



The Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge

Love | Connect | Transform

2023-2024 Member Resource Book



8470 Goodwood Boulevard
Baton Rouge, LA 70806
225-926-2291
www.unitarianbr.org

Welcome to The Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge

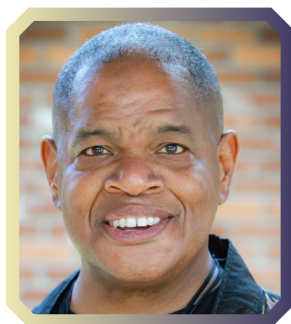
This booklet is designed to introduce new members to the current structure and operations of our congregation, encourage all members to become familiar with volunteer opportunities, and streamline communications for volunteer leaders and staff.

Our ministry is guided by our ministers, professional staff, and volunteer leaders who focus on offering radical hospitality to all, building faith-filled relationships through heart-felt community worship, nurturing spiritual practices, guiding small group ministry, and overcoming oppression in the interest of justice.

We are inspired and eager to work with all members and friends as a strong, resilient, generous, and loving Unitarian Universalist faith community.



Rev. Nathan Ryan
Senior Minister



Rev. Chris Long
Minister of
Congregational Life



Kathy E. Smith, CRE
Director of Family
Ministries



Allison Hall,
Congregational
Administrator



Donna Yelverton
Membership Team Leader



Photo by Maya Miller

2023-2024 Member Resource Book

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We Are Covenantal . . . Not Creedal

We welcome all who wish to be in covenant with us. Unitarian Universalism embodies religious freedom. We do not provide the answers to life's great questions. Instead, we provide a beloved community in which individuals, working together and alone, are encouraged to find answers that are meaningful in the context of their own lives. We embrace the principles of Unitarian Universalism, which include:



We draw upon all sources of knowledge—including experience, authority, intuition, reason, and faith—in the search for answers.

Ours is a living, dynamic religion. We are always free to develop and change our beliefs as we acquire new knowledge and insight concerning truth, reality, and the meaning of life.



The Chalice



A flame within a chalice (a cup with a stem and foot) is a primary symbol of the Unitarian Universalist faith tradition. Many of our congregations kindle a flaming chalice in gatherings and worship and feature the chalice symbol prominently.



We Have a Rich History



We Are Unitarian Universalists: Our Denomination

Unitarian Universalism creates change in ourselves and in the world.

Seven days a week, UUs live our faith by doing. Whether in community with others or as an individual, we know that active, tangible expressions of love, justice, and peace are what make a difference.

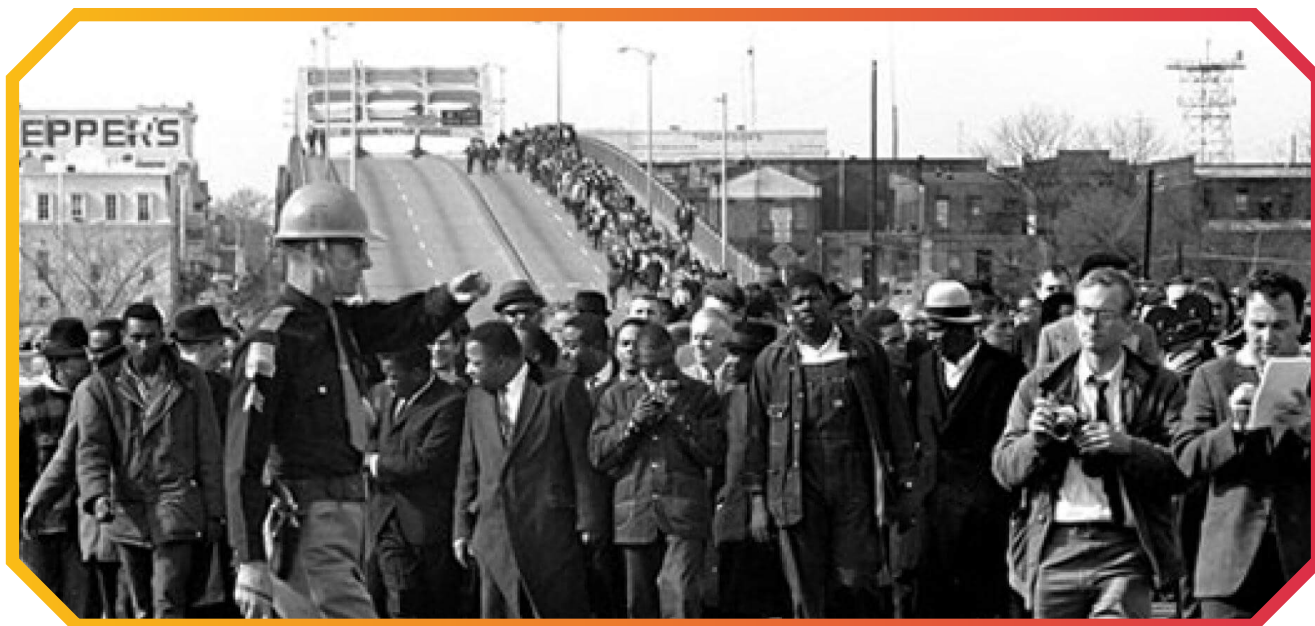
Unitarian Universalist congregations are committed to principles that include the worth of each person, the need for justice and compassion, and the right to choose one's own beliefs. Our congregations and faith communities promote these principles through regular worship, learning and personal growth, shared connection and care, social justice and service, celebration of life's transitions, and much more.

Our faith tradition is diverse and inclusive. We grew from the union of two radical Christian groups: the Universalists, who organized in 1793, and the Unitarians, who organized in 1825. They joined to become the Unitarian Universalist Association

(UUA) in 1961. Both groups trace their roots in North America to the early white Massachusetts settlers and the framers of the United States Constitution.



Across the globe, our legacy reaches back centuries to liberal religious pioneers in England, Poland, and Transylvania. Today, Unitarian Universalists include people of many beliefs who share UU values of peace, love, and understanding. We are creators of positive change in people and in the world.



We Are UCBR: Our Congregation

Our building is known as “the church with the big circle window.” Our congregation is known as “the church that shows up.”



We have a rich history, beginning in 1951, with a few individuals who met at the Heidelberg Hotel, then in the Old State Capitol basement, the YWCA, a trade school, a synagogue, and a house that was purchased and subsequently demolished during interstate highway construction. The Unitarian Fellowship of Baton Rouge was dedicated on its present site in 1965. By 1969, the fellowship had 118 members and its first minister. The congregation changed from a fellowship to a church as it matured and grew in membership and financial support.



We have emerged from several years of ministerial transition and pandemic with a membership of nearly 400.



We Are Self-Governing

We believe in freedom of the pulpit for our ministers, and we operate with congregational polity. While we are in covenant with other Unitarian Universalist congregations to support the UUA, we are self governing. We transitioned to a policy governance organization during 2014-2016.



We give primary responsibility for governance to our elected board of trustees. Governance decisions include articulating the mission, vision, and strategy, delegating the authority to achieve those things, and ensuring that authority is used responsibly and well. Governance also means requiring that the congregation's money, property, and people be kept safe and that the congregation is driven by our mission and lives in harmony with our values.

Everything that we do that is not governance is ministry —the daily work of building a community, managing resources, and transforming lives. Our ministry team leader (MTL), who functions as our CEO, is our senior minister, the Rev. Nathan Ryan. Ministry also includes our Minister of Congregational Life, Rev. Chris Long, the church staff and all of the volunteer leaders and members who carry out the congregation's work.

