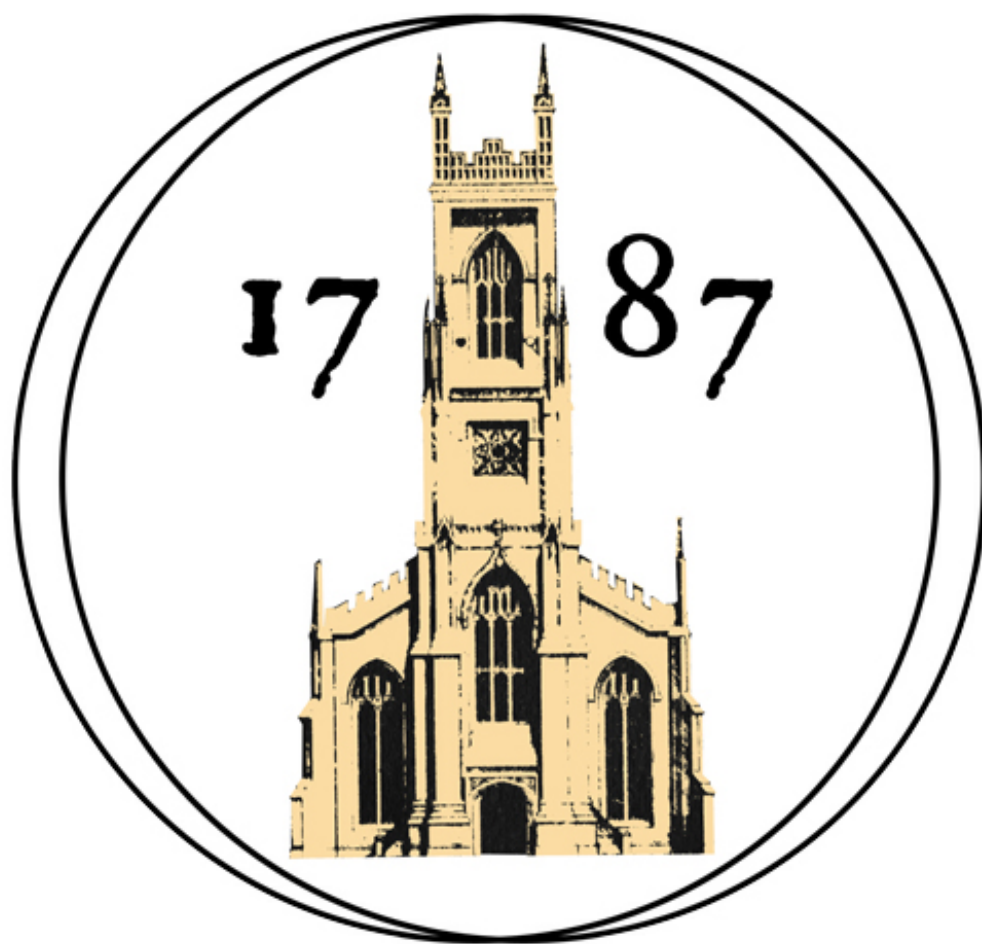


**THE UNITARIAN CHURCH IN CHARLESTON
SOUTH CAROLINA**

**Annual Report to the Congregation
2011 – 2012**



May 20, 2012

A MEMBER OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION

Minister

Since we all know all the old clichés about how quickly time can pass, I will resist repeating one here and simply allow you, dear reader, to insert your own. We have developed such hyperbole regarding time because it's true—in the rumble and rush of all that is expected of us, and in the steady flow of all that life can bring us, indeed time can appear to accelerate. This is how I'm feeling as I write this, already my third Annual Report in your service. It seems just yesterday (oops, cliché alert) that Mark Farnham called me on a summer Saturday night to explain an opening in the pulpit and to ask if I might be willing to consider a temporary ministry while the church considered options. That was June 2009 and the rest is history (that's two).

In reviewing the church year we are soon to complete, the highlight for me, without question, was the wonderful Service of Installation we shared in October. During that special rite, attended by so many members, and also colleagues and friends, we formally established the relationship we have worked so hard to nurture and we made important promises to one another. On an immediate level, the ceremony was reflective of our personalities and the present mood of the church; it was about us. However, it was so much more, as it also reflected an honorable history of ministry perpetuated by ministers and members alike, over the two-hundred year history of our congregation; it was about more than just us.

Some of our achievements and best attempts this year were pursued “for us.” For example, we expanded our Adult Education emphasis and offered a new array of weekly programming. Janet Watts, our gifted Director of Religious Education, managed this process with enthusiasm and organization. We're still discerning what folks want, but Janet has accomplished good things, and no doubt, will continue to develop what the congregation will support.

This year was marked by other staff transitions. In the late fall, when the Office Administrator role became open on short notice, Hannah Piazza, who had already spent a year as our talented Office Assistant, was able to step up, fill the breach and take on new temporary responsibilities with efficiency and poise. After a search committee considered candidates, Hannah was offered the job and now serves the church on a full-time basis. She brings confidence and a steady countenance to the Administrative desk and a maturity that belies her years.

We successfully made the move from an on-site Sexton to a part-time position and rented the apartment (over the Annex) once reserved for the Sexton's housing. This was new territory for us, and in truth, we are still adjusting. The apartment was modestly renovated and we found tenants easily. However, it took a while to find Mike Garbarini, who filled our revised Sexton role with skill and good-humor. Mike quickly learned our schedules and systems and helped make what could have been an uneven transition smooth and uneventful. Sadly, Mike will soon take leave. We knew his tenure with us would be brief but he has made such a positive difference, he will be missed.

Rounding out what we've accomplished “for us,” Lin Raymond continues to oversee an impressive music program featuring The Chancel Choir (adults), the Chalice Choir (children, led with such talent and warmth by Amy Ball and Carol Oates), occasional guest musicians, an annual Christmas cantata, and seasonal, charitable Candlelight Concerts. Lin moves us on the piano and organ, and our choirs accent our worship and lift our spirits regularly.

Arguably, our biggest “more than just us,” accomplishments are found in the enlargement of our social justice outreach. Pending congregational votes, we will align with the Charleston

Area Inter-Faith Steering Committee (CAISC) in spirit and also by financial commitment to help unify the diverse congregations in the tri-county area around social issues of shared concern. By corraling our energy and memberships, we hope to be advocates for local justice and hold civic leaders more accountable. When fully organized, there will be no other body of this nature active in Charleston, and such an entity can make a great difference in the life of our community.

On a more ideological, but no less important, level, is our chance to adopt the “Charter for Compassion,” (also pending a congregational vote), and make the pledge an active part of church life. The charter organizers, including noted author Karen Armstrong, act from the position that compassion gets plenty of mention in the public realm, but precious little real utilization. The charter, as a present reminder among us, will motivate us, especially when in conflict, to try and step into another’s shoes and honestly view the dividing issue from her perspective, through his experience.

Our increased involvement with CAISC and “The Charter for Compassion,” along with our on-going Charitable Giving campaigns, Coffee Houses, and various other opportunities for service and support, help us take shared values and the desire for justice outside our walls into the larger community. These programs also put us into contact and relationship with others, whose views may differ from our own. There is great value in moving beyond comfort zones and learning where we might connect and learn from differences.

Reports like this are always incomplete and I am quite sure I am overlooking other big accomplishments that are worthy of note. I acknowledge likely omissions so please read this document cumulatively. I trust others will fill in whatever blanks I have left and round out our yearly commentary.

Although marked with rather high staff turn-over, this was, otherwise, a year of plateau and stability. A visionary committee extended our accessibility emphasis into the Sanctuary and a lovely “ramp room” was constructed to look as if had been in place all along. This development renders both our primary social and worship spaces now sound and accessible. Our decisions on ministerial appointments are just as solid and we welcomed 71 new members. This was a year for us to pause a bit and reflect on what we cherish here, and cherish is the best word, as it captures that devotion of feeling and sense of belonging that makes the church connection unlike any other social bond we may have. Returning to Installation Sunday, I remind you of what the congregation read together:

“We cherish our church for its historic achievements and devotion to freedom. We cherish the memory of our founders who nurtured our existence as an independent congregation. We cherish our church for all that it now has to give: the friendships it makes possible, the loyalties it fosters, the imagination it stimulates, the comfort it brings, the quickened sense of conscience it engenders, the positive influence it bestows on children, youth, adults, and the wider community. We cherish our church for what it may yet become.”

We have much to celebrate this year but let us remain somewhat discontent, every hungry for the delights and demands tomorrow will surely bring. Forward thinking and obedience to the long view has served this church well, and will continue to guide us, if we so allow. It’s been a good year, but the best is yet to come (that’s three).

