



The Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge

Love | Connect | Transform

## 2025 Member Resource Book



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Baton Rouge, LA 70806  
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[www.unitarianbr.org](http://www.unitarianbr.org)



# Welcome to The Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge

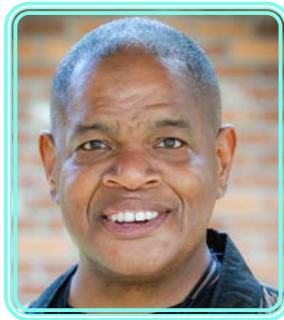
This booklet introduces new members to our congregation's structure and operations, highlights volunteer opportunities, and supports streamlined communication for leaders and staff.

Our ministry is led by ministers, staff, and volunteers dedicated to offering radical hospitality, building meaningful connections through worship, nurturing spiritual practices, supporting small group ministry, and working for justice.

Together, we strive to be a welcoming, resilient, and loving Unitarian Universalist 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

# 2025 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 values of Unitarian Universalism.

As Unitarian Universalists, we covenant, congregation-to-congregation and through our association, to support and assist one another in our ministries. We draw from our heritages of freedom, reason, hope, and courage, building on the foundation of love.

Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values. We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through the spiritual discipline of Love.

Inseparable from one another, these **shared values** are:



This image is of a chalice with an overlay of the word love over the flame, with six outstretched arms that create a circle around each of the core values and form a six petal flower shape. Each arm is a different color and clockwise they are: Interdependence (Orange), Equity (Red), Transformation (Purple), Pluralism (Dark Blue), Generosity (Teal), and Justice (Yellow).

**Interdependence.** We honor the interdependent web of all existence. We cherish Earth and all beings by creating and nurturing relationships of care and respect.

**Pluralism.** We are all sacred beings diverse in culture, experience, and theology. We covenant to learn

from one another in our free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

**Justice.** We work to be diverse multicultural Beloved Communities where all thrive and dismantle racism and all forms of systemic oppression.

**Transformation.** We adapt to the changing world. We covenant to collectively transform and grow spiritually and ethically.

**Generosity.** We cultivate a spirit of gratitude and hope. Our generosity connects us to one another in relationships of interdependence and mutuality.

**Equity.** Every person has the right to flourish with inherent dignity and worthiness. We covenant to build and sustain fully accessible and inclusive communities.

## The Chalice

The flaming chalice is the primary symbol of the Unitarian Universalist faith. Congregations light it in gatherings and worship. The words we say together when we light our chalice are: "With hope to make this a better world, we light this flame. Its light is a symbol of the power of love."





# We Have a Rich History



## We Are Unitarian Universalists: Our Denomination



Unitarian Universalism inspires change in ourselves and the world.

We live our faith through acts centered on UUA values. Our diverse and inclusive tradition promotes these values through worship, learning, connection, service, and social justice.

Formed in 1961 from the union of the Universalists (1793) and Unitarians (1825), Unitarian Universalism traces our roots back to liberal religious pioneers in England, Poland, Transylvania, and early America. Today, UUs embrace diverse beliefs, united by shared values and a commitment to creating positive change.





# We Are UCBR: Our Congregation

Known as “the church with the big circle window” and “the church that shows up,” we have a rich history dating back to 1951.



Early gatherings took place in locations ranging from the Heidelberg Hotel to the Old State Capitol basement. In 1965, the Unitarian Fellowship of Baton Rouge was established on its current site and became a church as membership and support grew. Today, with about 400 members, we continue to thrive, emerging strong from ministerial transitions and the challenges of the pandemic.





## We Are Self-Governing

We value freedom of the pulpit and operate with congregational polity, self-governed while in covenant with other UU congregations to support the UUA. Since transitioning to policy governance in 2014-2016, our elected Board of Trustees oversees mission, vision, strategy, and the responsible stewardship of resources. Ministry encompasses the daily work of building community, managing resources, and transforming lives, led by the Ministry Team Leader, Rev. Nathan Ryan, and supported by Rev. Chris Long, staff, and volunteers. The Board sets annual ministry priorities through the Annual Vision of Ministry (AVOM).