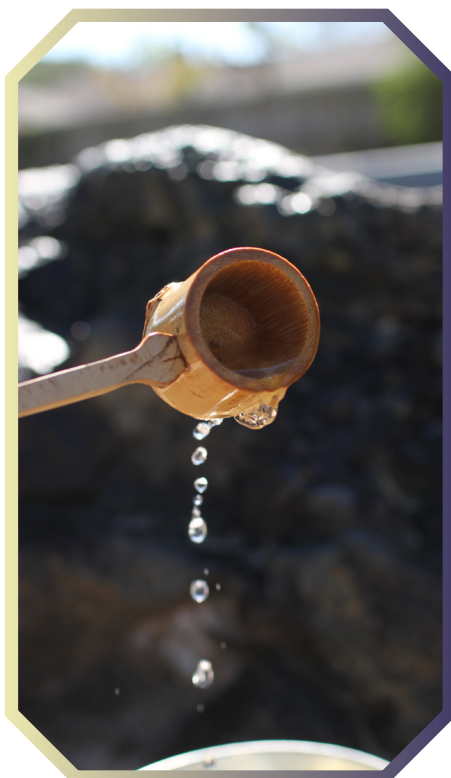
Each year the board sets the top priorities for ministry by crafting an Annual Vision of Ministry (AVOM). Our AVOM for this church year is:

Annual Vision of Ministry 2023-2024

Each day the ministry of the church should continue to serve the purpose and mission of the church. In the 2023-2024 board year, the ministry team's priority shall be to:

1. Continue our deep commitment to living the values expressed in the Eighth Principle by examining and acknowledging individual prejudice and by working to dismantle systemic oppressions in our institutions.
2. Put into action shared ministry by assertively implementing the church's membership plan and by promoting a growing understanding of the meaning and potential of shared ministry.
3. Continue to create a culture that develops and fosters involvement, generosity, engagement, joy, and fun.

Thus, governance maintains our bylaws and produces mission statements, minutes, policies, strategic goals and core values. Ministry brings into being worship services, programming, generosity, faith formation, service projects, welcoming visitors, engaging members and friends, and caring for buildings and grounds.



We Practice Pre-Emptive Radical Hospitality

We are a diverse, multicultural, beloved community of communities.



Our church has championed diversity and civil rights since its beginning over seventy years ago. Unitarianism and Universalism come out of white protestant New England congregational Christianity.



This congregation was founded to be an integrated congregation. At that time southern congregations were segregated by default. While this church was and still is majority white just like all of Unitarian Universalism, it has never been all white.

In recent years the congregation has engaged in learning and discernment with an

aim to increase its welcoming. For example, for the past five years, our board has added working towards racial reconciliation in its Annual Vision of Ministry —its annual charge to the staff and lay leaders about the board's expectations for ministry. There are groups in the church who intentionally study how racism and other oppressions affect this congregation and its presence in the world.

Our Social Justice Team has made stipends available to encourage at least 100 members to participate in Dialogue on Race, a Baton Rouge-wide curriculum on institutional racism.

The Black Joy Collective has provided a space for Black UUs to explore their lived experiences as Black Unitarian Universalists and as spiritual seekers.

TOGETHER BATON ROUGE

Through Together Baton Rouge our congregation has actively participated in addressing issues such as economic segregation, educational inequities, and housing access that are deeply tied to institutional racism.

This church works towards a beloved community of communities where all cultures are valued equally.



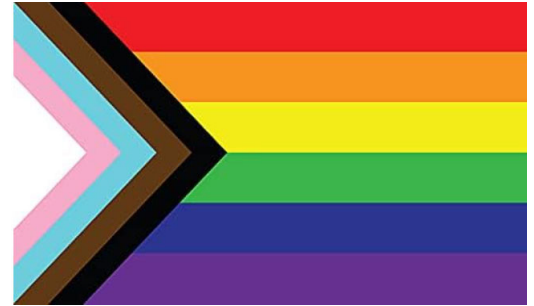
We welcome people of all sexual orientations and sexual identities.

We are recognized by the Unitarian Universalist Association as a Welcoming Congregation. This designation means we affirm and include people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer at every level of congregational life.

We recognize LGBTQIA+ people as a vibrant and valuable part of worship, programming, and social life, welcoming them as whole people.

As a Welcoming Congregation we have pledged to:

- Honor the lives of all people and equally affirm displays of caring and affection without regard for sexual orientation.
- Celebrate diversity by using inclusive language and content in worship.
- Incorporate an understanding of the experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons throughout all of our programs, including religious education.
- Affirm and celebrate lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer issues and history.
- Affirm marriage equality and conduct same-sex weddings.
- Advocate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people, promoting justice, freedom, and equality in the larger society. We speak out when the rights and dignity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people are at stake.



We recognize that there's always something more to learn, and remain open to deepening our understanding about the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, nonbinary, and queer people.



Our Ministry Teams are composed of volunteers who work with lay leaders under the guidance of Ministers and Staff.

Worship-Related Teams

Worship Guild

Rooted in our Unitarian Universalist tradition, yet flexible and adaptable, we cultivate worship to make the world a better place. The guild meets monthly with worship staff to discuss how to best support the worship experience. This includes sharing readings during weekly services, preparing the church for holidays, and creating and directing special services, such as the annual service where church members share personal stories of their church and faith.

Contact: Leslie Taylor-Grover



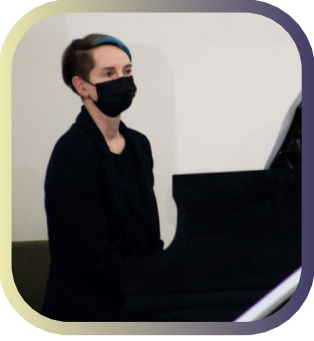
Treehouse Team

So named because of their location in a technology space located high above the sanctuary, this group of volunteers takes care of the technical and electronic capabilities that enable worship. We depend on them for everything audio-visual, for internet and wifi, even for lighting. They are the reason we were able to transition to online worship when necessitated by the pandemic and why we now can support multi-platform worship that is accessible to all.

Contact: Mike Patton



Music Program



The music program provides music for our church services through a combination of instrumental and vocal ensembles and soloists.

Lee Hartman and Trey Davis are the leaders.

The choir always welcomes new singers. The only requirement is that you be willing to learn.

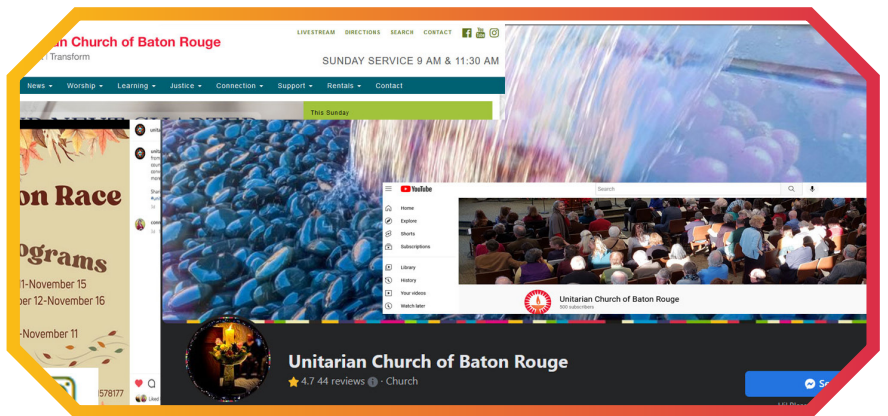
Choir practice is on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. Other ensembles are on an ad hoc basis.

Contact: music.office@unitarianchurchbr.com



Communications Staff

The Communications Staff manages the church's website/calendar, email communications, Zoom meeting reservations, YouTube chat during live streams, digital signage (on the street), and the digital slides for the introduction to Sunday services. The team includes members of the staff and congregation who have experience in the field of digital communications.



If you would like your event or group to be considered for inclusion in any of the church's methods of communication listed above or your group needs a Zoom meeting reservation, contact the staff members listed below. Please provide any information you have, including potential art or logos.

Contact: Allison Hall at office@unitarianchurchbr.com or Lee Hartman at music.office@unitarianchurchbr.com



Family Ministries

Family ministry —how we work as a community to grow individually and together— includes learning who you are, figuring out how you want to live, and filling the toolbox you will need along the way.

That toolbox should hold the practices that keep you grounded, community that supports and encourages you, connections that sustain and challenge you, and the resources that you need to keep growing and learning. Not just resources for our bodies or our emotions or our brains, but resources for our spirits, the part of us that makes us love, laugh, cry, pray, sing, wonder, dance, and take care of each other.

The part that seeks out answers to the big questions like...

- What do I hold sacred?
- Where do I feel the presence of something bigger than me?
- Where do I turn when things are too big for me to handle by myself?
- How do I make meaning of my life?

Unitarian Universalist faith formation is becoming able to articulate what our faith teaches, and what it doesn't teach. It is an ever-deepening understanding of what our faith calls us to —compassion, justice, love, liberation for all starting with the most marginalized— and continually awakening and reawakening our responses to that call.