I remain proud to be your minister.

Respectfully submitted,



Administrator

All of the wonderful accomplishments and transformations our church endured last year have been met with yet another great year of growth and achievement.

We began the year with a new Office Administrator, Mary Smith, who accompanied us through the installation of new floors in the hallway of Gage Hall, repairs and rental of the annex apartment, the organization of a membership photo directory, and the completion of a new handicap accessible ramp in the Sanctuary.

All of these accessions, however, cannot be mentioned without acknowledging the generous folks who steered these projects to their completion. Priscilla Shumway was big in spring boarding the new flooring in Gage Hall. Karen Abrams lent her professional expertise in helping us list and rent the annex apartment. Maureen Porter was a master liaison and dedicated much of her time seeing the Lifetouch photo directories through publication. Susan Conant, Stan Goldberg, Charlie Miller, Deb Mihal, and Paul Nelson drove the successful committee that raised funds for the accessibility ramp. Ray Setser, John Meffert, and Paul Garbarini were all readily present and active during the construction of the ramp in the Sanctuary, (which has solidified our mission in making everybody welcome to our church). And of course, our outstanding Sexton, Mike Garbarini, was there carrying us through it all.

Following the successes of the year's first quarter, we moved into a period of transition. Mary resigned in November and I went from part-time Administrative Assistant to fill the post as Interim Administrator. This change paralleled the movement of all church financial responsibilities to DAK bookkeeping firm. I worked together with our dedicated treasurer, Don Hearth to form a new system to ensure that our financial records agree and consolidate with DAK's. Through this time I was able to apply all I had learned under my time with Reny Wilcher, our previous Administrator, and see us through the holiday season and new calendar year.

February began the Annual Pledge Drive which Karen Abrams and Amy Ball conquered with diligence and spirit (yet again) to reach our most ambitious goal thus far. In early March I was officially hired as the new Office Administrator. Since, I've been working to keep all transitions as seamless as possible and exhibit my great appreciation and dedication to this church community. The magnificent staff has made my new advancement joyous and smooth with all of their support. The Vestry has been important as well in seeing that all my efforts meet theirs and come to fruition.

I am grateful to be surrounded by such an encouraging community of individuals. It has been a great year and I whole-heartedly look forward to many more.

Administrative Notes:

- Our church submitted 275 certified members to the UUA in January 2012.
- This year 71 people have taken the Pathways to Membership Class and become members.
- We hosted 14 weddings in the Sanctuary this year and one Spoleto opera.
- Gage Hall has been rented 23 times, not including our on-going rental agreements with The Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry or the Charleston Jung Society.
- We continue our mutual relationship with Charleston Day School and will begin using their facilities for classes and RE next year.

Respectfully submitted, Hannah Piazza, Administrator

Music Director

Mission: The mission of the music program is to enhance worship through music.

We strived to meet this goal in the following ways:

Music for the Church Services:

Musicians from our congregation and guest musicians provided music on piano, flute, guitar, violin, viola, whistle, recorder, voice, trombone, and percussion.

Amy Ball generously continued as a volunteer accompanist for the choir.

We increased the choral library with several new anthems.

Hymnals were purchased for the sanctuary, both *Singing the Living Tradition* (10) and *Singing the Journey* (10).

The choir members gave generously of their time, especially for the Christmas Cantata and the Christmas Eve services.

The Chalice Choir continued with strong monthly performances in the services from October through April. The choir was lead in weekly rehearsals by Carol Oates and Amy Ball with accompaniment by Max Hutton.

Community Outreach:

Auditions were held for the fifth annual Martha Welch Music Scholarship. This year's winner was Max Hutton, pianist.

The Chancel Choir provided music for Crisis Ministries National Memorial Service for the Homeless on December 21, 2011 at Marion Square.

The Music Committee in conjunction with the Fine Arts Committee launched our third series of Candlelight Concerts, a concert series of classical music in the sanctuary, with Art Openings in Gage Hall. The concerts were held on the first Friday of the months of November, February, and April. These concerts benefit the music program at James Simons Elementary School, helping children of low-income families expand their education. Our total donation to the music program this church year was \$3,018.00, which has helped to purchase musical instruments and teaching supplies.

Respectfully submitted by Lin Raymond, Music Director

Religious Education Director

We have kept many of our traditional services and events for children in RE, but this year's big change was the addition of Adult RE programming for the first time under the responsibilities of the DRE. I was give full-time status this church year and it has made a considerable difference in the quantity and quality of the offerings in this fledgling arena of Adult Religious Ed. Adult RE offering formally started in October 2011. Adult RE registration, evaluation, child care requests and class proposal forms have been created and put on the church web site. This information is not as user friendly as we would have hoped and we are working on ARE being more web friendly. Our first year of ARE offering included:

Morning Meditation: 29 classes; **Current Events discussion group:** 3; **Technology workshop:** 1; **Yoga:** 13 classes; **Dream work:** 13 classes; **Drumming circle:** 4; **Newcomers Q &A with the Minster and DRE:** 7; **Lingka Path Eastern Philosophy classes:** 8; **Humanist:** 2; **Radical Christian Readers** 3; **Tai Chi:** 2.

Additional special ARE offerings included a presentation on "The Tin Smith of Tradd Street" by Paul Garbarini and a lecture by author Imran Ahmed titled "Islam and the West—A Personal Journey." Rev Reed offered movie nights and a special group on grief and loss over the winter holidays. Community Minister Elaine Aron Tenbrink will offer an eight-part class over the summer titled "Spirit in Practice."

Other areas of interest include the sheer number of children in the RE program. The 2-8 year-olds have significantly increased in attendance. We have also had to add a third nursery attendant. Traditional attendance in Sunday school drops after the Christmas season, but we actually had an increase in attendance and this has necessitated the RE Committee and I to look into alternative gathering spaces. In the fall of 2012 we will expand into the Charleston Day School library for two of our Sunday School classes. This will mean extra teachers and additional resources. The REC is considering volunteer guidelines for families and the possibility of a registration fee for RE attendance.

The primary focus of my job is on quality Sunday School offerings for our children. This includes the recruitment, training, support and supervision of many volunteer teachers. In addition to Sunday classes we also offered fellowship and exploration with traditional events and newer projects. Among these are the following:

Social Justice events: School supply collection for the Crisis Ministries family shelter; monthly Back-Pack-Buddies work for the teens at the Lowcountry Food Bank; Winter mitten tree collections for Crisis Ministries; Thanksgiving canned food drive (365 pounds of food) for LFB; Guest at Your Table collection for the UU Service Committee; serving dinner at Crisis Ministries; working for the Oyster Roast in aid of YRUU scholarships, and the RE-wide education and collection of household items for the Florence Crittenton House.

Holiday Celebrations: Father's Day picnic service; Halloween party; Harvest Sunday; Christmas party and Santa appearance; RE holiday pageant and service; Easter Sunday service, egg hunt and petting zoo; Everybody's Birthday.

Age-specific activities included the following:

Youth Group- Trips included Edisto Beach visit, camping trip to Ravenel, Pentecostal church, AME church, Hindu Temple, Music Farm concert and Mountain Youth Conference in NC. The teens organized an art show and poetry slam. Three teens will participate in the UUSC Civil Rights Journey this summer. All three received scholarships to tour Atlanta, Birmingham, Montgomery and Selma with other UU youth from across the country to learn about the courageous people who worked to bring an end to racial discrimination in the US. Youth facilitator Amberjade Taylor left us in December to further her education in India and Matthew Foley worked with Tyler Ray to complete the church year.

7th & 8th graders- This year's class completed their Coming of Age requirements and presented their Belief Statements in church; they attended a Youth Conference in NC and visited local houses of worship including the Reform Synagogue; Catholic Cathedral; Greek Orthodox, Lutheran, and AME churches; Charleston Central Mosque; the Charleston Hindu Temple & Cultural Center; and the Dharma Center.

Communications- Two teacher trainings took place, as did one Sunday fire drill, two parent volunteer meetings, and two children's art shows in Gage Hall; we recognized two high school graduates, Susan Conant's new Musical ensemble for teens performed, and the children's Chalice Choir, under the leadership of Amy Ball and Carol Oates, has had rehearsal every Sunday before church this year. These new and improved additions to the children's music program are greatly appreciated.

