

*"Love is the spirit of this church,
and service it's law ..."*

COMMITTEES & PROGRAMS

THE UNITARIAN CHURCH IN WESTPORT



Unitarian Church in Westport
10 Lyons Plains Road
Westport, CT 06880
203 227-7205
www.uuwestport.org

ADMINISTRATION

■ Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees, elected by the congregation, consists of 11 voting members of the church and is responsible for the program and business affairs of the church. The board meets monthly and works in collaboration with the ministers and committees of the church to enrich the lives of members and friends.

■ Human Resources

The Human Resources committee was established to assist the Board of Trustees in the development of HR related strategies and policy for non-ministerial staff. Responsibilities include the development of an HR Policy Manual, documenting specific HR procedures and assisting in the development of organizational design and attendant job descriptions to better reflect the human resource needs of the church as it moves towards its Vision 2028 goals. It helps in the assessment of the fair administration of benefits for ministerial and non-ministerial staff. It works with the Finance Committee to help ensure that appropriate funding for the human resources of the Church is recognized and implemented.

■ Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is made up of five members, with one acting as chair. Members serve a two year term with the next chair being chosen from the current committee. The NC receives requests from the Board of Trustees, the Endowment Committee, the Finance Committee and Human Resources Committee to fill positions being vacated. The NC seeks to identify committed members of the congregation who complement the existing members on the various committees.

■ Public Relations

The principle function of the PR committee is to make the greater Westport/Weston community aware of some of the outreach programs in which we participate. It's goal is to publicize events and activities of our church in local newspapers and other media, providing the public with information about who we are and what our church stands for.

Please contact the church office for current committee chairs and program leaders

The Unitarian Church in Westport

is a vibrant and active religious community. Exploring our spirituality, lifespan religious education and service to others provide many opportunities for us to grow together in love.

This brochure outlines the many ways we do this work together-- ministers, staff, lay leaders and other members-- to create and support the many programs that are available to our members and friends.

If you are new to our congregation and are looking for ways to become more involved, we hope this brochure will be a roadmap for your journey. If you have been here for awhile and are just wondering how some things get done, we hope this brochure will help. It may also assist folks who are yearning for deeper involvement in our church community.

Please contact the church office at 227-7205 for current information about committee chairs and program leaders.

SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL

- HABITAT FOR HUMANITY
- UU – UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION
- ELIMINATING RACISM
- UU SERVICE COMMITTEE
- AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
- GREEN SANCTUARY
- BEARDSLEY SCHOOL

LIFESPAN EDUCATION

- RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COUNCIL
- YOUNG RELIGIOUS UU'S
- ODYSSEY

CARING MINISTRIES

- PASTORAL CARE COMMITTEE
- SHAWL MINISTRY
- ADDICTION MINISTRY
- SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
- SAFE CONGREGATIONS

WORSHIP

- SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE
- SUNDAY USHERS
- SUMMER SERVICES

MUSIC

- MUSIC COMMITTEE

COMMUNICATIONS

- SOUNDINGS
- WEB COMMITTEE

PROGRAMS

- SENIOR GROUP
- CAMP JEWELL
- FIRST FRIDAY FORUM
- MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

DENOMINATIONAL

- PARTNER CHURCH
- CHALICE LIGHTERS

FINANCE/FUNDRAISING

- FINANCE COMMITTEE
- ANNUAL CANVASS
- CONTINUING CANVASS
- ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE

BUILDING & GROUNDS

- BUILDING & GROUNDS
- MEMORIAL GARDEN
- AESTHETICS COMMITTEE
- KITCHEN ORGANIZERS

ADMINISTRATION

- BOARD OF TRUSTEES
- HUMAN RESOURCES
- NOMINATING COMMITTEE
- PUBLIC RELATIONS

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS

■ Buildings & Grounds

As the name implies, the Buildings & Grounds committee is constantly involved in maintaining the physical plant of the church. Semi-annual clean-ups are performed with the help of volunteers. A half dozen years ago the Meeting House and West Wing were renovated. More recently, the West Wing was improved by dedicated members of the church.

■ Memorial Garden

The Memorial Garden, located north of the church on the hill, was established as a peaceful resting place for the ashes of deceased members of the congregation and their immediate families. For plot reservations and more detailed information, please contact the Church office at 203 227-7205.