Adult Classes on Sunday Mornings 10:15-11:15 a.m. during Middle Hour

We have three tracks of programming or classes for adults.

- **Faith in Action (Room 7).** This is our social justice track. The third Sunday of every month is the Social Justice Team meeting. Other Sundays rotate through four areas of interest: climate, education, voting, and reproductive rights.
- **Faith in Exploration (Room 6).** This is the track for learning more about our faith. The first Sunday of the month is a Minister Meet-and-Greet, where you will have the opportunity to chat with one of our ministers, other staff, and lay leaders. On other Sundays, we have classes about different aspects of our church, such as the Introduction to Our Church (three classes about who we are) and the Branches Introductory Sampler (learn about and experience our small group ministry program).
- **Faith in Practice (Room 1).** This is our spiritual practices track. Each Sunday we offer ways to embody spiritual practices and deepen our connections. Classes in this track have included Story and Art (sharing our stories through guided art), Sacred Play (discussion of spiritual practices such as gratitude, sharing, and nurturing community), and Nurturing our Nature Connection (a series of experiential practices such as labyrinth, drum circle, and altar building).



We also offer adult classes throughout the week, both online and in person, which vary throughout the year.

Children and Youth Classes on Sunday Mornings 10:15-11:15 a.m. during Middle Hour

During Middle Hour, we offer classes for children from pre-K to high school. During the school year, our line-up is:

- **Sunday Morning Youth Group (Room 5, Grades 6-12).** Our youth put our values into practice through building community, deep discussion about ethics and justice, service projects. Relationships are all-important, so we include discussion, games, and bonding experiences, too!
- **UU Kids (Room 3, Grades 1-5).** Elementary-age children learn what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist —our values, our stories, our history— through conversations and hands-on activities. This year's focus is Lego UU Sources, UU Values, and Kindness Club.
- **Chalice Children (Room 2, preschool-kindergarten).** Our youngest children read stories, listen to each other, share activities, and practice being in community with each other. The UU values we teach at this age are compassion, fairness, and caring.



Summer Program: We offer programs year-round! During the summer, we are a little less formal and a lot more playful. Watch for special days like Game Day, Building Day, and Bubble Day!

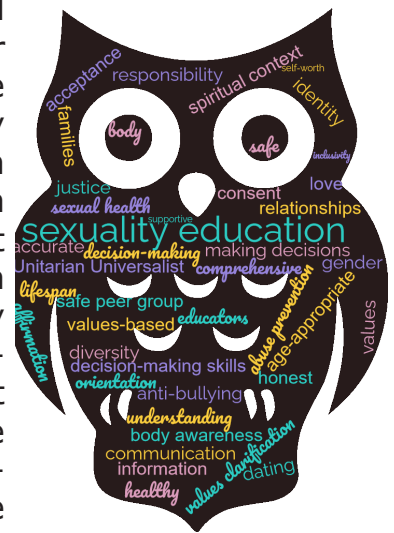
Home Ministry for Families

We have a vibrant home ministry for families. We mail postcards on a regular basis to our children and teens. We also occasionally send faith development activities to do together at home.



Our Whole Lives (OWL)

We are proud to offer Our Whole Lives, the acclaimed sexuality education program from the Unitarian Universalist Association, which is scientifically accurate, values-based, and taught throughout the lifespan at age-appropriate levels. For more information, check out the UUA's webpage at www.uua.org/owl.



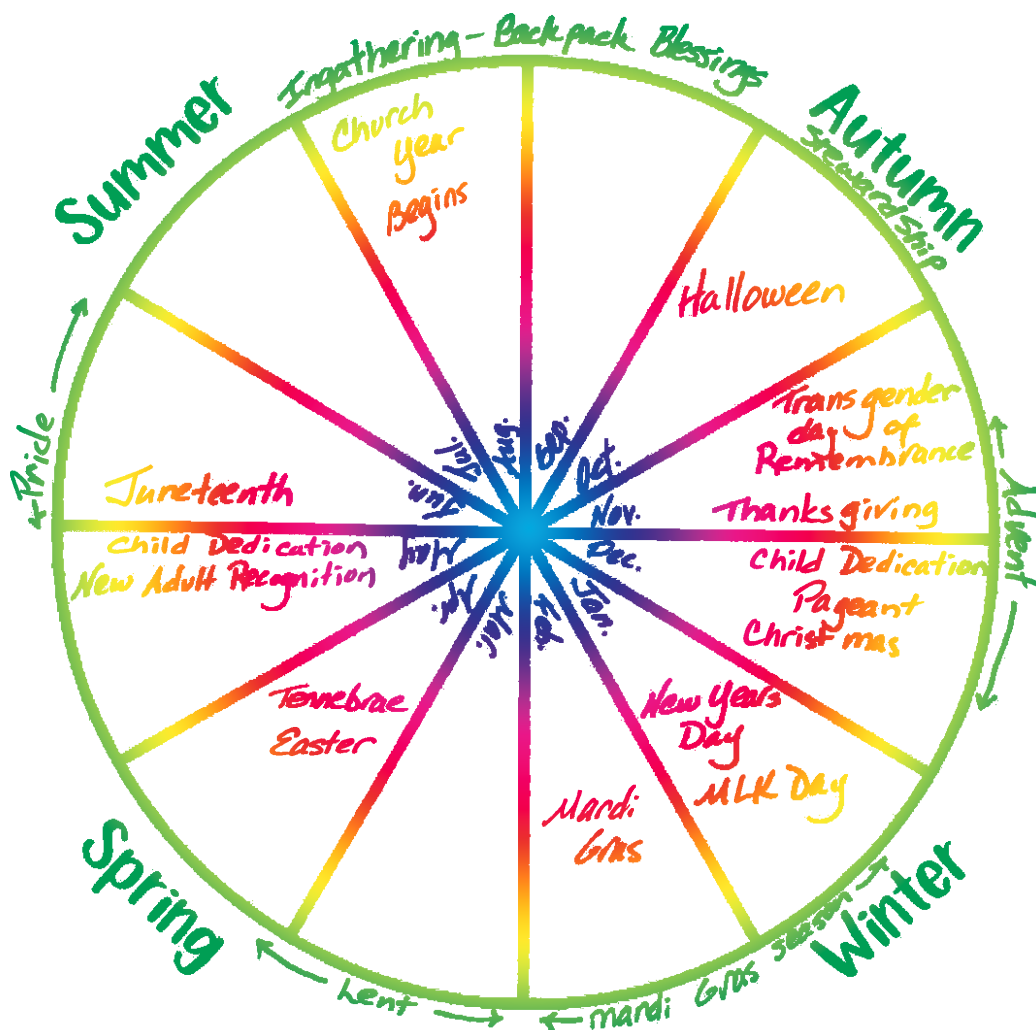
Multi- and Intergenerational Programming

We offer multigenerational, intergenerational programming throughout the year: Ingathering and Blessing of the Backpacks, Halloween party, child dedications, Christmas activities, Easter Egg Hunt, and participation in the Pride Festival.

We've included a **Wheel of the Year** to help visualize our church year.

We also sponsor a number of social gatherings, some for all ages and some for age cohorts.

You can learn about all of our programming through our weekly emails, our church Facebook page, and our church website, or email Kathy Smith at education@unitarianchurchbr.com.



How does being a Unitarian Universalist shape the rhythm of your life?

How Can I Help?

There are a number of ways you can help support and sustain family ministry at the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge.

- Sign up for and attend our classes and programs. (Length of commitment: totally up to you!)
- Sign up for and attend a Branches group. (Length of commitment: two hours a month for a year)
- Help with a one-time project. (Length of commitment: one to two hours on your schedule)
- Help with an ongoing project. (Length of commitment: one to two hours once a month)
- Help with family home ministry preparation and/or deliveries. (Length of commitment: three to six hours once a month)
- Speak at one of our Sunday morning Faith in Action or Faith in Practice sessions about an area of social justice work or a spiritual practice that sustains you. (Length of commitment: one Sunday morning)
- Lead a book discussion group for adults. (Length of commitment: six-twelve weeks of weekly meetings)



Contact: Kathy Smith, Director of Family Ministries, education@unitarianchurchbr.com

Branches

This small-group ministry program is lay-led and designed to deepen and expand the ministry of the congregation. It is open to new and longtime members and also friends who are seeking more information about Unitarian Universalism and the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge. Branches groups meet once a month for two hours, for at least a year. Discussion topics are chosen by group leaders or members. Each group has eight-twelve members. Group members

listen to each other but don't attempt to solve each other's problems. When a member is in need, the other group members are a first-level of support. There are currently sixteen Branches groups.

