinated with:

- USSB Anti-Racism Committee (renamed the Commission on Inclusion and Belonging)
- USSB Indigenous Reparations Committee (now called Chumash Outreach Group)
- Local community organizations who are doing the heavy lifting, such as 805Undocufund, Immigration Legal Defense Center, Drivers Listos, and

Justice & Equity Team cont.

La Casa de la Raza. We are active members of the Santa Barbara Border Crossing Project which includes representatives from Trinity Episcopal, the Church of the Beatitudes, and SBCares. An additional border crossing trip, with youth participation, took place in January. We have strengthened our partnerships with SBACT and the Interfaith Sanctuary Alliance.

- Partners in the nation and the world, from whom we seek information and guidance, such as CAPAS (Community Accompaniment Program With Asylum Seekers) / UUSC (Unitarian Universalist Service Committee) and advocacy groups with the League of Women Voters, US & CA.

Our Asylum Family – Our continuing relationship with this courageous and resourceful family has informed our broader Immigration Justice work and fueled our promotion of the Immigration Justice Fund at USSB. Steering members Joan Ariel and Ellen Broidy fill the demanding roles to oversee and promote the fund, with the assistance of staff and Rev Julia.

Privacy and safety strategies are an emerging concern for our partner organizations, our members, and the recipients of our efforts. We are learning about tools and strategies for confidentiality and protection.

Other notable actions and activities in 2024-2025:

- A few J&E members serve on the Board of Directors of PFLAG Santa Barbara
- Volunteering at the Pacific Pride Festival in August 2024 at the SBTAN Trans Day of Visibility in April 2025.

J & E volunteers in coordination with partners at Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Chruch, and using materials provided by UU the Vote and Reclaim Our Vote, have organized non-partisan postcard campaigns to encourage and enhance turnout for important local elections across the country. ·

- Members coordinated with local League of Women Voters for two forums, one on Immigration issues and one on the effects of the two-party system on democracy in the US.
- July 2024 – The congregation, via coordination by J&E member Deb Karoff, assisted with hosting Indigenous runners for the Peace and Dignity Journeys.
- Members promoted and attended Active Bystander Intervention and De-Escalation Training and information.
- Members attended USSB-hosted Family Preparation workshops, providing safe space, information, and assistance for immigrant families to provide for legal protections.
- Our Social Justice Calendar publicized peaceful protest events in support of free speech and our ability to advocate for our core concerns, and expose injustice.
- Our Social Justice Calendar publicized USSB Co-sponsorship of Juneteenth Santa Barbara festival in June 2025 and encouraged congregational attendance.



Flower Committee

The Flower Committee members provide a floral arrangement for the chancel table each Sunday. We are a loose knit group which welcomes anyone interested in participating. USSB has a lovely collection of vases and other flower arranging equipment. One does not need to have a flower garden or pay out of pocket for flowers to participate. We love to introduce what USSB has for making arrangements and will mentor anyone who wants to learn about creating large sprays and bouquets.



Occasional flower arrangers at USSB help out at congregational events. The highlight of decorating is for the winter holidays. We have been blessed with talented congregants who annually supply greens and join in hanging and arranging them. It takes many hands to beautify the chancel: making up the standards, forming swags and wreaths, filling the urns, and creating bows. This is a wonderful time to get in the holiday spirit while we work together. This year we even had grandchildren pitching in and adding joy to the experience.



While children may be too young to expand our ranks, the more help we have to share the Sunday decorations, the easier the commitment. Involvement is based on one's own availability. There are no committee meetings, just luncheons and learning sessions. Experience the joy of adding beauty to the worship settings. Contact us any time if you would like to make an arrangement. Also, with a financial contribution to USSB, we will provide flowers of your choice for memorials and dedications.