Respectfully submitted, Janet S. Watts, Religious Education Director

Vestry

Much of the work over the summer of 2011 involved the searches for a new Office Administrator and Sexton, and the refurbishment and rental of the Annex apartment. A new Office Administrator was hired who had good qualifications, but turned out not to be a good fit, and she chose to leave in December. Fortunately, our office assistant, Hannah Piazza, was able to fill in full-time while a new search got underway. A careful review and revision of the job description was done, including moving most of the bookkeeping responsibilities to an outside agency. A new search resulted in the hiring of Hannah as our Office Administrator. We had many applicants for the Sexton position, but few well-qualified ones. We were fortunate that Mike Garbarini wanted to make a move to Charleston, and he has been doing an excellent job.

The Vestry held a retreat in September, where the main focus was an evaluation of the current Four Bold Steps/Strategic Plan and brainstorming new goals for a revised plan. Many of the goals from the current plan have been accomplished, and deserve celebration by the whole congregation. The next step in updating the plan was to ask the Program Council at their September, 2011, meeting to have each committee do its own brainstorming for new goals and ideas. The results of that have been collated into a rough draft of a new plan, and at its April, 2012, meeting, Program Council members gave their input into the draft. The next step will be to have a series of working meetings open to the entire congregation to further refine the plan.

Several members attended the UUA General Assembly in June, 2011, and brought back information and enthusiasm for the concepts of the Charter for Compassion and for Congregation-Based Community Organizing (CBCO). More than 100 UU congregations around the country participate in CBCOs, and an effort to organize one in Charleston began in 2011. The Vestry and Social Justice Committee wholeheartedly endorsed the concept of becoming members of the CBCO that is forming, and a number of events were held to inform the congregation about our opportunity to join this interfaith effort. This work will result in congregational votes on May 20 to endorse the Charter for Compassion and formally join the CBCO Charleston Justice Ministry. Joining involves a financial commitment, and a line item has been proposed in the 2012-2013 budget.

Summer of 2011 was a busy one, as work proceeded for the accessibility project in the Sanctuary. Everyone was very pleased at the outcome. During the process of cutting through the wall in the foyer, a number of the original bricks were removed, and some of the intact ones have been preserved. Recognizing that enslaved African laborers were no doubt involved in the making and laying of those bricks and in the construction of the Sanctuary, the Vestry approved the idea of creating some kind of marker that would acknowledge their contribution. Paul Garbarini has been actively researching this subject, and is chairing an ad hoc committee to create a design for and recommend placement of this marker.

A major event in the life of the Church occurred in October, 2011, with the formal installation of Rev. Danny Reed as our settled minister. It was a joyous occasion, and the congregation gave him the gift of a custom-made stole, with funding provided by the Alliance. Danny participates in all Vestry meetings and works well with the Vestry, providing guidance and much-needed humor.

Another major effort of the Vestry this year has been the review and revision of Vestry Policies. Our Constitution provides that additional policies not clearly set forth in that document be developed by the Vestry for the governing of the Church. A new policy, #24 was developed on Financing of Church Projects. This policy is intended to standardize the process of financing church construction/maintenance projects by both standing and ad hoc committees that are outside of the scope of the approved committee budget. Several other policies were updated, and others are in the process of revision. All Vestry Policies can be found on the UCC website.

We owe many thanks to Karen Abrams and Amy Ball, who agreed to co-chair the Annual Pledge Campaign again this year. It is due to their diligent efforts and the generosity of many members that we had a successful outcome to the campaign. The Finance Committee developed a draft budget for 2012-2013 which has been approved by the Vestry and will be voted on by the Congregation at the annual Corporate Meeting.

The major responsibilities of the Vestry, as specified in the Constitution, are in the areas of strategic planning, policy development, finance, and provision of staff. We have been active in

all those areas this year. Your Vestry members have been Diane Boyer, Chair; Paul Wilczynski, 1st Vice-Chair; Mark Farnham, 2nd Vice Chair; Trip Banner, Secretary; Deb Mihal, Todd Frech, Hillary Hutchinson, Myrtle Staples and Carol Tempel. Trip, Mark and Paul will be ending their three-year terms this year. Many thanks to all for their hard work.

Submitted by Diane Boyer, Vestry Chair

Program Council

The Program Council, made up of the church committees and Church Administrator, work directly with the church staff to take care of the church's day to day management, and tackle problems that need multi-committee and staff support. This allows the Vestry to concentrate on Church Strategic Plans, financial budgets, and church policies.

The Program Council Membership consists of Committee Chairs from: Social Justice, Building/Grounds, Churchyard, Docents, Worship; Personnel, Caring Committee, RE, Communications, Stewardship; Music, Finance, COSM, Connecting Circles. The Program Council is lead by its Co-Chairs: Hannah Piazza, Church Administrator and Paul Wilczynski, 1st Vice Chair of the Vestry.

The member committees of the Program Council submitted their budgets to the Finance Committee, and ensured that there were few, if any, conflicts in the church calendar.

It also began work on revisiting the Four Bold Steps. Previous to the April meeting, Committee Chairs and Co-chairs were asked to do two things:

- 1) Evaluate the accomplishment of the objectives listed under each Bold Step, particularly in regard to the committee's work in achieving that objective;
- 2) Brainstorm ideas for future Bold Steps and objectives for the church.

The results of these reports were brought to the April meeting. Participants broke up into 4 work groups and evaluated the ideas and objectives. This discussion will be continued in next year's Program Council.

Submitted by Paul Wilczynski, Vestry 1st Vice Chair

Treasurer

The Church's fiscal year runs from the first of July through June of the following year. We ended the last fiscal year on June 30, 2011 in a very strong financial position. The Operating Budget income was approximately \$5,000 (1.5% of the total) over expenses. The balances of the Endowment, Churchyard and Landmark Funds were approximately \$730,000, \$120,000 and \$61,000 respectively. Finally, our reserves totaled about \$30,000.

The current fiscal year has again been strong through the first 10 months. The Operating Budget looks good largely because of the very successful service auction, income from rental of the Sanctuary higher than expected and, so far, strong payment of pledges by Members and Friends. If this continues during May and June, we will have a carryover such that the Operating Budget for the next fiscal year does not need to include money for the reserves which was originally recommended by the Finance Committee.

The Endowment Fund received a \$101,000 gift last June to establish a Social Justice Restricted Account. The value of the Endowment Fund today is about the same as it was one year ago. This is because of market conditions and the \$22,000 that the fund contributed to the Church.

The balance of the Churchyard Fund is about the same as one year ago.

All bills totaling approximately \$650,000 have been paid for the interior restoration of and the accessibility to the Sanctuary. The Landmark Fund (pays for major maintenance, restoration and improvements to the Sanctuary) will have a balance of about \$35,000 if all outstanding pledges for restoration and accessibility (about \$9,000) are paid in full.

The responsibilities for handling the Church's finances have undergone three major transitions during the past year. Mary Smith replaced Reny Wilcher as the Office Administrator in July 2011 and the Vestry hired DAK Bookkeeping Services to handle the pay role functions. Mary resigned in November. I then recommended, and the Vestry agreed, to expand the role of DAK to include essentially all of the financial responsibilities previously held by the Office Administrators. The new system has been in place since December and is working well. This system properly enlarges the role of the Treasurer. This would not have been possible without the Church having an Assistant Treasurer. Terry Walsh has been working with me in this role since October. She has been a huge help and a terrific student in terms of learning the Treasurer position.

My term as Treasurer will end shortly. The Vestry and the Finance Committee have been very supportive during the past four years. Thanks to the Vestry Chairs under whom I have served: Jay Westbrook, Karen Abrams, Sally Newell and Diane Boyer. My very special thanks go to Ellie Setser who, as Finance Chair during my four years term, has been an inspiration and a supporter. Thank you very much, Ellie.

Submitted by Don Hearth, Treasurer

Ad Hoc Committee for Health and Wellness

At the request of the Vestry Chair, Diane Boyer, the Ad Hoc Committee for Health and Wellness (Committee) was organized and began meeting in early August 2011. The goal of the Committee was to determine if there is a need to develop additional programs, policies and/or education related to Health & Wellness (H & W) in our church. Members of the Committee investigated

community and national resources that might be used to support such programming. Results of a congregational survey conducted during March 2012 indicate there is strong interest and significant need for additional programming.

In its April 2012 final report to the Vestry, the Committee highlights major findings from the survey and listed resources available for H & W programs. The Report also proposed a structure for organizing and implementing H & W programs in our church.

Respectfully submitted, Joanne Milkereit

Alliance

In the calendar year 2012 the Alliance has 32 members.

Fundraising activities: As of September 1, 2011, Alliance balance: \$3,154.31

June Rummage Sale: \$328.20; October Rummage Sale: \$352.50; March Rummage Sale: \$725.00; Holiday Bazaar: \$1,727.70; Cookbook sales: \$920.00; Sunday book sales: \$238.50; Dues: \$625.00. a Rummage Sale is planned for June; anticipated income is \$500.00.

