



Quarterly Review

Summer 2023



MINISTER'S REFLECTION

Recently I had the opportunity to attend a summer service as an observer and participant. This service was led by members of two of our Soul Matters groups, and included opportunities for singing, meditation, reflection, conversation, and deep listening. I was moved by the gifts each person brought to the service, and found myself reflecting on the beauty of our shared ministry. Although I was not able to attend every service this summer (taking much needed time for rest, retreat, and renewal), I did have the opportunity to read some of our lay leader's reflections. This summer's services included the sharing of personal stories, interwoven with creativity, spirituality, and commitments to justice, equity, and inclusion. You shared the gifts of your souls, your learning, and your lives with one another, while I had the opportunity to sit back and simply watch from the back row, with a humble and grateful heart.

There is a time when a minister must lead; and a time when the congregation must rise to take the helm. Throughout it all, we are partners in shared ministry: I teach you, and you teach me. This Fall we will return to weave our gifts together, and to learn from one another. And we will be changed by the interweaving of our stories and lives. From the pulpit to the balcony to the back row, I look forward to witnessing the continual emergence of our ministry together in the year ahead.

In peace,

Reverend Terri

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BOARD PRESIDENT'S REFLECTION

Hello, fellow congregants!

I hope that all of you have had a chance to rest and renew over the summer.

Eddie and I had a chance to visit our favorite summer vacation spot at the Cape - alas, for only a week. The rest of the time, we “staycated” with our pets: Margie, Harold and Millicent. Whether you traveled or had a “Staycation”, the Board and I welcome you back to a new and exciting year.



Thinking about the changing seasons and the beginning of another UUC year, I've been reflecting on the many years that I have been a member of UUC—since 1973 to be exact. What keeps me coming back? Is it the friendships I have made? My joyous long ago work with the RE children? The opportunity for deepening spiritual growth? Developing connections with the larger community of Stamford?

The Board met this summer for the first half of our Board Retreat. Our newest Board member, Rajesh Singh, was welcomed! We had a hearty discussion about what we were doing right and what needed some “tweaking.” We also discussed some of our goals and priorities, the largest of which was setting organizational structures/shared ministry teams and assigning a Board liaison to each of the team structures. You will have an opportunity to sign up for one of these teams during Coffee Hour this coming Sunday at our Volunteer Fair. To pique your interest, the Shared Ministry Teams for this coming congregational year include: Lay Pastoral Care, Religious Education, Communications, Technology, Building and Grounds Beautification, Worship and more.

And speaking of Coffee Hour, we are doing things differently this year. Diana Martinez-Rasekh and Mateo are chairing this venture. Every congregant is asked to sign up thru SignUp Genius to bring treats for coffee hour a couple of times per year. (Details for what to bring, and how to sign up, will be in this week's e-blast). We all need to support Diana and Mateo in this new and improved way to enjoy our coffee hour!

Hope you all will be reflecting on what keeps you coming back and looking forward to seeing you all soon!

Kind regards,

Lynne



Now let us take time to look back and celebrate some of the key moments in our shared lives that took place this past Spring and Summer!

MAY NEW MEMBER CEREMONY



We welcomed seven new members to our congregation on May 7th! Let us extend a warm welcome to Diane Jones, Linda Bellantoni, Christopher and Alex Mann (with child Oliver!), Elizabeth Brigham, Benjamin Chonigman, and Doreen Banks.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SEASON ENDS ON A “DELIGHTFUL NOTE”

In keeping with a Soul Matters theme that was explored earlier in the year, the Religious Education team wrapped up an enriching and full year with a fun-filled celebration of “delight” held in the Community Room. Participants contributed to a collective poem and the outcome was delightful! We are looking forward to the coming year, with some surprises in store for all ages.





GARDENING TOGETHER



Special thanks to Christopher Mann, Carolyn Kagan, and Andrew Damon for leading our multigenerational grounds beautification in May! The gathering took place after the Religious Education Sunday Service, and brought together children and adults to get our hands dirty and plant flowers. We look forward to continuing to make our grounds a beautiful place of peace and welcome. Sign up for the Buildings and Grounds Committee on September 10th to get involved!

VESPERS SERVICES EVOLVE & ENGAGE MORE CONGREGANTS

To the repetitive, chanting notes of well-practiced songs, and the flicker of lights and candles, participants in the ever-evolving Vespers Services find peace and quiet contemplation as they gather on the second Wednesday of the month. Since the inception of Vespers at UUC Stamford last winter, the group has met consistently to decorate the sanctuary and participate in the prayer and song ritual known as Vespers. Prior to services, musicians and singers meet for a Pop-up choir rehearsal, where 6-8 singers and 3 musicians - including a cellist, violinist, and percussionist - practice the harmonies that fill the sanctuary. Come join the choir in the fall - all voices are welcome! Or, come, gather, and experience this calming ritual for yourself.