Your Flower Committee,
Donnis Galvan, Kathleen Boehm, Bruce Daniels, Stuart Brandt, and Linda Rose

Earth Advocates

Earth Advocates focused on the theme of "reducing," although other issues were addressed as well. Specific efforts included:

- Participated in the Bridge to the Future campaign by meeting with local representatives, including Supervisor Laura Capps, and the head of the County Office of Emergency Management regarding our efforts to make USSB a Resilience Hub, available to the community in times of extreme weather events and power outages.
- Identified funding sources and procedures available to non-profit organizations, such as USSB, for installing solar panels and battery storage, needed for day-to-day operations and to enable us to function as a Resilience Hub.
- Initiated a program allowing congregants to calculate the carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions generated by their individual households, and obtained commitments to reduce over 90 tons of personal CO_2 emissions. Held a raffle with prizes for those who participated.
- Coordinated three groups of tours of the Tajiguas Landfill and ReSource Center; more than 40 people participated.
- Gave a Sunday Reflection on the importance of the sustainability/resiliency aspects of the Capital Campaign and relationship to USSB values.
- Began a program encouraging congregants to bring their own coffee cups to Sunday services/meetings to reduce the amount of waste going into our landfill.
- Wrote thank you notes to Gregg Hart and Salud Carbajal on Earth Day, signed by congregants, in support of their legislation addressing environmental issues.
- Hosted 3C-REN, the Tri-County Regional Energy Network, who gave a presentation regarding the incentives available for home energy upgrades.
- Continued collecting thin film plastics and taking them to Ablitt's for recycling.
- Restarted the textile collection once the transfer station started accepting them again.
- Wrote articles for the Kaleidoscope and Friday emails about the two refill stores in Santa Barbara, the benefits of probiotics/organic food, and reasons to bring our own coffee cups on Sundays.
- ·Arranged a tour of the Mission Refill store.

EARTH ADVOCATES

UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF SANTA BARBARA

STARR KING
PARENT-CHILD WORKSHOP

D*ear USSB Community,*
As we reflect on the 2024-2025 school year, we are filled with gratitude and excitement. Thanks to your ongoing partnership and support, Starr King Parent-
Child Workshop experienced a year of growth, joyful celebration, and meaningful
connection.

Successes and Growth

This year, we saw a notable increase in enrollment-a promising sign that families in the Santa Barbara area are seeking early childhood education programs that nurture connection, play, and community. We were also thrilled to welcome Calais Storey as our new Director and Parent Education Instructor. Calais brings warmth, vision, and deep dedication to inclusive community-building, and her presence has already enriched our program in countless ways.

Celebrations and Community Moments

Our calendar was rich with opportunities to come together in community. The Fall Feast brought families and friends to the table in gratitude, while our Lunar New Year celebration delighted with vibrant colors, traditional treats, and a joyful dragon parade that wound through the campus with excitement and laughter. We danced into spring with the May Day Festival, accompanied by the everspirited Glendassary Jam Band. This year also marked the launch of two new seasonal traditions:our Winter Sing and Spring Sing. These potluck gatherings quickly became beloved eventsinterweaving song, family, and community spirit in ways that felt both fresh
and familiar. Together, they've deepened our commitment to fostering connection
and joy across generations.

Challenges and Looking Ahead

While this year brought many successes, we continue to listen carefully to the needs of our growing community. The Starr King staff, Board of Directors, and membership are engaging in thoughtful reflection to better understand the current needs of our community and how to ensure our program remains inclusive, equitable, and accessible for all. This year, our preschool explored new fundraising strategies to enhance our financial sustainability and support our program. Although our primary fundraiser yielded less than anticipated, the introduction of a silent auction was a successful addition that helped bridge the gap. We view these efforts as important learning opportunities and stepping stones toward building a more robust fundraising model. With the addition of a new development team, we are excited about the potential for deeper collaboration and innovation in our fundraising efforts. Together, Starr King is committed to securing the resources needed to continue nurturing and enriching the lives of the children and families we serve.

Starr King cont.

Our Gratitude to USSB

None of this would be possible without the unwavering support and generosity of the Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara. Your commitment to shared values of compassion, social justice, and connection makes our work possible and meaningful. We are deeply grateful for the space, trust, and partnership you provide. As we look to the coming year, we are energized by the possibilities ahead and grounded in the strength of this community. Thank you for your continued support and partnership along the way.

Together, through the strength of both our programs, we are nurturing something truly meaningful by helping families thrive and building a stronger, more connected Santa Barbara community.

With heartfelt appreciation,
Calais Storey
Director & Parent Education Instructor
Starr King Parent-Child Workshop

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