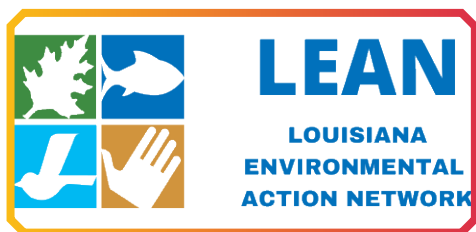
Contact: Anne Nowak, MiJa Thompson, or Lang Baker at branches@unitarianchurchbr.com



Social Justice



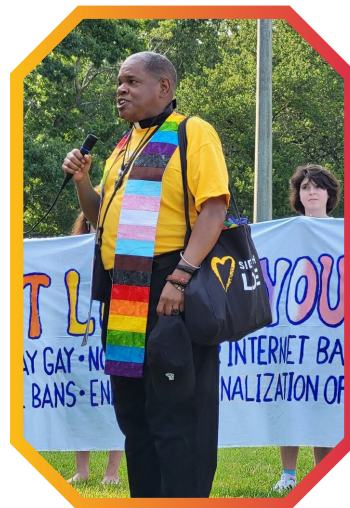
The Social Justice Team of our church engages in discussion, reflection, and action concerning issues of diversity, peace, and justice. We strive to approach issues through an intersectional lens, centering racial, LGBTQIA+, disability, and environmental justice. When possible, we collaborate with other organizations already doing this work, such as the Center for Common Ground, Together Baton Rouge, Voice of the Experienced (VOTE), and Sister Song.



An important task assigned to the Social Justice Team is selecting the recipients of the monthly shared offering. Fifty percent of the offering collected on each Sunday is shared with a local organization that is actively working on social justice issues, such as Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, Louisiana Environmental Action Network and Diversity House at Youth Oasis.

The Social Justice Team meets during Middle Hour (from 10:15 a.m. to 11:15 a.m.) on the third Sunday of the month at the church and all are welcome to attend. Other Sundays feature Social Justice subgroups that rotate through the four focus areas: **climate**, **education**, **voting**, and **reproductive rights**.

Contact: Abel Thompson or Megan Sheehan-Dean Co-chairs, social.justice@unitarianchurchbr.com



Climate Interest Group



The Climate Interest Group —the most active subgroup of Social Justice so far— provides a place for those interested in environmental issues to gather and share resources and concerns with the goal of identifying action steps for individuals and possibly the church. Discussions have ranged from environmental changes that we have noticed, risk assessment, and local health and pollution issues. Future topics will include learning more about recent climate science findings and discussing how we can best help others locally, nationally, and globally.

No matter what your thoughts are about this vast topic, you are welcome to explore with us. This group currently meets during Middle Hour on the Social Justice Team's rotating topics, but other times can be considered.

Contact: Maida Owens and Denise Crowe

Caring Groups

Congregational Care Team

The CCT ministry involves about forty volunteers who are available to help meet the more tangible needs of members and their families.



The team serves as a liaison to those who are sick or infirm. Team members work with Branches groups and call on volunteers from the congregation as needed. They check in with their “clients” regularly and serve their needs or communicate them to ministers or Pastoral Care Associates as appropriate.

The team can provide food and meals as needed during a congregant’s illness or recovery. Members also provide transportation to those who may be temporarily unable to drive, and other tangible temporary help, such as visiting, pet sitting, or grocery shopping.

The CCT manages get well, sympathy, and congratulatory card ministries, sending greetings to those in need, signed by members of the congregation after each Sunday service. We send holiday cards to homebound members and students and others away from home. We also coordinate the donation of flowers for the Sanctuary for Sunday services by members who wish to honor or memorialize loved ones. When requested, the CCT organizes receptions following memorial services at the church.



We meet bimonthly, at the church, on the second Tuesday of odd-numbered months, in the early evening. New members are welcome!

Contact: Co-chairs Liz Hamlin, Melanie Borek, or Vicki Barry. cct@unitarianchurchbr.com

Pastoral Care Associates

Pastoral Care Associates are a small group of volunteers, invited and trained to assist the ministers with pastoral support for the congregation. Led by Rev. Chris Long, Minister of Congregational Life, their ministry is confidential in nature and grounded in being present. PCAs may be called on for pre-surgery or hospital visits, or to stand in support with loss of loved ones. Their ministry is to be present in times of need acting as trusted liaisons between members and ministers and other caring teams. PCAs are not professional counselors or therapists but provide support with the direction and guidance of the ministers.

In the Listening Room you will find a Pastoral Care Associate providing a safe space with a listening ear for those who need someone to hear their concerns. It is open every Sunday after the first service and is located next to the Fellowship Hall in the hallway towards the church office. Please, drop in. You do not need to be in crisis. Sometimes it helps to talk things over.

Pastoral Care Associates: Karen Girardot, Holley Galland Haymaker, Alice Johnson, Jonny Parker, and MiJa Thompson

For pastoral needs or concerns contact: care@unitarianchurchbr.com



Disaster Response Team

The Disaster Response Team's (DRT) mission is to provide a caring presence to church members in the preparation for and aftermath of a disaster. The DRT identifies resources and volunteers prior to the event and assesses needs and provides assistance, as possible, after the event.

Disaster response involves the entire church community. The core members meet and plan. The ministry team advises and directs. The staff assists with logistics around communication and administrative support. The phone tree callers contact the members and check on their status during these times of natural disasters. The church as a whole responds to requests for help and support



by completing the DRT Resource Survey and volunteering their services and supplies.

The DRT is looking for more volunteers to add to the team, including Phone Tree Callers who contact an assigned number of church members (no more than 10) to see if help is needed prior to and after a disaster as well as Resource Data Managers who maintain an electronic list of volunteers and resources.

Contact: MiJa Thompson, Suzanne Besse, or Janet Moulder, disaster.response@unitarianchurchbr.com



Serving the Congregation

Membership Team

The Membership Team, under the direction of the Minister of Congregational Life, is responsible for growing and retaining an engaged and more culturally diverse Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge community to which all who share Unitarian Universalist values can feel a sense of belonging. The team works with the ministers, staff, board, and volunteer leaders to develop and implement a cradle-to-grave spectrum of faith development.



The team works with members to encourage discussion and learning about welcoming and hospitality and the need for growth to support the church into perpetuity. The team equips members, volunteers, and volunteer leaders with tools and practices to help ensure the sustainability of the church. The Membership Team grows the congregation by moving us from being a singular community of individuals to an interdependent web of diverse communities.

The Membership Team supports the mission of the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge by educating members about preemptive radical hospitality and a culture of belonging. The team endeavors to create and support outreach to curious seekers and a welcoming environment for people of all cultures, races, ethnicities, sexual preferences, gender identities, ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, formal education levels, physical and mental abilities, and communities, with hope to make the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge a self-sustaining, dynamic, and diverse community of communities that is welcoming to seekers and attentive to the needs of guests, friends, and members.

Spectrum of Faithful Relationship



The team also recognizes that some people will remain friends of the church rather than becoming members, and that members may well move in both directions on the spectrum of faithful relationship.

The Membership Team liaisons with ministers, staff, other teams, and volunteers to sustain the church and maximize the faith spectrum. Much of this work is achieved through caring for people from cradle to grave by:

- Embracing children and families of members.
- Attracting and welcoming guests.
- Formulating a pathway to belonging for all.
- Building shared ministry through communication and by facilitating volunteerism and lay leadership.
- Providing end-of-life attention and memorializing.



The functions of the Membership Team are multifold, from marketing and outreach and welcoming new guests to training for our Breeze membership database. To manage these functions, the Membership Team works with and includes other teams.