■ Aesthetics Committee

This committee protects and perpetuates the beauty of our church and includes both buildings and grounds. Our committee recognizes that there are needs of individuals and groups to communicate visually with the whole congregation. Our facility is like a giant collage; each addition or subtraction affects the overall impression. All are respectfully asked to consult with the committee before adding to or subtracting from this collage including notices, posters, plants, rocks, pictures, mobiles, etc.

■ Kitchen Organizers

Our kitchen is used for many UU occasions as well as by other organizations. We ask that everyone help keep our busy UU kitchen clean, making sure all appliances have been cleaned and serviced properly, making suggestions to help it run as efficiently as possible. This committee meets periodically to evaluate the condition and current needs of the kitchen.

Please contact the church office for current committee chairs and program leaders

■ UU Service Committee

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee has been a powerful voice for human rights since 1939, when it was founded to help the victims of Nazi oppression in Europe. UUSC works for human rights and social justice through partnerships with grass roots organizations in the United States and around the world. UUSC programs are grounded in UU principles and guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, both of which affirm the inherent worth, dignity, and human rights of all.

In the past it has supported UUSC relief efforts in response to the tsunami in Southeast Asia and the terrible earthquakes in Pakistan. During the holiday season, it supports UUSC through the "Guest at your Table" fundraiser. To become involved in the human rights work of UUSC, look for information at the Social Action table in the foyer or visit www.uusc.org

■ Amnesty International

Amnesty International is the world's largest grass roots human rights organization, defending human rights globally through the letter writing and e-mailing efforts of member groups in over 20 countries. Amnesty International researches and identifies "prisoners of conscience" who have been imprisoned and mistreated -- sometimes tortured -- solely on account of their peaceful expression of views unpopular with authorities, or membership in an oppressed group, such as religion, sexual orientation, or ethnic background. Local Group 79 writes letters and petitions on behalf of prisoners of conscience throughout the year, and holds an annual Holiday Card Action party each December. Website: www.amnesty.org.

■ Green Sanctuary Committee

The green Sanctuary Committee is in the process of raising awareness concerning sustaining our earth through four venues:

- Religious Education (RE)
- Worship and celebration
- Sustainable living as individuals and as a UU community
- Environmental justice for local communities and beyond

Our accomplishments include:

- The inclusion of an earth-centered RE program for the 2005-2006 year.
- A worship service that explores our role in maintaining the Earth
- Sponsored a talk about influencing global environmental change
- Installed weather proofing and energy-efficient light bulbs

Please contact the church office for current committee chairs and program leaders

COMMUNICATIONS

■ Soundings

SOUNDINGS is the bi-monthly newsletter of the church. It presents a calendar of events for the coming month, letters and columns from our ministers along with announcements and articles from members of the congregation. SOUNDINGS is lay produced. Every other Wednesday members of the congregation meet over coffee and donuts to facilitate the mailing.

■ Web Committee

The Web Committee maintains the website – UUWestport.org – enabling all committees and staff to post events, notices, announcements, sermons, readings, images, multimedia etc. via the Internet. Besides postings, the Web Committee makes certain that the site continues to run smoothly.

DENOMINATIONAL

■ Partner Church Committee

The Partner Church Committee facilitates Westport's partnership with the Unitarian Church in Alsóboldogfalva, in the Transylvanian region of Romania. It is part of a denomination-wide movement, but it is also unique and highly personal. Through a variety of activities, the Committee seeks to:

- Be a bridge that connects the people of our congregations
- Create transformational opportunities for pilgrimage and hospitality, for learning and service
- Challenge ourselves theologically, and open ourselves to changed values and behaviors

Major initiatives include: Travel/Pilgrimages, the Scholarship Program, and building friendships through collaboration on mutually beneficial projects.

■ Chalice Lighters

Chalice Lighters is a program of our Unitarian Universalist District of Metro New York, comprised of 51 congregations in Connecticut, New York and New Jersey. Twice each year, individuals in the district congregations are asked to contribute \$10 or more to help another congregation take a significant step: to start a congregation, to call a minister, to secure or improve a building, or to further the development of a growth plan. Congregations help congregations.

PROGRAMS

■ Senior Group

The Senior Group is a fellowship of adults, age 55+, who gather once a month for camaraderie, lively conversation and interesting discussions based on the program of the month. It invites speakers, artists and musicians from both the congregation and the outside to inform it on important issues or to demonstrate their talents. It meets from 11 to 1 once a month starting with the program, followed by a brown bag lunch. The group also enjoys special events such as museum visits, tours and trips in our area. In addition to friendship, it support members by helping them with challenges such as transportation.