Expenses: Gage Hall entrance: \$800.00; installation present: \$245.00; reception expenses: \$258.00; P&C ads: \$128.35.

Disbursements: On May 13 the Alliance will present a check to the church for \$1,000.00 toward staff bonuses and \$1,500.00 toward church operating budget. Checks for \$100 each have been sent to *People Against Rape, My Sister's House* and *Pet Helpers*.

Social Activities: The Alliance hosted a Pot Luck in August, a Pancake Breakfast in September, Danny's Installation reception, Christmas Cantata reception, Pledge Sunday reception, Thanksgiving Dinner and Easter Breakfast. The Alliance co-hosted two concert receptions.

Officers for 2012-2013:

President: Sue Prazak

Vice-President: Jo Westbrook

Secretary: Claudia Updike

Treasurer: Toni Johnson

Respectfully submitted, Sue Prazak

Archives

The mission of the Archives Committee includes collecting and cataloging materials pertaining to the church, maintaining the files and objects entrusted to its care, making such materials available to the congregation, and assisting members of the congregation in using the files. The

result of these activities is the fostering of the institutional memory of the Unitarian Church in Charleston.

Our goals this year were to file all written materials in our possession, to complete the Heritage Room, and to digitize audio tapes. The Heritage Room will give the Congregation access to historical artifacts.

We continue to make progress on filing papers dating from the ministry of Jacqueline Collins along with newly acquired materials. The Heritage Room concept is undergoing revision as the space within the sanctuary has been rearranged. The audio tapes of long-time church members, recorded in the 1990s, are in the process of being digitized. We plan to do further interviews and recordings.

Next year we will continue our filing and, if funds and volunteers become available, we will begin sorting and preserving our many photographs.

Members: Gail Schiffer (chair), Mary Ann Hughston, Claudia Updike and Anne Lindsey. Billie Hall and Rosemary Hutto are honorary members.

Submitted by Gail Schiffer

Books & Coffee

The Charleston UU Books & Coffee group will have met ten times this past fiscal year: once a month from September, 2011 through May, 2012, in the homes of various participants, and we have all shared leading discussions on the books. We have read and discussed the following books:

- *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett, and *Dead Weight* by Batt Humphreys, September, 2011. Ellie Setser and Jo Anne Simson led the discussion.
- *The Social Animal: The Hidden Sources of Love, Character and Achievement* by David Brooks, October and November, 2011. Jim Parker led the discussion.
- *Are We Rome? The Fall of an Empire and the Fate of America*, by Cullen Murphy, December, 2011. Lee Westbrook led the discussion.
- *Man's Search for Meaning*, by Viktor Frankl, January, 2012. Jo Anne Simson and Jim Parker led the discussion.
- *World on the Edge*, by Lester Brown, February, 2012. Ellie Setser led the discussion.
- *The World as It Is*, by Chris Hedges, March and April, 2012. Lee Westbrook led the discussion.
- *Half the Sky*, by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, May, 2012. Pat Wolman will lead the discussion.

This year's set of books has been extremely thought-provoking – hardly a light-weight among them! The discussions have been lively and interesting, as always. And the leaders have been very well organized – more so than usual, perhaps.

The Books & Coffee group has served the Charleston UU community for more than three decades, as a resource for both information/education and fellowship in the congregation. We have read many books relating to social and environmental issues. The book group has maintained both continuity and flexibility over the years in face of an evolving church community. We believe that this group serves the following long-range goals of our church.

- I. Nurture and connect the people of our congregation.
- IV. Prepare for and encourage growth so people have a UU home.

Submitted by Jo Anne Simson

Churchyard

Mission: To maintain the churchyard for the enhancement of the beauty of the natural environment of our urban oasis; to provide maximum accessibility and safety; to maintain and repair monuments, and to assist persons who wish information about our gravesites.

Achievements:

- 1) We continued to hold monthly work parties, at which we weeded, trimmed, planted, transplanted, raked and swept. As always we had an emphasis on keeping the paths open. These work parties were followed by wonderful covered dish lunches, which nourished both body and soul, as they encourage conversation and camaraderie.
- 2) We can't take credit for it, but we had incredibly wonderful weather for each of our work parties all year long. Let's hope it continues.
- 3) We continued to use the services of Ruth Knopf, a noted rose expert, to maintain all our roses.
- 4) We had one more monument restored this year—the box tomb of Robert E. Brown, which was in a state of almost complete ruin. For each tomb he restores, Robert Russell gives us a written description of the work done, and includes before and after black & white photos of the monument or tomb. He is very professional.
- 5) We had windows installed in both back doors of Gage Hall for safety.
- 6) During the long, hot summer, various Eden Keepers volunteered to water plants, especially the newly planted ones, and to keep the grassy areas mowed, while Tommy Hughston recovered from knee surgery.

7) The committee was reminded that the lovely shaded walkway between our garden and King Street belongs to our church. The Garden Club of Charleston tends it, but they do not own it. The committee was urged to keep this fact before that club and our congregation on a regular basis.

8) We decided to restore and update monthly the Wayside Pulpit on King Street. The UUA publishes 24 quotations every two years. These are available on paper, sized to fit Wayside Pulpits. We purchased the set and will change the quotations each month.

9) We donated three Charleston Noisette roses to the Service Auction. These were a popular item and all were sold.

Once again we thank all of this year's committee members and Eden Keepers: Melanie Bartmess, Stan Boyer* Susan Brandt*, Mary Côté, Sarah Cothran*, Karen Del Porto*, Suzi DeMerell*, Krystina Deren, Matt Ellis, Fran Ennis*, Martin Erbele, Mary Farabow, Robbie Furtwangler, Marguerite Gregory, Kathy Guy, Anita Harrison, Tom Hartry, Tommy Hughston*, Talbott Johnson, Fred Judkins, John Klintworth, Ruth Knopf, Cameron Lowery, Janice May*, Rachel McCammon, John Meffert*, Laura Moses*, Richard Moss, Liese Nichols, Sally Preston, Harrison Reed, Ed Stephens, JoAnn Stokes-Smith, Cris Sumpter, and Bill and Kevin Walsh,

* Denotes members of the Churchyard Committee.

Submitted by Fran Ennis

Committee on Shared Ministry

MEMBERS:

Alex Hild, Stan Goldberg, Hilary Nelson, Prudence Finn, Nelson Ohl, Nancy Groh

EX OFFICIO:

Danny Reed

VESTRY LIAISON:

Carol Tempel

COSM MISSION STATEMENT:

The Committee on Shared Ministry is a continuing body of the Unitarian Church in Charleston responsible to the Vestry. The primary responsibility of the COSM is to support and strengthen the ministry of the church and to monitor the health of that ministry. The COSM functions as an advisory body and as a communications channel for the minister and the congregation. In this capacity, the COSM helps to establish and clarify goals and expectations for the shared ministry of the church. The COSM seeks to assess, support, and advocate for shared ministry throughout the context of the congregational life. (Approved 10/03)

2011-2012 Highlights

1. COSM members continued to monitor the health of the congregation by having its members contact randomly selected members of the congregation each month and asking three questions:

- A. How do you feel about the church?
- B. Do you have any concerns about the church?
- C. Is there anything the church leadership should know?

In addition, a fourth question was added in the spring of 2012. That question is:

- D. What do you want for the future of the church?

Responses to the questions are sent to the Vestry via the Vestry liaison with the names of respondents deleted to preserve anonymity. This gives the church leadership an ongoing idea of the feelings of congregants about the church.

2. Early in the church year the Vestry made two assignments to COSM. The first was to explain how COSM has met the church's Four Bold Steps. The second assignment was to brainstorm for possible new church projects. Both of these assignments were completed in September 2011.

3. COSM was involved in planning and participated in the ceremonies for Danny's installation service. The Rev. John Buehrens, who spoke at Danny's installation and gave the service the following Sunday morning, stayed at a home owned by one of COSM's members and his transportation was provided by COSM.

4. COSM's portion of the church website was updated so that church members can answer the four weather report questions online and also post open-ended comments. This information will become part of the church weather report submitted to the Vestry.

Respectfully submitted, R. Alex Hild, COSM Chair

Connecting Circles

Steering committee: Maureen Porter (chair), Mary Ann Terry (co-chair), Linda Maxwell Allen, Cameron Mitchum, Sally Smith, Terry Walsh, Jo Westbrook

The mission of Connecting Circles is to provide small group ministry to our congregation. Connecting Circles meet monthly in the homes of members to discuss spiritual topics, share life experiences and get to know one another in a meaningful way. The steering committee is responsible for monitoring the overall functioning of the program by training group leaders and promoting the program to the congregation.