Tasks include:

- Marketing (attracting curious seekers), outreach, and communications.
- Welcoming guests, ushering, and extending hospitality to all.
- Following up with guests.
- Welcoming and orienting new members by celebrating their joining and by integrating them into congregational life, stewardship, branches small ministry groups, and ministry team volunteer work.
- Promoting fun events to build relationships among congregants.
- Recruiting volunteers and supporting and developing volunteer leaders.
- Focusing on retention of members and friends.
- Tracking and analyzing membership data.
- Supporting enhancement of the Breeze membership database.



Contact: Donna Yelverton



Subgroups of the Membership Team

COM-unity Team

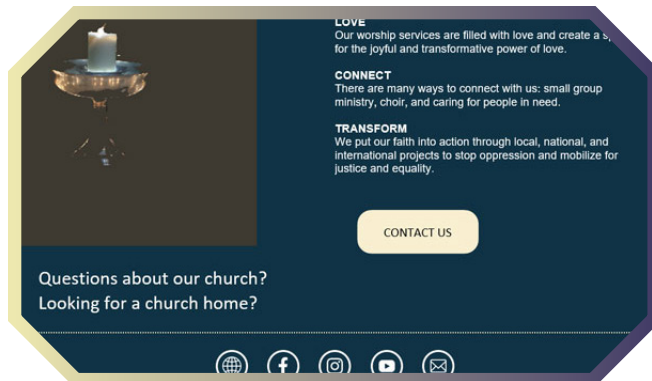
The COM-unity liason includes the Communications, Outreach, and Marketing Teams.

Communications Team

This team interfaces with the Communications Staff to ensure the exchange of messaging and information between the church and its constituents, and manage our social media presence.

The team's goal is a centralized, up-to-date communication system that meets the needs of volunteers and consumers within the church and collaborates with marketing and outreach, to increase visibility and take the message of our church to the community, including via social media platforms.

Contact: Pennie Nichols



Outreach Team

This team works with the volunteer staff Outreach Director Becky Cureau to connect our church to the larger community, including the Unitarian Universalist Association and its Southern Region staff, Louisiana UU congregations, and the local interfaith organization.

The Outreach Team makes the church and its mission known to the Baton Rouge community, so that people can find our church; facilitates service to the community through volunteer service activities; and provides information about events at the church through timely news releases to the media.

Contact: Denise Crowe



Marketing Team

Marketing is responsible for the processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging programs and promotions that have value for our constituents, including seekers, guests, friends, members, partners, and the community at large.

Included is publicity, targeted advertising, and branding.

Contact: Roman García



Welcoming and Hospitality

Welcoming and Hospitality have two primary branches. In addition, this team works with the Safe Building and Congregation Team.

Ushers and Welcomers

Ushers and welcomers staff the welcome table and usher for each Sunday service and, as requested, provide ushering assistance for memorial services.

As welcomers, ushers are often the first person a new visitor meets at the church. They are trained to greet each person with a smile and an openness to answer questions. The Welcome table typically includes simple UU literature and a sign-up sheet for guests who would like more information about the church.

Ushers greet people as they enter the sanctuary, and help ensure preemptive hospitality, anticipating accessibility needs. They also collect, count, and secure the offerings.

Contact: David Lindenfeld and Marla Elsea



Hosts and Greeters



Greeters' duties traditionally have included working alongside ushers at the welcome table, greeting and providing information and assistance to newcomers, guests, and members. Greeters focus on relationship-building and information sharing before services and inviting and encouraging those attending the service to gather following each service for refreshments and conversation.

Although responsibilities of hosts include set up of refreshments and room where attendees gather after each service, their most important role is to welcome guests and newcomers in a manner that builds relationships and our beloved community of communities. They are trained, along with other members of the Welcoming and Hospitality Team, in how to welcome guests and newcomers in a non-othering way, consistent with our church's mission and values of multiculturalism, anti-oppression, and preemptive hospitality.

Contact: Suzanne Besse and Nancy Grush



Member Engagement and Retention

This team works with Faith Development and Family Ministry to address and integrate the following interdependent tasks:

- Defining and facilitating the path to membership.
- Orienting, engaging and retaining members and friends.
- Supporting family ministry and membership classes.
- Tracking membership demographics and metrics.

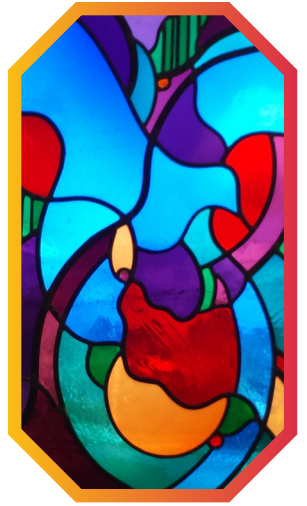
This team aims to create a clear path to membership for those who wish to join. The team foresees growing numerically and in diversity, inclusion, anti-oppression, and accessibility. Our welcoming process will support that growth and encourage friends and guests who are at least the minimum age specified by the bylaws to become members of our church.

This team develops and maintains connections to all of the adults, children, and youth who are part of our church community by providing accessible and meaningful worship, proactive caring, well-designed programming, social justice discussion and action, small group ministry, and other opportunities for connection and growth. Our goal is that community members rarely leave unless they move or die, and that those who leave for other reasons know they will be welcomed back when they choose to reconnect.

Tactical plans include:

- Establish and maintain a sustainable, welcoming new-member plan and checklists to ensure that those who join our community feel that they belong and know how to become more engaged.
- Plan and facilitate semi-annual new member welcome ceremonies.
- Assist the Director of Family Ministry with implementation of classes designed for those in the path to and through new membership, including but not limited to, Minister Meet and Greet, Branches Sampler Series, and Introduction to our Church.
- Facilitate the review and discernment of enhancements to our systems for retention and engagement of members.
- Develop needed measures of membership data and produce reports.

Contact: Diana Dorroh and Dottie Kelly



Caring for Volunteers

This church imagines a day when volunteers share such life-changing stories that the enthusiasm is contagious and leaders never have to awkwardly beg for help. Our dream is a zero recruitment culture where volunteers have the support they need, feel empowered to perform their roles, have a strong sense of community, and are experiencing significance and meaning. The goal is for the church to be a magnet for new, highly motivated volunteers and a system that develops leaders and plans for succession.

Contact: Donna Yelverton

Developing Leaders

This Membership Team subteam works with the Nominating Committee.

Contact: Holley Haymaker

Breeze Database Enhancement and Administrative Support

Contact: Allison Hall

For information or to volunteer, contact membership@unitarianchurchbr.com

Generosity Team

The Generosity Team is a function of Ministry guided by the Ministry Team Leader. This team is responsible for the strategic, long view of stewardship for the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge. The goal is to create and sustain a culture of generosity in which UCBR members:

- Are good stewards, financially proficient, informed about the church's finances, and comfortable talking about money.
- Participate joyfully in stewardship/pledge drives, fundraising events, and capital campaigns.
- Are afforded opportunities for planned-giving and endowment funding.
- Can articulate the linkage between the congregation's mission and resources.

The team works together, and with the ministers, staff, board, and volunteer leaders to cultivate an abundance mindset where we are expansive in our vision, focused on opportunities, optimistic about our future, have more trust and less fear, are grateful, and long-term focused. If this sounds exciting to you, come join one of the task groups.

Contact: Capi Landreneau and Donna Yelverton

Generosity Team Task Groups

FUNdraising Team

The FUNdraising team is working on a long-range plan for events that honors volunteer efforts, celebrates community, provides for ongoing funding of key areas of the budget, and is in line with our mission, vision, and values. The team is always looking for fresh ideas and helping hands.



Contact: Connie McLeod or Pennie Nichols

Education

The Education Team is working on initiating conversations and learning opportunities about the culture of money within our church community and within our lives. Upcoming plans include opportunities in the areas of budgeting, saving, giving, and receiving. Let this team know what you would like to know more about when it comes to money matters.

Contact: Aaron Sheehan-Dean, Jackie Blaney, Kristie Boudreaux, or Rob Johnson



Stewardship Team

The Stewardship Team works on the annual budget drive campaign, including design and creation of the campaign, planning, and the heart work of conveying our mission as it relates to giving. If this speaks to you, be in touch.

Contact: Jane Webb or Janet Moulder

Planned Giving

The Planned Giving Team is creating a legacy giving program with an informational campaign planned for the Spring. The Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge has not actively developed this type of giving in the past and hopes to be able to provide support for future generations, and help members leverage their capacity to impact the future of our church. If you have time or information to share, we welcome it.