PRIDE IN THE PARK



UUC had a presence this year at the Triangle Community Center's (TCC) Pride in the Park Festival on June 10th. Shout out to Bobbie Rich, Gail Harris, Jay Fountain, Trina Wong, Christopher and Oliver Mann, and Tom and Tallulah Frye-Lintern who joined Rev. Terri at the UUC booth to celebrate Pride in support of the LGBTQ+ Community. We will continue to partner with and support both TCC and Stamford Pride in the year ahead.

LUNCHES WITH THE MINISTER HITS THE ROAD

Reverend Terri's regular minister lunches aren't just for lunching! This spring and summer saw Rev. Terri and a variety of congregants head outside to enjoy lunch in beautiful outdoor spaces such as Lee Gardens - and perhaps most notably the beautiful gardens at the home of congregants, Christopher and Alex Mann. Christopher is a landscape architect who each year transforms their yard into a masterpiece of beauty and natural splendor that just can't help but evoke a sense of the interconnectedness of all living things! We were honored to walk the grounds and then share a meal.





Social Justice Focus on Food Insecurity & Housing

FILLING IN THE BLANKS

Nora Geissert and Diane Jones organized our most recent volunteer event with Filling in the Blanks, a Norwalk-based nonprofit that provides weekend meals for children living with food insecurity. Our group was exceptionally fast this time, and with the help of other volunteers we were able to fill 600 bags of food in one hour and 28 seconds! Not only do we fill a substantial need in the community, but we have a lot of fun doing so!

BASKETS OF HOPE FOR PACTIFIC HOUSE



We had a successful spring drive to collect items for a welcome basket for those transitioning out of Pacific House emergency shelter into more permanent housing. Thank you to all who contributed pillows, sheets, blankets, towels, and so many more items. Our community room was overflowing with donations! Special thanks to Trina Wong for coordinating this project. The collection for Pacific House will continue on an ongoing basis throughout the year, with help from our RE children to decorate a new basket that can be used for collecting items. Stay tuned for more details!





Community Building Activities Flourish at UUC

SOCIAL SOULS continues to serve as a dynamic and engaging platform within the UUC community. Members of the Social Souls Community Listserv (Google Group) were invited to gather for UUC's Writers Circle, a Pride in the Park celebration, UUC's Game Night, community events observing and celebrating Juneteenth, a Community Drum Circle, and more.

AFTERNOON ADVENTURERS met throughout the spring and summer to enjoy porch dining at Zody's. Members of the group also stepped out to support fellow congregants in their artistic endeavors. Don Perley's art installation was prominently displayed at the Greenwich Art Society and Carolyn Gamanos' work was the focus of a very successful reception at The First Bank of Greenwich. Mark your calendars for an Adventurers picnic at **Cove Island on September 20th.**

FIRST FRIDAY POTLUCK - On Friday, August 4th, we held a successful First Friday Potluck with attendees enjoying a delicious selection of summer dishes and good fellowship. Our next First Friday Potluck will be held on **Friday, October 6th.**

Looking ahead, some of you may remember the Famous Chinese New Year's Dinners provided by Sheryl Ma (including one delivered to waiting cars in the middle of the Pandemic!) Save the Date for the next Celebration: **February 9, 2024!**





TAG SALE TIME AGAIN! – The regular spring event in conjunction with Arts & Crafts on Bedford was a fun day for our volunteers, as well as those who stopped by to browse and to take a look at our sanctuary. The tag sale is a part of our presence and awareness-building efforts in the community – as well as an excellent fundraiser. We netted \$1200 this year in the Spring and are gearing up for the Fall sale at this writing.

BUSINESS UPDATES

- The Annual Meeting was well-attended this June with congregants passing the budget and approving the slate of officers for the 23-24 year.
- The Board of Trustees presented the Annual Recognition Award to former Board VP Maria Lassman for her significant service in all areas of church life.
- The work of restoring our beautiful sanctuary is ongoing, with the missing upper window having been ordered and being shipped from abroad. Additionally, our driveway and parking area were paved and create an aesthetically pleasing and safe area now for all who enter!

OF NOTE - The Emerson Hall Foundation work is moving forward, including incorporation of the Foundation and securing a Federal ID number. We have approved By-Laws, are working on a website and letterhead, and researching D&O insurance options. In the coming months, we will be exploring historic preservation connections and grant options, marketing strategies and other ways to become more visible in the community!