This church year marked the tenth anniversary of the Connecting Circles program in our church. During this time, the program has grown from four groups to the present number of thirteen with about 100 people participating. The program has been ably led by Mary Ann Terry who passed

the leadership of the steering committee to Maureen Porter at the start of the 11-12 Church year. The steering committee has promoted the program in a number of ways this year. Connecting Circles are described to new members during the Path to Membership Class held in the fall and spring. An article about Connecting Circles was published in the Gateway newsletter each quarter and there has been a signup sheet at the Welcome Table in Gage Hall which is monitored by the steering committee chair. A campaign to promote the program was held during the month of January which resulted in the formation of two new groups with trained facilitators. Some of the existing groups were also able to add new members. Quarterly trainings for group leaders were not held during this past year and will resume next year.

Respectfully submitted, Maureen Porter

Denominational Affairs

Unitarian Church in Charleston's (UCC) Denominational Affairs Committee (DAC) seeks to enrich congregational life at our church and promote the strength of Unitarian Universalism by:

- Promoting awareness of the larger UU faith community by apprising the Congregation, of the programs sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), Southeast District (SED) and the Southern Cluster of SED UU Churches.
- Encouraging and promoting UUC's financial and member support to the UUA and District -- UCC continues to be a Fair Share Congregation, paying full dues to both the District and the UUA.
- Encouraging support of and participation in denominational activities
- Staying connected with the larger UU faith community.

Your Denominational Affairs Committee in 2011/2012 has concentrated on two goals:

- Support to the Southern Cluster of UU Churches within the Southeast District, and
- Keeping the congregation up to date on the activities of the UUA, Southeast District and Southern Cluster.

Our Congregation hosted the Southern Cluster of SED UU Churches in October, 2011. It was an extremely successful conference, with great support from our entire congregation. The Cluster of UU Churches supports each other with best practices and strong leadership. The Committee keeps the UCC informed and up to date on denominational and Southeast District activities, programs, and support through a strong presence on the UCC Website, and continuing articles in the Gateway.

ROMANIAN PARTNER CHURCH- The Romanian Partner Church has been a particular challenge, but at this point, the situation concerning scholarship applications, money, and

missives between the two churches has been sorted out. Hillary Hutchinson traveled to Romania in July 2008, and had a brief meeting with Rev. Peterfi Sandor in Kulkullodombo. Trying to raise money for the Partner Church program with goods from Romania has not worked well, and will be discontinued. The Vestry voted to continue the scholarship program for students admitted to the Unitarian High School in Cluj from Kulkullodombo. At this point, we are sponsoring one student through High School graduation, Balázs Bényi (pronounced Baa lazh Ben yee). We have written to him, and the children have sent letters to him, but to my knowledge we have gotten nothing back. I also forwarded a picture of the Children's Christmas choir to Rev. Peterfi Sandor.

Annual Cost to participate in UU partnership program: \$150

Cost of student sponsorship, yearly: \$600 and we committed 4 years (2009-2013).

*Respectfully submitted, Richard Hayes, Denominational Affairs and Hillary Hutchinson,
Romanian Partner Church*

Docents

This has been a challenging year for the Docent Committee. The transition of both the Sexton and Administrator has presented procedural changes and access problems. There have been a number of docent and steering committee retirements. The committee is in need of recruits and is working on plans to solicit new members.

Visitor tours through February were offered from 10am to 1pm on Fridays and Saturdays. Starting in March 2012 the schedule was changed to offer tours on Saturdays from 10am to 1pm and 2nd Sundays from 1 to 3pm through June 10th. A decision on future scheduling will be made later.

Our first tour this year was delayed until September 16, 2011 due to the sanctuary modifications for handicap accessibility. Daily tours will not be offered during Spoleto due to lack of staffing.

Since September Docents have welcomed 1,248 visitors. Docents sell postcards, note cards and copies of TOURING THE TOMBSTONES, a booklet of details of the church garden.

In addition to the weekly tours, the Preservation Society's fall tour for 2011 on September 30th brought approximately 300 guests. The Gibbs Museum toured the Churchyard with us on the evening of October 21, 2011. On November 3rd our committer and the Churchyard Committee offered a joint tour of the sanctuary and garden to the Seabrook Photographers and a class from the Preservation Society visited the tower with Paul Garbarini on February 9th, 2012.

To promote the church openings the committee distributed "rack cards" to hotels and other tourist information locations in the fall. Once next year's schedule is finalized new cards will be printed.

Each Docent is scheduled to work one shift each month. There are currently twenty Docents (including subs) – see attached list. The Steering Committee consists of: Fran Ennis, Maureen Kelly, Susan Robinson, Bill Thomas, Nancy Waters and Anna Stephens (chair).

2011-2012 Unitarian Church Docent Committee Members:

Beverly Birkhimer	Toni Johnson	Susan Robinson
Shannon Denaux	Maureen Kelly	Gail Schiffer
Fran Ennis	Bill Loring	Joanne Simson
Paul Garbarini	Joanne Milkereit	Anna Stephens
Kay Haun	Cameron Mitchum	Bill Thomas
Abby Himmelein	Maureen Porter	Nancy Waters
Joanna Innes	John Preston	

Respectfully submitted, Anna Stephens

Endowment Investment Board

The Endowment Investment Board was established in May 2009.

The following were elected to serve on the EIB

William Finn - 3yr. term (term expires 2012)
Tommy Hughston – 3 yr. term (term expires 2012)
Stan Goldberg 2 yr term(term expires 2013)
Richard Hayes 2 yr term(term expires 2013)
Trip Banner (appointed by annually Vestry) (term expires 2012)
Don Hearth (Treasurer position)
Ellie Setser (Finance representative) - 1yr. term (term expires 2012)

The board met each quarter to review our investments with our advisor.

The Board elected William Finn to serve as the Chairman and Richard Hayes to serve as Secretary.

The EIB recommended Conrad Zimmerman and John Warren formally at Morgan Stanley Smith Barney (R.W. Baird effective April 2011) as our investment advisers.

The EIB conducted its oversight of the endowment consistent with EIB Policy and Procedures which were approved by the EIB and Vestry.

Value of the portfolio at year end was \$665,213. The targeted principal amount at year end \$706,813.

While we remain slightly behind our target principle, consistent with our policy, funds were provided to the church (promissory note interest, principle repayment, operating funds, etc.) during 2010 totaled \$21,580.

During 2011 the EIB amended its Policies and Procedures to include provisions for Restricted Gifts. The amended policy (including provisions for restricted funds) was approved by the Vestry on Oct. 20, 2011.

During 2011 the EIB received a Restricted Gift in the amount of \$101,000.

During 2011 our investment results continued to at or above their respective market benchmarks. During the course of the year the EIB made some minor shifts in our investments to account for changes in global economic conditions.

Respectfully submitted, William Finn, Chairman EIB

Finance

Committee: Susan Hartry, Paige Wisotski, Stuart Terry, Richard Hayes, Tommy Hughston, Dan Schiffer (Co-chair), and Ellie Setser (Chair), Don Hearsh (Treasurer) and Terry Walsh (Treasurer Select)

The financial status of the congregation is improving. The proposed budget for next year is ready for consideration at the annual meeting. Modest 3% raises for the R. E. Director, Music Director, Administrator and Sexton are included in the new budget along with a significant increase in the R. E. budget to accommodate the new adult education programs. The music budget will also increase. We will shift some salary money to pay our accountant to take care of payroll and other administrative details. The Stewardship Committee was able to come very close to our goal for next year although several large pledgers moved away. Amy Ball and Karen Abrams again led this fine effort.

The major renovation projects and the handicap accessibility projects are finished however there are still a few outstanding pledges. We will send reminders and hope that members will honor their pledges as money was “borrowed” from the Landmark Fund to complete those projects.

Stuart Terry continues to oversee the parking contract and Planned Giving. Brochures will be produced next year for Planned Giving with the goal of increasing the Endowment.

As always we are underinsured despite the \$30,000 spent each year on this line item. We have changed to Anderson Insurance Agency which has put together better coverage for us. Susan Hartry continues to provide invaluable advice on our coverage.

Dan Schiffer resigned from the committee and his critical thinking skills will be missed. Richard Hayes will be the Chair beginning July 1, 2012 as the Chair is resigning on that date.