Contact: Donna Yelverton

Data Management

The Data Management Team is reviewing the data systems, statistics, and so on, and developing strategies to manage and utilize information in the most useful way. Got some tech skills or love to crunch the data? Do let this team know.

Contact: Diana Dorroh

Buildings and Grounds

Maintaining our physical plant requires many professional disciplines to be sure. However, there are so many more small problems that can be solved by the talents and efforts of the volunteer brigade that assist in keeping our church functioning smoothly. Changing light bulbs, cleaning gutters, trimming branches, repairing broken hinges or doorbells; these are things a homeowner usually tends.

At our spiritual "home" your talents and willingness are a special kind of ministry and much appreciated.

Allison Hall, the Congregational Administrator, manages routine services from contractors, such as lawn care, routine AC maintenance, and custodial services and supplies. She also keeps a list of contractors & vendors to call for bids, services & supplies. She calls upon several church member volunteers as needed.

Contact: Congregational Administrator Allison Hall, office@unitarianchurchbr.com



Safe Building and Congregation Team

The mission of the Safe Building and Congregation Team (SBCT) is to help foster a culture of safety and caring by providing the congregation with the information and skills needed to do so and by enhancing the safety of the building. The SBCT plans for emergencies while carefully balancing safety with our values and will always strive

to maintain a welcoming and loving community. The Team generally meets twice per month, but we would welcome volunteers who want to help on a more limited basis.

Contact: Melanie Mayeux



Archives

The Archives Team maintains the history of our church in words and artifacts. The team is responsible for keeping the records of the activities of the church as displayed in the weekly Orders of Service, bulletins, announcements, and newsletters. These are used as reference by our staff as they plan worship and celebrations. Archives works closely with church Historian Becky Cureau. Photos, books, plaques, banners, newspaper clippings, art, and similar physical records of life at our church have been preserved from its organization to current times.

Beginning in 2015, the multitude of boxes of material from previous ministers' and administrators' files were organized to create the archives room that you can visit today. The door, which is next to the hallway Lending Library shelves is unlocked.



The Archives Team requests that **NOTHING** be removed from this room as most things are **ONE** of a kind. They can be perused and enjoyed, but please leave them as found. They represent our **COLLECTIVE** history that we hope will bring joy, pride, and important information for generations. Donations of photos and documents from home collections are welcome.



Thanks to Connie Holmes for creating a Finding Index spreadsheet that is revised as new items are added. While the index is a work in progress, it will eventually enable anyone to locate specific documents.

Contact: Dottie Kelly or Connie Holmes, who are available for research for any committee, team, project, or individual.

Blood Drive

The Blood Drive is a form of outreach to the community, in which our healthy members and friends donate blood, either at blood drives held three times a year at the church or on their own at the OLOL Blood Center. Their red cells, platelets, and plasma are used to help children and adults throughout the greater Baton Rouge community. Additionally, we have an OLOL Family Blood Group Plan, which provides blood units for all church family members and friends who are asked to provide replacements after their transfusions. A call to request replacements is made to the chairperson, who release the units as needed.

Contact: JoAnn Fryling



Affinity Groups

Black Joy Collective

The Black Joy Collective is a supportive gathering space for Black church members. The Collective meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. Discussions provide opportunities for sharing, learning, understanding, growing, and becoming.

Contact: Leslie Taylor-Grover or Cynthia Bryant



Fun and Fellowship



We have a long tradition of organizing after-church lunches at local restaurants. These Lunch Bunch gatherings, open to all members and guests, provide an opportunity to forge friendships and community in an informal, convivial setting. For new members and guests, attending Lunch Bunch provides an easy way to get to know members of the congregation.

The twice-monthly Lunch Bunches will be announced on the weekly bulletin emails and at church on Sundays. Restaurant reservations are made for 1 p.m. following the second service.

Circle Suppers have been another long-time tradition at UCBR. These potluck suppers, hosted by volunteer church members, have not been held in recent years, but our Fun and Fellowship team is currently working to restart this popular program.

Contact: Sandy Hubbard Sargent

Women's Book Club

The Women's Book Club meets monthly on the second Monday from 7-8:30 p.m. This year the club plans hybrid meetings both at the church and on Zoom. Books are selected once a year at the September meeting. The person who recommended the book is the presenter and discussion follows. New members are always welcome.

Contact: Carolyn Stutts

Open Circle Book Club

The Open Circle Book Club is open to all. It meets at 7 p.m. on the first Sunday of each month via Zoom video conference.

Contact: Pierre Sargent



Sixth Source Sharing Circle

The Sixth Source Sharing Circle is a place for members who are practicing an earth-centered tradition to come together and share their experiences or learn from other's experiences. The group focuses on a community "stone gumbo" approach to enrich us all: we all contribute what we know and have learned. The space is open to the curious, the experienced practitioner, and the beginner. Meetings are held on the second Sunday of each month after thesecond service.

Contact: Salvatore Culotta



Retirement Support Group

The Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge Retirement Support Group emphasizes "support." The group meets on the first Thursday of the month at 10 a.m. at various coffee houses around Baton Rouge. The open meeting usually lasts two hours. Some members go out for lunch together after the meeting. Members share information about upcoming events, tips about contractors or great places to visit. All retirees are welcome.

Contact: Pierre Sargent



The Cakes Group

The Cakes group is named for the historic feminist theology curriculum *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*, created in 1986 by the Rev. Shirley Ranck, a UU minister, and revised in 2008. It is named in memory of The Queen of Heaven, the ancient goddess revered by the people of the Bible in Jeremiah 7:17-18.

In 1987 our church was among the first to offer the curriculum. Lone Jensen, then a lay leader, was a facilitator of our first Cakes class, a 12-session exploration of pre- and post-Judeo-Christian cultures and their influences on women's lives. Participants are given opportunities to share experiences and beliefs, which create trust and bonds of friendship.

Twenty-six years later the now Rev. Lone Jensen returned to our church to lead a Cakes Reunion and Celebration. In 2020, the 19 women pictured here made history by completing



the first Cakes class at our church delivered exclusively via Zoom. The class ended with a celebration featuring contributions that included original artwork, poetry, stories, and dance, all of which were captured in a booklet created by Julie Ruckstuhl, one of the facilitators. Many women who've participated in the curriculum continue to meet regularly for sharing and sistership. Currently, 90 women at our church continue their connections via a Cakes email distribution list.

Contact: Suzanne Besse



Governance Organizational Overview



Our church operates under a Policy Governance model.

The leadership of the church is a shared responsibility of the congregation, the Board of Trustees and the Ministry Team. Members of the congregation share responsibility for discerning the church's mission and organizing to fulfill it. Members do not "own" the church for individual or collective benefit. Rather, members hold the church in trust for those who benefit from its work now and in the future.

Except for the duties reserved to the congregation, as set forth in the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws and Governance Policy Manual, the members delegate leadership responsibility to the Board of Trustees and the MTL. Our church's bylaws and Governance Policy Manual are available on the members area of the website, and copies of Board meeting minutes are available for review in the church office.

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees consists of seven voting members and the Senior Minister/Ministry Team Leader. Members serve three-year terms, with the President and Vice President of the Board serving one-year terms. These offices are filled by members of the current board who have completed at least one year of their term. Board members are elected by the Congregation. The Board generally meets on the third Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m.

Contact: Jeff Gauger, Board President



The board exists to serve the mission of the church, which currently is stated as follows:

Grounded in love and respect for nature and humanity and dedicated to the individual's search for truth.

We provide a home where we can celebrate spiritual diversity and commit ourselves to serving the human community.

The Board of Trustees, in part, conducts its governance responsibilities through standing board committees that include Finance, Governance, and Personnel Committees.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee's purpose is to assist the Board by helping to provide watchful and careful monitoring of, review and/or propose policies for, and facilitate communication related to financial matters. Responsibilities include:

- Review our church policies with regard to financial policy and propose changes as necessary.
- Provide oversight and reconciliation over/of all funds of the church, including but not limited to its bank accounts, capital fund drives, memorial funds, stocks and the sale of any assets.
- Coordinate an audit of internal financial procedures of the church on behalf of the Board.
- Hold an educational session as needed to ensure that Board members have an adequate understanding of the congregation's financial status and goals.
- ensure that routine financial reports are clear and helpful.