### Annual Vision of Ministry 2024-2025

Each day the ministry of the church should continue to serve the purpose and mission of the church. In the 2024-2025 board year, the ministry team's priority shall be to:

1. Provide a spiritual home that is safe and full of hope for all who need this refuge.
2. Remove the walls, barriers, and oppressions that prevent and obstruct engagement and inclusion.
3. Help our congregants to develop the spiritual tools they need to survive and thrive in this world.

Governance upholds bylaws, mission statements, policies, and strategic goals. Ministry brings worship, programming, generosity, faith formation, service projects, welcoming, engagement, and building care to life.



# We Practice Preemptive Radical Hospitality

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



For over seventy years, our church has championed diversity and civil rights. Rooted in white Protestant New England congregational Christianity, this congregation was founded as an integrated community in a segregated South. While majority white, it has always included people of diverse backgrounds.

In recent years, we've deepened our commitment to inclusivity. Our board has prioritized racial reconciliation in the Annual

examine how racism and oppression impact our congregation and broader society.



Our Social Justice Team supports participation in Dialogue on Race, a Baton Rouge-wide curriculum on institutional racism, while the Black Joy Collective creates space for Black UUs to explore their experiences. Through Together Baton Rouge, we address systemic issues like economic segregation, educational inequities, and housing access.

We strive to build a beloved community where all cultures are equally valued.



Vision of Ministry for the past five years, encouraging staff and lay leaders to focus on this critical work. Groups within our church



We welcome people of all sexual orientations and sexual identities.

We are recognized by the Unitarian Universalist Association as a Welcoming Congregation, affirming and including LGBTQIA+ people as vital members of our worship, programs, and social life.

As a Welcoming Congregation, we pledge to:

- Honor all lives and affirm caring and affection regardless of sexual orientation.
- Celebrate diversity with inclusive language and worship.
- Incorporate LGBTQIA+ experiences into all programs, including religious education.
- Affirm and celebrate LGBTQIA+ issues, history, and marriage equality.
- Conduct same-sex weddings and advocate for justice, freedom, and equality in society.
- Speak out when LGBTQIA+ rights and dignity are at stake.



We remain committed to learning and deepening our understanding of LGBTQIA+ lives and experiences.



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 Unitarian Universalist tradition, the Worship Guild cultivates meaningful worship to make the world a better place. Meeting monthly with worship staff, the guild supports services by sharing readings, preparing for holidays, and directing special services like the annual sharing of faith stories.

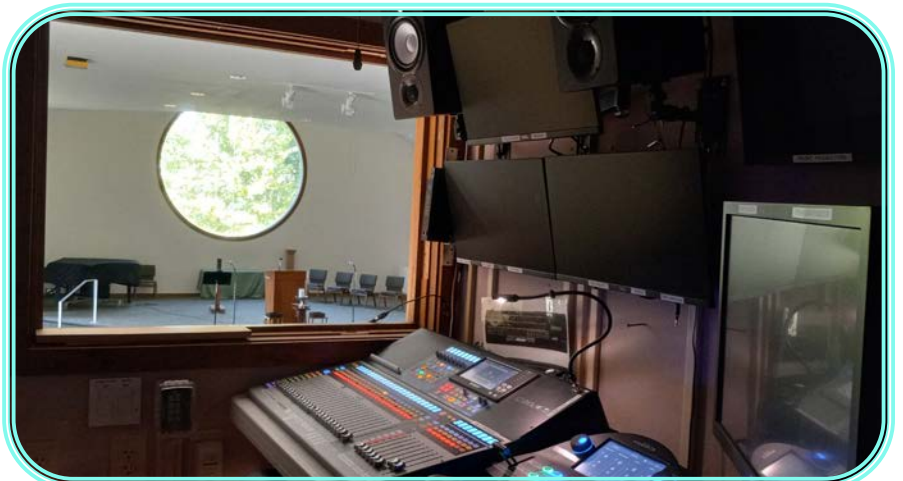
Contact: Leslie Taylor-Grover



## Treehouse Team

Named for their location high above the sanctuary, this volunteer team manages the technical and electronic systems that enable worship. From audio-visuals to internet, telecoil hearing loops, and lighting, they ensure seamless in-person and online services, including the transition to multi-platform worship during the pandemic.

Contact: Mike Patton





# Music Program



Our music program enriches church services with instrumental and vocal ensembles, as well as soloists, led by Lee Hartman and Trey Davis. The choir welcomes all willing to learn, with practices on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. Other ensembles form as needed.