■ Camp Jewell

This is an annual intergenerational "Get Away" weekend usually held in May, in the Berkshires, which offers activities, workshops and social opportunities for all congregants. The magnificent woods offer the ultimate setting for reconnection with friends, making new acquaintances and for physical and spiritual renewal.

■ First Friday Forum

A longtime tradition at our church, First Friday Forum, held on the first Friday of the month, presents a wide variety of entertaining and educational programs. A potluck dinner is followed by a presentation by a church member. Our church is fortunate to have members who offer their expertise on topical subjects. FFF is an opportunity to socialize and get to know one another.

■ Membership Committee

The mission of the Membership Committee is to welcome visitors and newcomers to our church, to assist new members in making connections and feeling at home in our church community, and to create opportunities for all of our members to meet each other and to become more involved with the life and activities of our church. It holds Newcomer Orientation meetings on the first Saturdays of October, throughout the year, to allow new people to meet our ministers, ask questions, and learn more about us. It helps to greet newcomers after the Services on Sunday mornings, to answer questions and inform them of upcoming membership events.

Please contact the church office for current committee chairs and program leaders

■ Beardsley School

The Beardsley School Committee was formed in 2001 when our congregation voted to adopt an inner-city school in Bridgeport, CT. Church members support the staff and students of Beardsley Elementary School through volunteer efforts as well as financial aid for special needs. Most importantly, our volunteers become mentors, tutors and readers for grades K-6. Over the past 5 years, our congregation has provided professional theater, job coaching, financial seminars, art, book clubs, school supplies, winter coats, backpacks, clothing, new and used books, scholarships, anti-violence training and participation in an annual holiday sing-along.

LIFESPAN EDUCATION

■ Religious Education Council

The purpose of the RE Council is to work with and support the Director of Religious Education in carrying out our mission of encouraging an open search for meaning and creating a strong spiritual community for children and youth. Led by co-chairs, each council member has chosen a particular area of interest to put their energies into such as curriculum, family worship, teacher support, administration or special programs and events.

■ Young Religious UU's

The goal of our high school aged youth program, Youth Odyssey, is to create a safe and open environment where youth can learn about themselves and their potential in the world. Youth Odyssey lends itself to community building, spiritual development, leadership development, social action and community service. Opportunities are also offered for our youth to be active in our congregation's mainstream programs, to serve in district leadership positions and participate in district sponsored conferences and events. And we certainly want to have fun!

■ Odyssey

ODYSSEY is the name of our adult education program and its mission is to provide learning opportunities for mind, body and spirit. We offer programs to nurture intellectual, emotional, creative and spiritual growth. These are presented in a climate of trust that brings us together and enhances our sense of community. Odyssey classes, workshops and study groups are offered every fall and spring, and are free. They are often taught or facilitated by members of our community or ministers, but one need not be associated with the church to offer or take a program.

FINANCE / FUNDRAISING

■ Finance Committee

The Finance Committee meets monthly to review the latest financial reports. It periodically informs the Board of our financial status and alerts the Board to any significant variances. It establishes financial policies and procedures in order to ensure appropriate financial controls are in place. In consultation with various church committees, and following Board guidelines, the committee develops the Operating Budget for the following fiscal year for approval by the Board and then by the congregation.

■ Annual Canvass

"The Canvass" is the name of the process by which members and friends of the Unitarian Church in Westport make their annual financial commitments ("pledges") to support the church's operations. The Annual Canvass Committee consists of 25-50 people who provide leadership for the canvass each year. Another 100 people in addition (or a total of about 20% of the congregation) are also actively involved in helping to organize and run the canvass each year. The Annual Canvass Committee always needs volunteers with skills in many areas, providing an opportunity for everyone to work on this vital activity in roles both small and large.

■ Continuing Canvass Committee

The Continuing Canvass Committee is a small, informal organization made up of the Annual Canvass Committee Chairs from past years. Its main responsibility is to canvass new members who join the church throughout the year and in between Canvasses. The Continuing Canvass Committee carries out additional activities in support of the annual canvass, including lining up leadership for future years' canvasses and providing continuity from one canvass to the next.

■ Endowment Committee

The Endowment Committee manages the church endowment fund. It ensure that funds are invested in a prudent and responsible manner to promote growth of the fund. The committee also works to solicit new contributions, either through outright gifts or inclusion of the church in member's estate plans. Members are elected by the congregation at the annual meeting.

SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL

The Social Justice Council (SJC), working with the Social Justice Director, initiates, coordinates and supports the congregation's efforts to advocate, educate, organize, serve and witness for social justice. The goal of the SJC is to establish The Unitarian Church in Westport as a beacon of social justice in our community. In addition to providing assistance to the church's social action programs listed below, the SJC makes special effort to provide support and resources to programs in Bridgeport, CT, particularly those aimed at improving the well-being of children and families.

■ Habitat for Humanity

Our congregation is committed to helping build low income housing with Habitat for Humanity. It works with eight other congregations to build homes in Bridgeport in partnership with individual families. Our commitment is one Saturday a month plus any mid-week days people can work. Signup at the Social Action table in the foyer or contact the church office.

■ UU - United Nations Organization

Our congregation, through the UU-UNO, currently supports three UN projects. The first is to join with other local groups in educational and advocacy measures to stop the genocide in Darfur. The second is to raise educational funds for 40 AIDS orphans in Ghana, which is a UU-UNO sponsored project. The third project is a microcredit/microfinance project to lend small amounts of money to start up small enterprises among the world's poorest people.

■ Eliminating Racism

The Eliminating Racism Committee is expanding its horizons and thinking about multi-culturalism in our congregation. It expects to hold at least one anti-racism event each year, consistent with the recommendations of the UU General Assembly. It intends to become familiar with the UUA's "Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Institution" and adopt it as its guidepost for this work within our church. The committee's long-term goal is to achieve "Stage Six", becoming a "Fully Inclusive Institution." It intends to coordinate its efforts against racism with other groups working toward an inclusive attitude in our congregation.

CARING MINISTRIES

■ Pastoral Care

The Pastoral Care committee, in conjunction with the ministers, provides support to congregants in the midst of transition, crisis, or need. Volunteers are available to run errands or provide transportation to church or medical appointments. Casseroles are also offered in times of need. The committee makes phone calls and sends cards of condolences, congratulations, shared joy and/or concern. Trained pastoral care associates visit church members at home, in nursing homes, and in the hospital.

■ Shawl Ministry

The Shawl Ministry offers knitters and crocheters the opportunity to explore the realm of spirituality and creativity. All shawls made are given as gifts of celebration or comfort to people within and outside our church community. Daytime and evening groups convene every other week. Participants need not attend meetings to be a part of this ministry.

■ Addiction Ministry

The Addiction Ministry is a support group for those who must deal with addiction in its many forms, whether their own or a loved one. The group holds a monthly open meeting, usually with a speaker followed by discussion. It also offers youth counseling/support. While endorsing 12 step programs as an effective means of treating addiction, the ministry is not a 12-step program.

■ Small Group Ministry

In 2002, the Small Group Ministry program began at the church as a way to help build and nurture personal connections and foster shared spiritual exploration. The vision is to deepen and enlarge our shared ministry—to ourselves, to each other, and to our community. Groups of 8-10 people meet once a month with a trained facilitator to discuss spiritual topics. Group members share their journeys, listen deeply and learn from experiences of others.

■ Safe Congregations

The Safe Congregations Committee develops recommendations for the Board of Trustees on ways to enhance the physical, interpersonal and emotional safety of our community.

WORSHIP

■ Sunday Morning Service Committee

The task of this committee is to prepare the sanctuary for the Sunday morning worship experience. Some of their responsibilities include details of the chalice, flowers, candles, screens and various other objects. One need not be present every week in order to help this group.

■ Sunday Ushers

The ushers are a group of dedicated individuals who help to create and sustain an environment for worship on Sunday mornings. Each member generally serves one Sunday per month. Some of their responsibilities include welcoming people, the distribution of hymnals and orders of service, collecting the offering and preparing the candle boat and various other details that are required for this important function.

■ Summer Services

From mid June to August, Sunday morning services are lay led, usually by members of the congregation or by a guest minister. This committee coordinates the schedule, arranging service leaders and musicians, child care, ushers and hospitality. It meets as needed in person or by email between March and June.

MUSIC

■ Music Committee

The Music Committee supports the music program of the church and the work of the Minister of Music. It meets on an occasional basis to assist in the planning, organization and production of special musical events. One need NOT have musical skills to be of help on this committee. Some of their activities include the production of special concerts; the bi-annual "Spring Fling"; Cabarets; the Christmas sing-along; classes and other events.

Please contact the church office for current committee chairs and program leaders