This committee has three to five members, composed of the MTL or the MTL's designee, at least one Board member; and additional members as appointed by the President of the Board. The Board President designates the Committee Chair. Membership of the committee should provide a balance of skills, experiences, and gifts that include knowledge and experience, either general or specific, in finance and financial management; and knowledge of the mission and goals of the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge.

Contact: Bonita Brown, Chair

Governance Committee

The Governance Committee's purpose is to assist the Board by helping to provide watchful and careful monitoring of, review and/or propose policies for, and facilitate communication related to governance matters. Responsibilities include:

- Create and review for the purposes of updating and revising as needed, all church policies and bylaws to insure they are internally consistent.
- Hold an educational session for lay leaders at least annually to insure they understand the congregation's governance structure.
- Serve as an in-house resource to clarify roles and responsibilities to staff and lay leaders.



The committee has three to five members, composed of the President of the Board, the MTL and or a designee; and up to five additional members appointed by the President of the Board. The Board President designates the Committee Chair. Membership of the committee should provide a balance of skills, experiences, and gifts that include knowledge and experience with the history and specific governance policies that define how the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge will operate, including the reasoning underlying our structure, and knowledge of our mission and goals.

Contact: Nancy Gilbert, Chair

Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee's purpose is to assist the Board by helping to provide watchful and careful monitoring of, review and/or propose policies for, and facilitate communication related to personnel policy and general practices. Responsibilities include:

- review new church policies with regard to existing personnel policy and propose changes as necessary;
- coordinate a periodic audit of our Human Resource procedures on behalf of the Board;
- coordinate a periodic compensation study and make recommendations to the Board regarding adjustments in our compensation scales; and
- hold an educational session at least biannually to ensure that Board members have an adequate understanding of the congregation's personnel policies and goals.



This committee is made up of three to five people, composed of the MTL, at least one Board member, and additional members appointed by the President from the congregation. The Board President designates the Committee Chair. Membership of the committee should provide a balance of skills, experiences, and gifts that include knowledge and experience, either general or specific, in human resources and/or personnel management, and knowledge of our mission and goals.

Contact: Elizabeth Hamlin, Chair

Treasurer

The Treasurer, an officer of the church who does not sit on the Board, serves at the pleasure of the Board of Trustees. Qualifications include knowledge, skills and abilities in the areas of finance, accounting, auditing, budgeting, long-term forecasting and strategic planning. This position requires a strong communicator and manager who will serve as the primary fiscal monitor for the Board of Trustees. The Treasurer is a member of the Finance Committee who works with various committees and reviews and evaluates the work of the staff as needed and works cooperatively with the Ministry Team Leader on all financial matters. A BA, MBA and CPA or other professional designation in the field of finance is highly desired.

Principal responsibilities include ensuring the fiscal health of the Church Corporation. The

position is responsible for understanding and complying with the congregation's financial policies and government laws and rules that apply to the congregation's financial administration. Additional duties include but are not limited to: financial oversight on behalf of the Board of all church funds and fiscal activities; oversight of income and expenses; review of bank statements, deposits, payments and checks, timecards, on-line transactions, etc.; monthly reviews of the operating budget year-to-date and balance sheet; monitoring income and expenses, coordinating with the chairs of the Finance, Special Funds, and Endowment Committees; finance reports to the Board and congregation, and helping develop and present the annual operating budget to the congregation.

Current Treasurer: Robert Johnson

For more information or if interested in serving on the Board or one of the Board Committees, please contact Jeff Gauger, Board President.

The Board also establishes and maintains standing independent committees (such as Nominating, Endowment Fund, and Healthy Congregation) that function without supervision of the Board. Members of Independent Committees are elected by the congregation.

Nominating Committee



This committee consists of six members elected to three-year terms, plus the Senior Minister or designee. Members of the Nominating Committee must have been members of the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge for at least two years. Two members are elected each year at the April membership meeting. At least one of the six members must be a past member of the church's Board of Directors.

The Ministry Team Leader convenes the committee at least one month prior to the

April membership meeting to select a chair, and will notify the Board of the chairperson. The committee helps the Ministry Team Leader and Board identify leadership candidates for the various Board member, Board officer and committee positions, and publishes the slate of qualified candidates.

At the request of the President, the Nominating Committee will propose candidates for vacancies that occur during the year.

Contact: Bess Corbitt

Endowment Fund Committee



The Endowment Fund is an account separate from all other accounts maintained by the church. The Fund exists solely for the purposes of the church. Once a minimum threshold amount is attained, the income from the Fund may be used for the promotion and development of religious, charitable, and educational activities, and for non-

recurring purposes not regularly budgeted by the church.

The Endowment Committee, which administers the endowment fund, is currently being restructured to conform with the vision for the Generosity Team and will be reinstated before the fund reaches the threshold amount stated in the bylaws.



Healthy Congregation Committee

This committee was added in 2018 to:

1. Provide assistance and resources to church members, friends and staff to help us live in covenant and to promote healthy interactions among all/
2. Provide a means to address disruptive behavior.

Its purpose is to help improve the culture surrounding conflict so that the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge approaches conflict in a healthy way that encourages openness, respect, communication, healthy debate and collaboration.



Responsibilities of the HCC include:

- When necessary and appropriate, help resolve disputes and other forms of interpersonal conflict and assist in resolving disruptive behavior.
- Comply with the Conflict and Disruptive Behavior Resolution Policy and/or other similar Board-adopted policy.
- Develop and facilitate programs to improve the church's ability to deal with interpersonal conflicts and concerns and promote communication around issues before they escalate.
- Serve as a resource for church members, friends and staff to manage conflicts and grievances in a healthy manner.

The HCC consists of three members elected by the congregation to three year terms; and a church Minister as an ex officio member. No prior training is required to be a member of the HCC. Each member is expected to be: committed to the mission of the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge and Unitarian Universalism principles; able to work and communicate well with others and to not engage in divisive or unhealthy communications; willing and able to honor confidentiality and privacy; to respect the dignity of all individuals concerned; demonstrate respect for cultural diversity and diversity of ideas and opinions; and speak honestly, clearly and with kindness and respect.

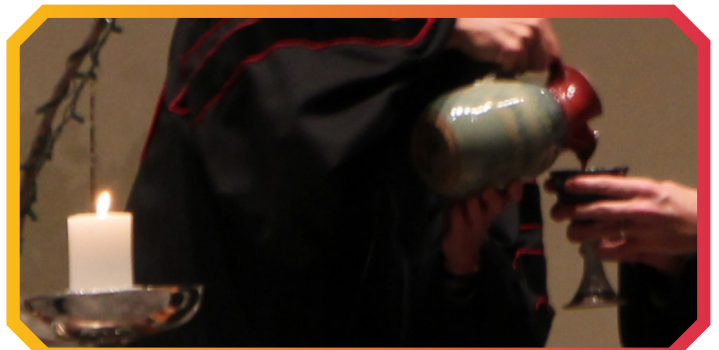
Contact: Kathy Judy, Shannon Cavell, or Vic Cross



Special Services and Events



Easter Egg Hunt



Tennebrae Service



Gospel Service



Family Events (Gumbo Cook-Offs, Crawfish Boils)



Flower Ceremony



Blues Service



Halloween



Impromptu Christmas
Pageant



Christmas Tree Decorating Party



Solstice Service



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Program and Ministry Teams

Program and Ministry Teams are collections of church volunteers who create positive progressive change and live out our liberal religious values in meaningful community with one another. Program and Ministry Teams are like smaller “families” within the larger church community. All activity that goes on in the life of the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge happens through the hearts, hands, and minds of the following Program and Ministry Teams:

