

**Summer UU Nantucket Newsletter**  
**August 2024**

Dear Members and Friends of UU Nantucket,

We have been busy! I attempted to make this a short letter but as you will see, much is happening. These past eight months have brought challenges and change to our congregation and have also created a path forward for our congregation. Led by our minister, Rev. Dr. Althea Smith, we have met this period of transition with additional support from leaders of the Unitarian Universalist Association, including Keith Kron, UUA Transitions Director, and Wren Bellavance-Grace, UUA Congregational Life Staff of New England and Christina Rivera, UU Religious Educator. Rev. Althea began her second year as our Contract Minister on August 1. She will complete her interim contract on July 31, 2025.

In this past year, we recognize our losses of members of our congregation including John C. Brady, son of Jean Keating; Lora Stewart, wife of Paul Stewart; Carl Borchert, husband of Randi Allfather; Lucille Jordan; and Nathaniel Tingley, son-in-law of Marty and Holly McGowan, husband of Lucy. Our losses continue to resonate deeply throughout our congregation.

The Transitions Team, composed of Kat Robinson Grieder, Susan Richards, Anne Perkins, Susan Fernald, and Alison Forsgren worked diligently this winter and spring to identify our steps ahead in order to secure a new minister. They created a survey and held congregational meetings to discuss what our needs are and what type of ministry we might wish to pursue. They reported their findings in May to the congregation and their report is posted on our website. The Board of Trustees now is responsible for the next steps. Discussions have been held with UUA Transitions Office leader, Christine Purcell. The work will continue this fall as a task force prepares the Congregational Report (CR) of our church for the UUA website. This will position us as a congregation seeking a new minister, with information and materials available to ministers who are searching for a congregation to serve. Potential ministers will be able to contact and be interviewed. This process will likely start in December. As a small congregation (under 125), we have been advised to search for a contract minister who could potentially become a settled minister.

In November 2023 through to April 2024, the Warming Place hosted a shelter in our Activities Room on Thursday evenings for those needing warmth, food, and a place to sleep. We are grateful to Carol Benchley, a UU Trustee, Anne Perkins, and Sue Myntinnen for all the work and effort they have contributed to a Warming Place and thankful that we were able to supply at least one night for this cause. We are not sure whether or not they will need to use our facilities this winter.

In March, an inflammatory incident by our former Business Manager with our Minister created an unsafe environment for our Minister and led to our Business Manager abruptly resigning. Wren Bellavance-Grace, UUA Congregational Life Staff of New England, met with our Board of Trustees following the incident to discuss ways in which we could create a safe environment for staff and congregation and to ensure good hiring practices. As a result, we have adopted a new policy of hiring to include background checks from a national database through Church Mutual Insurance Company as well as using the state of MA CORI and SORI background checks. Wren will continue working with us as we explore ways to strengthen leadership and our congregational procedures and policies.

The office administration of our church is experiencing significant change. Following the abrupt departure of our former Business Manager in March, a stretch of three months followed with trustees of

the Board filling in office hours and completing the necessary work. In the process, we cleaned, decluttered, and reorganized files, both in the physical office and the office computer. It has taken time to restore order in the office. It was in a sorrowful state. Alison Forsgren has stepped in to take on the role as temporary office administrator. She has brought professionalism to the position and good problem solving. We are fortunate she will be with us until November. **Postings for a part time office administrator and a bookkeeper will soon be in advertisements and on our website. We hope everyone will be on the lookout!**

At the beginning of July, our long term treasurer Paul Stewart wrote the following to the Board of Trustees:

“It is my honor and privilege to have served our beloved congregation as Treasurer and Trustee during part or all of 2014 through the end of my current term. As Treasurer, I have done my best to create, explain, and manage our finances in such a way that every congregant can understand them, and, as Trustee, to assure that our governance works well within our Principles, Constitution, procedures, and Agreements.

Now I find myself with numerous additional family obligations. With Barbara and Rev. Althea providing strong leadership and making significant changes during our congregation’s transitional period, this is the right time for me to start the process of returning to being a regular congregant and focusing on being a stronger steward of the every-day maintenance of our historic Meeting House as needs arise.

I plan to finish out my current term doing my work as Treasurer and Trustee, and write the Treasurer’s 2024 Annual Report. However, I am informing the Nominating Committee that, given the above, I would not be open to a nomination for Treasurer or Trustee in 2025.”

Paul has given a tremendous amount of service to the Board of Trustees in his role as treasurer, trustee, record keeper, and all-around church go-to person. The amount of time and thoughtfulness he has selflessly given is remarkable. We are grateful.