Respectfully submitted, Ellie Setser

Fine Arts

Committee: Joanna Innes and Amy Ball, co-chairs; Jack Hurley, Cisco Lindsey, Will Moredock, Myrtle Staples, Tobias Van Buren, and Jo Westbrook

Mission Statement: The Fine Arts Committee displays the art work of UU members and friends as well as others via invitation, knowing that fine art is an important cultural product of any community, which deserves to be viewed and to be purchased.

Accomplishments:

1. Conducted seven art shows
 - Fall Show I: Paul Garbarini's Photographs of Renovation, Sept. 11 to Oct. 9
 - Fall Show II: Invitational Show (Nancy Davidson)
 - Children's Show: December 8 to January 22
 - Winter Show: Works from Private Collections (members and friends) Feb. 3-Mar. 18
 - Spring Show: UU Members and Friends, April 6 to May 5
 - Children's Show: May 6 to May 25 and June 10 to July 1
 - Spoleto Show: Pedro Rodriguez (Sponsored by Jung Society : May 25 to June 10
 - Summer Show (TBD)
2. Worked with Building and Grounds to make improvements in the back entrance to Gage Hall (painting, new flooring, lighting). This space will lend itself to smaller art shows (solo shows, church history, etc.).
3. Worked cooperatively with the Music Committee to present three benefit concerts/art shows that brought in approximately \$3000 for the James Simons Elementary School's music program.
4. Added two new members to the committee: Jack Hurley and Toby Van Buren
5. Joanna Innes will continue to chair, and Amy Ball will co-chair for the next year.

Review of the year's work:

All of the art shows were successful. Of special interest was the show featuring works from members and friends' private collections. It increased the opportunity for more participation.

Plans for the new year include continuing some of the same kinds of shows:

1. Children's Show at Christmas and for Mother's Day.
2. One show for the work of our own members.
3. Private Collection Show
4. Invitational Shows
5. Solo Shows (including some in the mini-gallery in the back entrance)
6. Crafts Show (if we can find a satisfactory way for safe display)

Respectfully submitted, Joanna Innes

Landmark/Buildings & Grounds

1. Mission – To maintain the Sanctuary, Gage Hall, Annex and grounds of THE UNITARIAN CHURCH IN CHARLESTON in a good state of repair; To supervise any renovations, repairs and restorations; To care for furnishings and equipment. The Chairman of this Committee supervises, along with the Minister, the Sexton.
2. Goals – Goals for the past year were to provide accessibility to the Sanctuary, replace our long term Sexton, Frank Palmer, complete work on the north hallway entrance to Gage Hall (use instead of the kitchen as a rear entrance), assist the Stewardship Committee with locating a plaque for those leaving gifts to the church, and provide upgrades to church security since the Sexton will no longer live in the Annex.
3. Goal Achievements – All the goals were achieved including the installation of security cameras for the front and rear of Gage Hall that can be monitored at the Office Administrator's desk. The accessibility project for the Sanctuary was completed in September 2011, and the results are outstanding! The congregation raised over 68,000 dollars to complete this project. Approval of the plans was obtained from the State Historic Preservation Office and the ramp from the vestibule and into the Sanctuary via the library looks as if it has always been there.

A search committee was formed and a new Sexton was hired. Mike Garbarini has been a wonderful addition to our staff. The Sexton apartment was repaired and repainted and has been rented out. The north rear hallway in Gage Hall was completed and is used for display of art by the Fine Arts Committee. The stewardship plaque was installed in the enclosed northwest front courtyard of the Sanctuary. Plans are for this area to become a place for recognition of those making significant contributions to our Sanctuary and Congregation.

Additional items included changing the office in upstairs Gage Hall. The Office Administrator is now located in the southeast corner of upstairs Gage Hall. Phones, computer hookups and door controls were moved to the new location. Three security cameras have been installed around Gage Hall, two in the rear and one at the front. The cameras are monitored at the Office Administrator's desk and also provide recording. The Gage Hall front doors are scheduled to be refinished this month.

4. Concerns/Goals for next year – Continuing upgrades for Gage Hall such as sound dampening and stowage; a plaque or monument for the enslaved builders of our Sanctuary in under consideration by a special task force; developing plans for further improvements to the Sanctuary (tower and chancel window lighting, battery powered flickering lights for use instead of real candles, etc.).
5. Recommendations – Ray Setser will be replaced by Ron Updike as Chair of this Committee on June 1st. Please provide Ron the outstanding support Ray has received over the last 12 years.

Respectfully submitted, Ray Setser

Membership

The Membership committee is responsible for staffing the welcome table, organizing the Sunday greeters and ushers, production of the yearly church directory, production of the New Members class series twice a year, and the organizing of the New Members ceremonies. The members of this committee are Claudia Updike senior co chair, Cris Sumpter junior co chair, Ruthie Sumpter, Leslie Madden, Maureen Porter, Will Moredock, George & Marcia Castano and Chris Rife.

This year Claudia Updike accepted the position of senior co chair. She is responsible for the administrative aspects of the committee.

Two directories were produced, the regular yearly directory and a new picture directory. Two New Members class series were held, the first started on the third Sunday in September and the second started on Jan 23. Each series ran for three consecutive Sundays. Membership signed about fifty new members in two ceremonies. Cris Sumpter now organizes the mentoring group. It has been found that the individual leading the class series should organize the mentors as well. We held two parties for new members, one at Stan & Diane Boyer's house and one at Rev. Reed's house. The party at Rev Reeds house was held the same day as the New Members ceremony in the evening and was very well attended by the new members. George Castano continues to do a good job of organizing the Greeters and Ushers for Sunday services.

Respectfully submitted, Cris Sumpter

Music

Members: Joanna Innes and Amy Ball, co-chairs; Lin Raymond, Music Director; Dee Boggan, Cathie Currin, Susan Findlay, Frank Hardie, Marc Kruza, Myrtle Staples.

Mission Statement: The Music Committee supports the Music Director and attends the business of the Music Program, including the budget, care of the musical instruments and hymnals, and encouragement of all musicians, especially RE youth through the Martha Welch Music Scholarship. The committee also channels communication from the congregation to the Music Director.

Accomplishments for the 2011-12 year:

1. Conducted three Candlelight Concerts (combined with Art Openings)

- CSO String Quartet concert October 27, 2011
- Christopher Jacobson organ recital February 3, 2012
- Lin Raymond piano concert April 6, 2012

These concerts raised approximately \$3,000 for the James Simons Elementary School's music program. Lauren Parr, teacher in the program, stated how much she appreciated our help.

We plan to continue this social justice commitment with three more combined concerts and art openings set for the first Friday in the month: November 2,

February 1, and April 5, dates that have been cleared for the 2012-13 Church Calendar.

2. Conducted the \$500 Martha Welch Music Scholarship
 - For the first time, the committee hired an outside judge for the competition.
 - Winner, Max Hutton (piano), was given opportunities to perform for the congregation.
 - Letters with helpful criticism were sent to all participants.
 - Next year's audition date is set for Wednesday, November 30 at 6:30 p.m.
3. Amy Ball presented a proposal to the Vestry for use of the Pig Cards. (copy on file)
4. Made revisions for the Committee & Activity Handbook.
5. Worked with the Program Council on changes to the Four Bold Steps plan.
6. Provided snacks for the receptions/art openings in Gage Hall.
7. Sent a plant to Richard and Betty Karl for their new home in Florida, in recognition for their generous financial contributions for the piano and organ.
8. Joanna Innes will serve as chair and Richard Nelson as co-chair next year.

Respectfully submitted, Joanna Innes

Personnel

There were several personnel changes during this church year. Our long-term sexton, Frank, retired. There was a very festive ceremony to celebrate his many years of service, and we were able to present him with a very generous check, with our thanks for his many years of service.

He was replaced by Mike Garbarini, who has done a very thorough job. The fact that Mike does not live on the premises created some problems in the beginning, but Mike is a great addition to our staff.

Our administrator, Reny, announced that she would leave in July, The Search Committee [chaired by Hillary Hutchison; Betsy Grund was our representative] interviewed several candidates, and chose Mary Smith as our new administrator. It became clear after a few months, that this transition was not working well. In fairness to Mary, I might mention she came in "from the outside"; our other "new" employees had worked in the office as assistants before being promoted. We were very lucky that our assistant administrator, Hannah Piazza, was able to step in as temporary administrator, so that we had some time to regroup. It became very clear that Hannah was doing a very good job. The decision was made to hire her as our administrator, and she has worked in that capacity since January.

The Vestry, on recommendation of our Treasurer, decided to transfer financial responsibilities, such as pay checks, to an outside bookkeeper. This new arrangement is working very well; it has relieved the administrator from a lot of time consuming detail work.