Senior Minister.....	Reverend Nathan Ryan
Minister of Congregational Life	Reverend Chris Long
Family Ministries	Kathy Smith (education@unitarianchurchbr.com)
Music Program	Lee Hartman (music.office@unitarianchurchbr.com)
Archives.....	Dottie Kelly, Connie Holmes
Black Joy Collective	Leslie Taylor-Grover, Cynthia Bryant
Branches.....	Anne Nowack, MiJa Thompson, Lang Baker (branches@unitarianchurchbr.com)
Buildings and Grounds	Allison Hall (225-926-2291, office@unitarianchurchbr.com)
The Cakes Group.....	Suzanne Besse
Communications Staff.....	Allison Hall (office@unitarianchurchbr.com)
.....	Lee Hartman (music.office@unitarianchurchbr.com)
Congregational Care Team.....	Liz Hamlin, Melanie Borek, Vicki Barry
Disaster Response Team.....	Janet Moulder, Suzanne Besse, MiJa Thompson (disaster.response@unitarianchurchbr.com)
Fun and Fellowship	Sandy Hubbard Sargent
Generosity Team	Capi Landreneau
Financial Literacy	Aaron Sheehan-Dean
FUNdraising Team	Connie McLeod, Pennie Nichols
Planned Giving.....	Donna Yelverton
Stewardship	Jane Webb, Janet Moulder
Membership Team	Donna Yelverton (membership@unitarianchurchbr.com)
Breeze Administrative Support.....	Allison Hall (office@unitarianchurchbr.com)
Caring for Volunteers.....	Donna Yelverton
Communications Team.....	Pennie Nichols
Developing Leaders	Holley Haymaker
Marketing.....	Roman García
Member Engagement and Retention .	Diana Dorroh, Dottie Kelly
Outreach Team	Denise Crowe
Welcoming and Hospitality	
Hosts and Greeters	Suzanne Besse, Nancy Grush
Ushers and Welcomers	David Lindenfeld, Marla Elsea
Open Circle Book Club	Pierre Sargent
Outreach Director.....	Becky Cureau
Pastoral Care Associates.....	MiJa Thompson
Retirement Support Group	Pierre Sargent
Safe Building and Congregation Team	Melanie Mayeux
Sixth Source Sharing Circle	Salvatore Culotta
Social Justice Team.....	Abel Thompson, Megan Sheehan-Dean (social.justice@unitarianchurchbr.com)
Treehouse Team.....	Mike Patton
Women’s Book Club	Carolyn Stutts
Worship Guild	Leslie Taylor-Grover



Getting Involved

Worship Sunday Mornings: At 9 a.m. (in person and streamed online) or 11:30 a.m. (in person). As often as you can, participate in activities that occur during Middle Hour between services. Most members of our community feel the need for more connection than can occur during Sunday services.

Stay in Touch: Read your Order of Service and Saturday announcements that are sent by email and the weekly emailed Wednesday Bulletin. Check out our website www.unitarianchurchbr.org regularly. Drop in on one of the activities or sign up for a class listed there. These activities and events will provide opportunities for you to stay connected and assist in the ongoing church programs.

Take a class: See the Family Ministries section of this booklet.

Join a Branches group: Branches groups are small relational groups, within the larger church, led by experienced church members. Members share their stories and their lives, while developing connections to each other and to the church. We urge new as well as long-time church members to sign up for a Branches group.

Begin your financial support of your church: Discern what pledge level is appropriate given your financial circumstances and your love for the work of this church, and begin or continue your journey through our culture of generosity.

Sign up for a Circle Supper or go to lunch with the Lunch Bunch: Circle Suppers are potluck suppers, held at member's homes. The Lunch Bunch is a gathering, after the 11:30 a.m. service on Sunday. All are welcome. See the Fun and Fellowship section of this booklet.

Participate in the Music Program: For those who are comfortable singing choral music and performing, the Adult Choir meets weekly and sings for services on a regular schedule. See the Music Program section.

Bring your children to Religious Education on Sunday mornings during Middle Hour: If you have children, help them connect by bringing them to our thriving children's Religious Education Program.

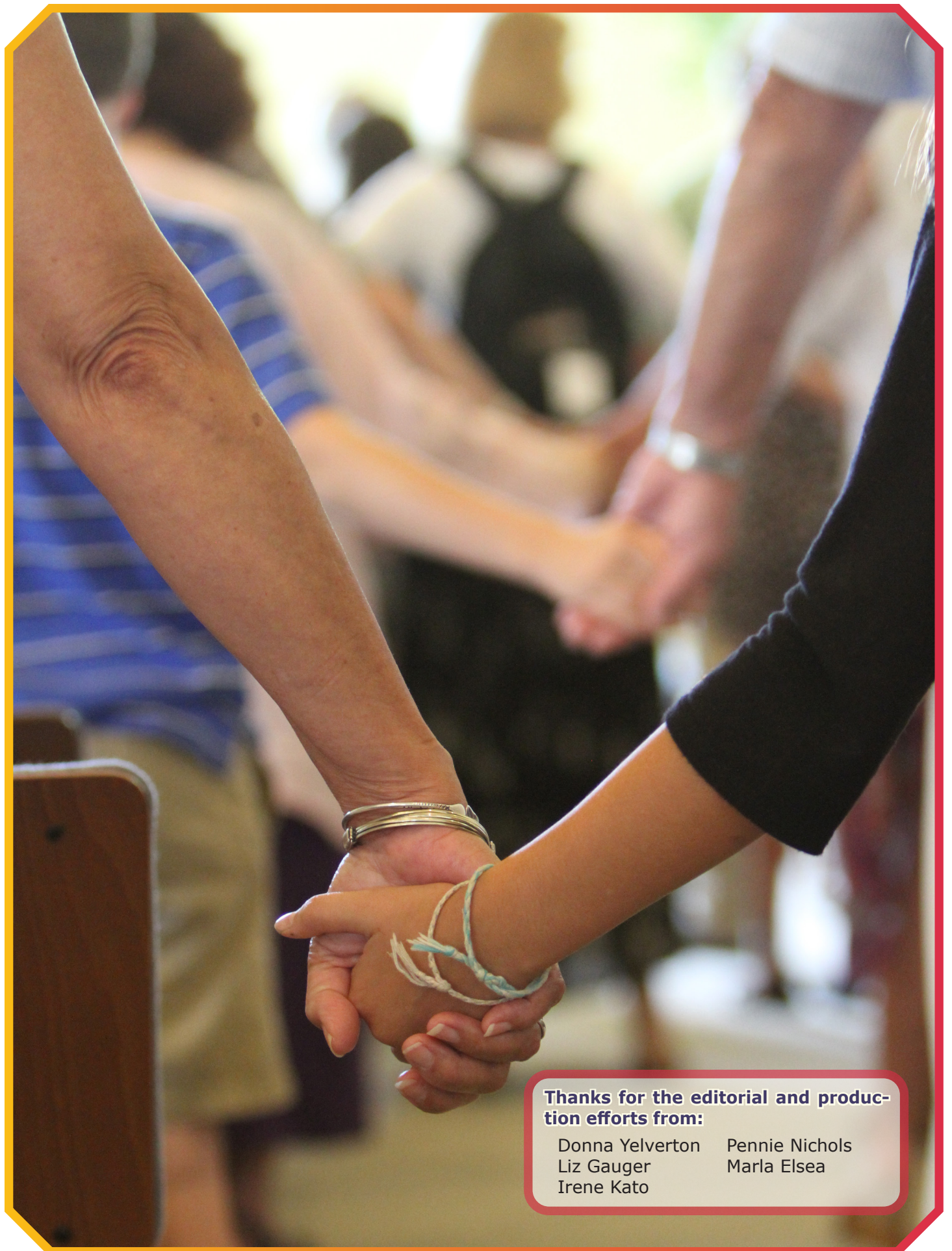
Volunteer to help with Children's Religious Education Program classes or events: See the Family Ministries section for information.

Volunteer to help with an event or fundraiser: Many people find that volunteering at fundraisers and fun events is a good way to make connections. Watch for announcements and see the Membership and Generosity Team sections for opportunities.

Support our Social Justice activities: Check the announcements or attend a meeting for opportunities to put our values in action as we try to make our world a better place...starting in Baton Rouge. Many friendships are forged as we work together on common goals.

Join a Ministry Team or Committee: If you are a new member, becoming comfortable in this church, forming relationships, and finding ways to connect spiritually, be aware that most ministry teams and committees need new members. So . . . if you feel that joining a ministry team or committee is a good way for you to connect, go ahead and do it. If you have been a member for more than a year, it may be time for you to find a ministry that fits your passion with one of our ministry teams. You can contact any of the leadership listed here or look in the bulletin or announcements for upcoming meetings.





Thanks for the editorial and production efforts from:

Donna Yelverton
Liz Gauger
Irene Kato

Pennie Nichols
Marla Elsea