**Presently, we are looking for someone who would be interested in becoming treasurer to be part of the budget process this fall.** As we begin building a budget, we will ask departments and committees to consider what is needed to fulfill their responsibilities. We will also look closely at our principles and mission in developing a needs-based budget.

In her role as a contract minister, Rev. Althea Smith has encouraged us to reexamine where we are and where we are going as Unitarian Universalists. She has held up a mirror to some of our traditions and asked us to contemplate if they represent everyone in the congregation. She has lifted up the concept of practicing congregational polity so individual voices may be heard. She has challenged us to “widen our circle.” She has questioned where our social justice programs are and encouraged us to think about what might be done. She has also asked about our faith formation. These are relevant areas that require both commitment and action. Rev. Althea meets and tends to individual congregants who need attention and care. Although she began her work with us in October 2023, technically her “first” year ended on July 31, 2024. She is presently in her second year with us and it will end on July 31, 2025.

On Sundays, our music director Nigel Goss provides us with compelling and beautiful music of all styles. The UU Choir is regularly at Sunday services but had a break this summer when Nigel was off island working on his master's degree. We are thankful for their contributions to the service and for Nigel's leadership. There were two Jazz Sundays this summer that were enjoyed by all who attended in person or on Zoom. Isaiah Williams and Carson Cooman played services on the Goodrich organ. The Noonday Concert Series continued this summer with seven concerts in all. Nigel is looking for support in expanding our music options.

Summer docenting was organized once again by the always helpful Peter Richards. With a steady crew of six volunteers, they have kept the church open in July and August for visitors. This is no small feat and we are grateful to Peter. What started out as a slow summer flow of visitors has turned into a busier one in August. It is great to have our historic sanctuary open for visitors.

Our Fourth of July reading of the Declaration of Independence was well-attended and likely back to pre-Covid attendance levels. We are delighted that Jack Weinhold was acknowledged for the 25th anniversary of this event which he originally envisioned and has helped organize every year. We appreciate both Jack and Cynthia Csabay, the director, and Arlene Hogan and Rob Baxter for making this event possible.

The Summer Auction, a fundraising event, went off beautifully this July thanks to the good work of the Auction Team Task Force including Deirdre Duffy, Kathy Stevens, Alison Forsgren, Jane Bourette, and Nancy Adrian.

Our Lay-Led Committee, composed of Susan Richards and Kat Robinson Grieder, is responsible for creating our Lay-Led services that are typically the fourth Sunday of the month and also for services when our Minister is off island at conferences, classes, and other UU activities. We are indebted to their good work and commitment. They are looking for more congregants to participate on this committee.

Our awesome "kitchen ladies" kept us going throughout the first six months of the year. They are on summer break and we will hopefully begin something again in the fall. Susan Kirk, Carol Benchley, Anne Perkins, and Polly Miller have helped to keep it going. We are mindful that our longtime member Val Hall was integral to the team as well. Although she and Bob have moved, we hope to see her whenever she can return.

This fall, we will be thinking about our Faith Formation as we develop the budget. Leyah Jensen, our RE teacher, was with us every Sunday from January - June. This summer she has been off island. We are grateful for Leyah's commitment to our church.

We became dependent on Zoom during Covid, and now we seem equally dependent upon it to allow us access when we need to be at home or when we are traveling. If Zoom is in our future, how should we plan for that? Our zoom participants are clearly here to stay. We will be investigating best zoom practices of other UU churches and what we might do to improve our zoom. We appreciate all the work Deirdre Duffy has done to make the technology work for the

services as well as for the summer auction. We appreciate the work that Rosemary McLaughlin and Deirdre Duffy have done on improving our website.

The beautiful planters in the front of the church, placed there by Nancy Mack, made it through the hot and humid summer thanks to Chris Hanson's attentiveness to watering and also keeping the lawn in the memorial garden mown. Joanne Pollster tended to the weeding and care of the memorial garden. We are grateful for her faithful attention to it. Joanne is also taking over the coordination of the shawl ministry started by Lora Stewart and the crafting group. She is looking for knitters to join her in this endeavor.

There has been a complex multitude of changes within our congregation. We have experienced painful losses within our congregation. As we reflect on our past, we are keeping in mind how we want to move into the future. We are growing and learning, making spaces for ourselves and others. How we fit together side by side, and how we welcome others to join us is part of our work ahead. We invite you to be part of this journey.

In spirit, love, and commitment on behalf of the UU Board of Trustees,

*Barbara Elder*

*(updated 8/31/24)*

Barbara Elder, president  
Paul Stewart, treasurer  
Deirdre Duffy, clerk  
Randi Allfather  
Carol Benchley  
Jan Ellsworth  
Chris Hanson  
Susan Robinson