Since most staff members are now working year around [until a few years ago, the office closed for the months of July and August], the Personnel Committee worked on up-dating the Personnel Manual, to reflect this new reality. We re-worded the Section on Benefits, and added a Section

on Vacation time. We will bring copies of this revised Manuel to the June meeting of the Vestry, to give to the newly elected Vestry members.

This is my last year on the Personnel Committee: 9 years, 4 ministers, 8 Vestry Chairs [Richard served for 2 years], and very fortunately just a few members on the Committee who were willing to serve long terms.

Betsy Grund will take over as Chair, Tony Brown will continue to give us his time and insight, and Nancy Waters [past Vestry Chair] has graciously agreed to join our Committee. We are fortunate to have Bill Finn as our expert consultant. And we appreciate greatly the support and advice we constantly get from our Minister. I have truly enjoyed my "term" and I have learned a lot. It is time for me to go.

Submitted by Suzanna van der Woude, Chair Personnel Committee

Religious Education Committee

Religious education committee: Susan Garrison-chair, Rachel Beverley-Burton, Karna Hutton, Jane Lassiter, Bethany Thies, and Janet Watts.

This year we saw an increase in number of students in Religious education. Also a new trend of the student enrollment **NOT** dropping in the spring occurred. For this reason, the committee is looking for ways to expand the program in terms of space and more volunteers. We have submitted a budget for next year.

Submitted by Susan Garrison

Service Auction

Committee: Co-Chairs Lisa Hajjar and Nancy Simpson; Terry Walsh, Susan Conant, Susan Garrison, Ellie Setser, Fran Ennis, Dan Schiffer, Gail Schiffer, Prudence Finn, Claudia Updike, Ron Updike, Jonathan Lamb, Anita Harrison, Emilie Carey.

The function of the Auction Committee is to plan, organize, advertise, and run the church's annual Service Auction to raise operating funds for the church. The success of the auction is highly dependent on the congregation's participation in donating items and services to be offered at the auction and in attending the auction and bidding on these donated offerings. The auction is also viewed as a social event and a fun way to give back to the church by all who participate. Therefore, it is a critical function of the committee to make the service auction an enjoyable evening by providing good food, drinks, atmosphere, and a desirable number and variety of offerings for both the silent and the live auctions.

Each year provides a new challenge in trying to make the auction seem fresh and fun, so people will come and buy, and so donors will continue to donate. It remains a challenge to work with the limited space in Gage Hall. Finding other venues is always a possibility, but it could involve

spending over \$1,000 just for venue rental (as investigated this year) and then there will be the risk of people not coming to the new venue. So in the meantime, the committee has made minor changes to the auction over the last couple of years in order to maximize space. We no longer ask people to bring dishes to share; the entire dinner is provided and the menu is simplified; vertical space (walls and kiosks) are used to display art and service items; and chairs are added after the silent auction ends to minimize crowding.

Three new accomplishments for the 2011 auction included: advertising donated items and services on the UU website, including pictures and testimonials; taking credit and debit cards for auction purchases with a 2.75% fee; and using Craig's List to help sell an item that did not get the minimum reserved bid in the live auction (\$1,500 from the sale was donated to the auction). These new ventures proved to be very popular with participants. We hope to, one day, provide an online bidding option, or somehow extend bidding opportunities.

The live auction continues to be the main earner for the auction. Earnings from the live auction have risen from an average of \$5,000 in the mid-1990's to over \$15,000 in 2011. Meanwhile the silent auction earnings during that same time period have increased from almost \$2,000 to just over \$4,000. The last two auctions have resulted in record earnings. The net proceeds for the 2011 auction are approximately \$22,000 (more money may come in as left over tickets are sold for "fixed-price" events). The continued success of the live auction is, in part, a direct reflection on Fred Skipper, our auctioneer for many years now. He has also provided key advice and recently has expressed a commitment to work our auction whenever we decide to hold it. This gives us some peace of mind as we have been asked to move the service auction to the second Saturday in November, after having held the auction in February or March for many years now. The auction committee remains open to new members and new ideas. We also rely on many volunteers on the night of the auction. We hope the change to a fall auction will be welcomed by all.

Submitted by Lisa Hajjar

Social Justice

UUC Bold Step: To Become Social Justice Leaders in the
Community and the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE – The committee serves as an umbrella group that provides coordination and communication with the UCC congregation, Social Justice Committee members and the greater Charleston community. Our main focus has been to address issues related to social justice and social responsibility at the local and state level. Most of the outreach and in reach activities are done by sub-committees/action groups who meet as necessary to meet their objectives. In addition to our many varied areas of focus, we will be working with our minister, Danny Reed and the Vestry to work with other churches in the tri-county not only to improve the quality of life of people in need through individual projects, but will become a part

of a large interfaith effort to affect systemic change, such as policy change, to have a greater impact on the problems that affect so many disenfranchised people in our community. The Social Justice Committee meets three times a year: October, January and May. Minutes are available upon request. **Diane Narkunas, Chair; Suanne Ansari, Co-Chair; Cathie Currin, Secretary; Richard Hayes, Webmaster; Myrtle Staples, Vestry Liaison.**

Committee Highlights:

- Danny Reed and a small group composed of members of the Vestry and the Social Justice Committee regularly attended monthly meetings of the Charleston Area Interfaith Sponsoring Committee (CAISC) coordinated with the Direct Action & Research and Training Center, Inc. (DART). Members of this group worked with Danny to introduce and explain to our congregation the purpose and need of a Charleston Area Justice Ministry (CAJM) in our community.
- Members of this planning group developed a Communication Plan, numerous information materials for awareness and clarification, small group wine and chat's at three members' homes, and a forum.
- UCC CAJM Planning Group brainstormed with Danny Reed and Ed Dykman, Secretary, CAISC, about how lay people in the involved churches could help support clergy to move interfaith justice ministry forward. Rev. Reed and Rev. Dykman proposed to the CAISC Executive Board that they appoint three sub-committees composed of lay volunteers that report to the Executive Board: Communication/Public Relations, Fundraising/Development & Membership. The Executive Board has agreed to this suggestion.
- UCC hosted the January 2012, meeting of CAISC where over 30 attendees met in Gage Hall for the meeting and were served lunch prepared and served by congregation members. Several members of this diverse group of clergy and church lay people took a tour of our church sanctuary.
- Danny Reed was appointed to the CAISC Executive Board; our voice will be heard.
- On March 15, a Justice Ministry Program for Congregation members was held at St. Matthews Baptist Church, North Charleston. Over 180 people from diverse races and creeds crowded into their meeting hall. There were 24 UUs in attendance.
- The Vestry and the Finance Committee approved and allocated 1% of our annual budget to support a DART organizer and accompanying expenses for the interfaith effort. This will be voted on at the UCC May 20, 2012 Annual Meeting.
- Funding is critical to the success of the CAJM. CAISC/DART has a grant request into the UUA in the amount of \$15,000.
- The volunteer effort for the Lowcountry Food Bank's BackPack Buddies Project has completed its third year of providing weekend food support for poor children who receive food assistance during the school week.
- Media Reform SC has developed a website, MediaReformSC.org, and has shown two thought provoking movies that attract members of the Charleston area community.
- Green Sanctuary members have successfully raised funds for installation of a bike rack behind Gage Hall; and our Sunday coffee hour now has free trade coffee!
- First Social Justice Sunday – September 2011.

ADVOCACY- The Social Justice Committee supports those who wish to improve their capacity to advocate for social justice issues locally and at state and federal levels. **Contact: Donna Reyburn.**

Accomplishments:

- Through articles in The Gateway, members have been kept aware of several areas of concern: Immigration issues and injustices, helping Haiti in the aftermath of a devastating earthquake, ethical eating, and the human right to water.
- Developed an online form that any member of the church can use to suggest an issue that we, as a church, may adopt, which would help a group of people or an organization.
- On the local level, our participation in the Charleston Area Interfaith Sponsoring Committee (CAISC) is an important step in uniting many faiths and people to address social justice issues within our Charleston area community

COFFEE HOUSE CONCERT FUNDRAISING/ MITCHELL SCHOOL PROGRAMS - Promotes educational equity for children living in poverty in the Charleston Tri-County area. Funds generated through monthly Gage Hall Coffee Houses are used for academic enrichment activities at Mitchell School. Enrichment activities include enhanced math and science as well as field trips for children in grades K-6. **Coffee House: Mark Farnham and Bill Morris; Mitchell School: John Narkunas**

Accomplishments:

Coffee House funds continue to support student enrichment activities at the Mitchell Math and Science Elementary School in Charleston.

- Funds earned from seven concerts August 2011 through April 2012- \$3,725 - (one more concert in May).
- Funds that went out to Mitchell School for enrichment activities - \$4,498 – (More invoices expected in May). A total of \$6,000 was budgeted for the school year.
- Net amount in revolving account that will carry over to next year- \$5,269 as of May 1, 2012.
- Over 350 students participated in the program this year in grades K through 6.
- Students were involved in science-based field trips to such places as the Children’s Museum, Caw Caw Interpretive Center, Legare Farms, Middleton Place, South Carolina Aquarium, Channel 2 Weather Station, Bulls Island, and the College of Charleston Hollings Science Center.
- After school science programs were conducted using the Mad Science curriculum at the Mitchell School.
- Funds were used to pay for fees and transportation costs associated with the program.
- Members of the congregation participated in this program as chaperones on trips.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH GIVING – Since 2007, ten organizations nominated by members of the church community have received donations to support underserved populations.

The UUC has awarded over \$52,000 to organizations in the Charleston Tri-County Area. These groups include: Alston Wilkes Society, Sea Island Habitat for Humanity – Women Build, The Clemente Course, Florence Crittenton Programs of South Carolina, Lowcountry Food Bank: Backpack Buddies, Our Lady of Mercy Literacy Program, South Carolina Strong, BEGIN WITH BOOKS Pre-School Literacy Program, Darkness to Light and My Sister’s House. **Contact: Diane Narkunas.**

Accomplishments:

- Awarded \$5,000 to Darkness to Light in December 2012. This organization was nominated by Catherine Townsend.
- Awarded \$5,000 to My Sister’s House. This project was nominated by Abby Himmelein.
- Instituted year round collection of donations for fall and spring projects to try to cut short the active requests for support of charitable giving projects.
- Used two Christmas Eve collections to get a ‘head start’ for the spring project, My Sister’s House.
- Instituted having ‘pink’ envelopes in every pew during the active church year and made available during summer services in Gage Hall. Thank you Worship Committee for making sure pink envelopes are available.
- Received consistent support from Stan Boyer through the sale of pecans from the Boyer property. Thanks, Stan for your weekly support in Gage Hall.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH VOLUNTEERING - To request additional volunteers for the organizations where you help, or for additional information about community volunteer opportunities, **Contact Cathie Currin.**

Accomplishments:

- The main activity in outreach volunteering has been helping the third Saturday of each month at the Low Country Food Bank. Teams of 15-20 volunteers meet each month September through May to pack between 900 and 1300 bags of food for low-income children who would otherwise have little or nothing to eat over the weekend.
- Occasionally we receive requests from Habitat for Humanity to help with deconstruction projects.
- We have had occasional displays at coffee hour to talk to church members and friends about the various subcommittees in Social Justice and to recruit helpers for outreach projects.

CRISIS MINISTRY- Approximately 31 UUs volunteered during this church year to prepare and serve dinner at the Charleston Men’s Shelter on the first Wednesday of every other month, and to prepare and serve breakfast at the Family Shelter the following morning. Lee Westbrook purchased and delivered food for these meals. **Contact: Catherine Townsend.**

Accomplishments:

- 6 dinners were prepared and served at the Crisis Ministry Men's Shelter by members of the UUC congregation.
- 6 breakfasts were prepared and served at the Crisis Ministry Family Shelter.
- 31 volunteers
- \$1,127 was spent on food; balance is \$5,269.

ENDOWMENT FUND – In September 2011, the UCC received an endowment gift of \$100,000 that is targeted for social justice. Interest from this endowment will be used to support social justice issues. **Contact: John Narkunas.**

- Due to the volatile stock market, since September a total of \$76 has been accumulated. It appears it will take another year or two before sufficient funds have been accumulated to consider awarding funds.

GREEN SANCTUARY- The purpose of the group is to lead the church's effort to become more environmentally sustainable through capital improvements, education, and worship. Much of these efforts will be accomplished through collaboration with other church committees. The Green Sanctuary Sub-Committee's mission falls under the seventh UUA Principle: "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part." **Co-Chairs: Nina Fair & Laura Moses**

Objectives:

- Continue to support environmental education and worship via "green themed" Sunday Forums and Worship Services. At a minimum, we will sponsor the Earth Day service each year.
- Continually work to reduce the church's environmental footprint.
- Ensure everyone who uses Gage Hall is aware of the waste-reduction policies now in place with regard to disposable eating utensils, recycling, and composting.
- Occasionally provide "green tips" to Church Office for inclusion in the Gateway in support of environmental education.
- Provide expertise to other church committees, especially those involved with capital improvements, to ensure the church makes sustainable decisions.
- Continue to work toward a church that is accessible to alternative transportation. For example, we have installed a conveniently-placed bike rack near Gage Hall.
- Encourage members to participate in area clean-ups and other activities to green our communities.
- Support the Religious Education Program's initiative to collect spent compact fluorescent bulbs and old electronics for recycling.

Accomplishments

- Earth Day Service – April 21, 2012

- Bike rack for Gage Hall
- Fair trade coffee for Gage Hall
- Wheeled recycling bins
- Environmental film series in collaboration with Circular Church Sustainability Committee
- Green forums
- Promotion of recycling of e-waste, printer cartridges, plastics and other recyclables
- Replacement of incandescent light bulbs with CFL's
- Participation in Beach and City Sweeps

Media Reform SC – This group seeks to understand and educate others about how contemporary media can better serve the needs of citizens in our democratic system. It operates, in a nonpartisan way, under the assumption that media form the nervous system of a democracy – the source of the many types of information needed in order for citizens to make informed and sound policy and electoral decisions. **Contact: Faye Steuer.**

Accomplishments:

- Maintenance of web site, mediareformsc.org;
- Meeting monthly and adding 4 new members;
- On-going monitoring of national news relevant to media reform;
- Attendance at a local technology workshop by two members (June, 2011);
- Working on a nationwide effort to encourage the FCC to look into covert consolidation (merging of newsrooms across media outlets);
- Examination of the public files on covert consolidation at two local television stations (summer, 2011);
- Meeting with Congressman Tim Scott's staff (September, 2011) re covert consolidation;
- Publishing of articles on media in local publications by two of our members (fall, 2011);
- Speaking by phone with the Chief of Staff of FCC Commissioner Mignon Clyburn re our concerns about lack of diversity in local media (December, 2011);
- Filing of a comment with the FCC requesting that broadcasters be required to post their public files on line (December, 2011);
- Inspection of public files on political advertising at two local TV stations (January, 2012);
- Showing of the documentary film "Broadcast Blues" in Gage Hall (January, 2012);
- Creation of an email list of contacts, gathered from the list of attendees at the film;
- Group screening of several other films, resulting in the decision to show the documentary "OUTFOXED" in Gage Hall on May 8, 2012;
- Formation of a task force to look into the possibility of establishing a low power FM radio station on the peninsula (spring, 2012).

Respectfully submitted, Diane Narkunas

Worship

The Worship Services Committee is now co-chaired by Sharon Strong and Priscilla Shumway.

Contact info: Priscilla Shumway: Priscilla.shumway@gmail.com, Home: 886-8689, Cell: 425-1850; Sharon Strong:sharonstrong2000@yahoo.com, Home: 853-3976, Cell: 276-1716

Mission: The Worship Committee enhances the Sunday services throughout the year, in the spirit of enlightenment, to nurture the body, mind, soul and spirit of our congregation. The Worship Committee partners with both the congregation and the minister to provide the best possible services, to get feedback on the services and to act as a sounding board for the minister's own services. Each week, a Worship Associate helps coordinate the service with the minister OR an outside speaker.

Members: as of March 2012 are: Richard Hayes, Mary Anne Hughston, Susan Hartry, Ralph Haller, Tobias Van Buren, Jerry Prazak, Cecil Bennett, and Hillary Hutchinson. (Rev. Danny Reed, Elaine Aron Tenbrink)

Activities:

The committee continues to arrange at least one service each month not conducted by the minister. Summer services were conducted to large audiences and a church picnic in June and pancake breakfast in September provide a fun social beginning and end to the summer season.

What we have accomplished:

- Gotten youth involved in church activities: Story for all ages every Sunday
- Summer services=year round church. Summer services are very popular and lead to new members
- Brought in outside speakers for services on variety of topics, more variety in topics during summer
- Worship associates support minister in all services
- Provide meaningful services which encourages attendance which helps people see the value of the Sanctuary and this community (leading to financial support)
- Supported handicapped accessibility, built in time in service to celebrate that

The Worship Committee meets on the third Sunday of every month as well as holding a yearly retreat.

Respectfully submitted, Sharon Strong