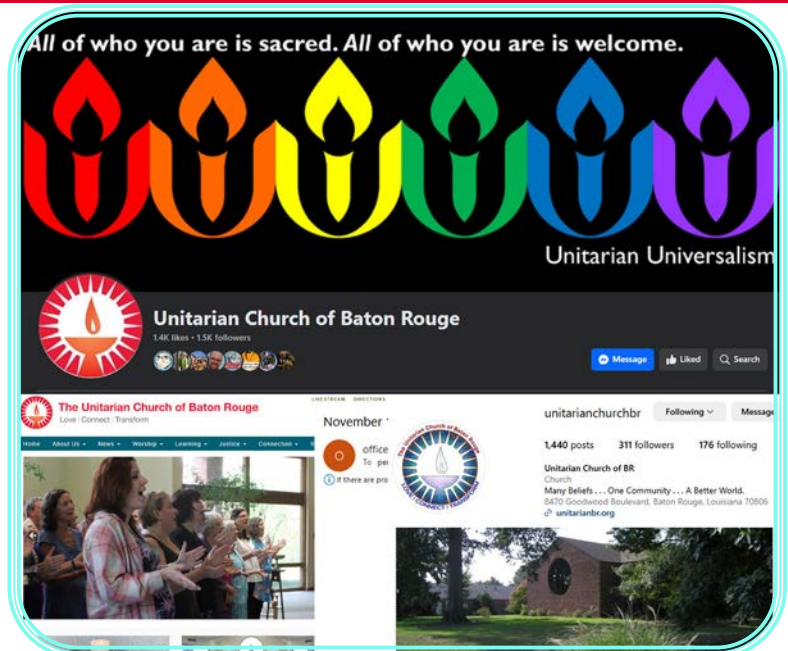
Contact: [music.office@unitarianbr.org](mailto:music.office@unitarianbr.org)



# Communications Staff

The Communications Staff oversees the church's website, calendar, email communications, Zoom reservations, YouTube live chats, street signage, and Sunday service slides. This team includes staff and congregation members with digital communications expertise.

Contact: Allison Hall at [office@unitarianbr.org](mailto:office@unitarianbr.org), Lee Hartman at [music.office@unitarianbr.org](mailto:music.office@unitarianbr.org)



# Family Ministries

What is Family Ministry?

Family ministry is for everyone! Learn who you are as a spiritual being. Figure out how you want to live. Fill your spiritual toolbox.

Your spiritual toolbox holds the practices that keep you grounded, community that supports and encourages you, connections that sustain and challenge you, and resources to keep growing and learning, no matter how old you are!

What do we mean when we say spiritual? Our spirits allow us to love, laugh, cry, pray, sing, wonder, dance, and take care of each other. It's the part of us 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?

Family ministry programs and classes help you articulate what Unitarian Universalism is. Build a supportive community for your spiritual journey. And deepen your understanding of our values – compassion, justice, love, liberation for all starting with the most marginalized.



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

We have three tracks for adults on Sunday mornings.

- **Faith in Action (Room 7) – Social Justice.** 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) – Lean about Our Faith.** At the Minister Meet-and-Greet on the first Sunday of each month, you can chat with our ministers, staff, and lay leaders. The rest of the month, we rotate through classes about our church, our faith, our symbology, and our small group ministry program.
- **Faith in Practice (Room 5) – Spiritual Practices.** Some of the practices we have shared in this track have been telling our stories through guided art; nurturing gratitude, compassion, and community; and embodied spiritual practices such as a labyrinth, drum circle, and altar building. Stay tuned for what's next!

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.

- **Sunday Morning Youth Group (Room 1, Grades 6-12).** Our youth put our values into practice through building community, service projects, and deep discussions about ethics and justice. Relationships are all-important, so we include food, games, and bonding experiences too.
- **UU Activity Lab (Room 3, Grades 1-5).** Elementary-age children learn what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist through stories, conversations, and hands-on activities. The UU values we teach at this age are kindness, fairness, generosity, interconnectedness, listening, and being open to grow and change.
- **Chalice Children (Room 2, preschool-kindergarten).** Our youngest children hear 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 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)



### Our Whole Lives

We are proud to offer Our Whole Lives, the acclaimed sexuality education program from the Unitarian Universalist Association. OWL 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](http://www.uua.org/owl).

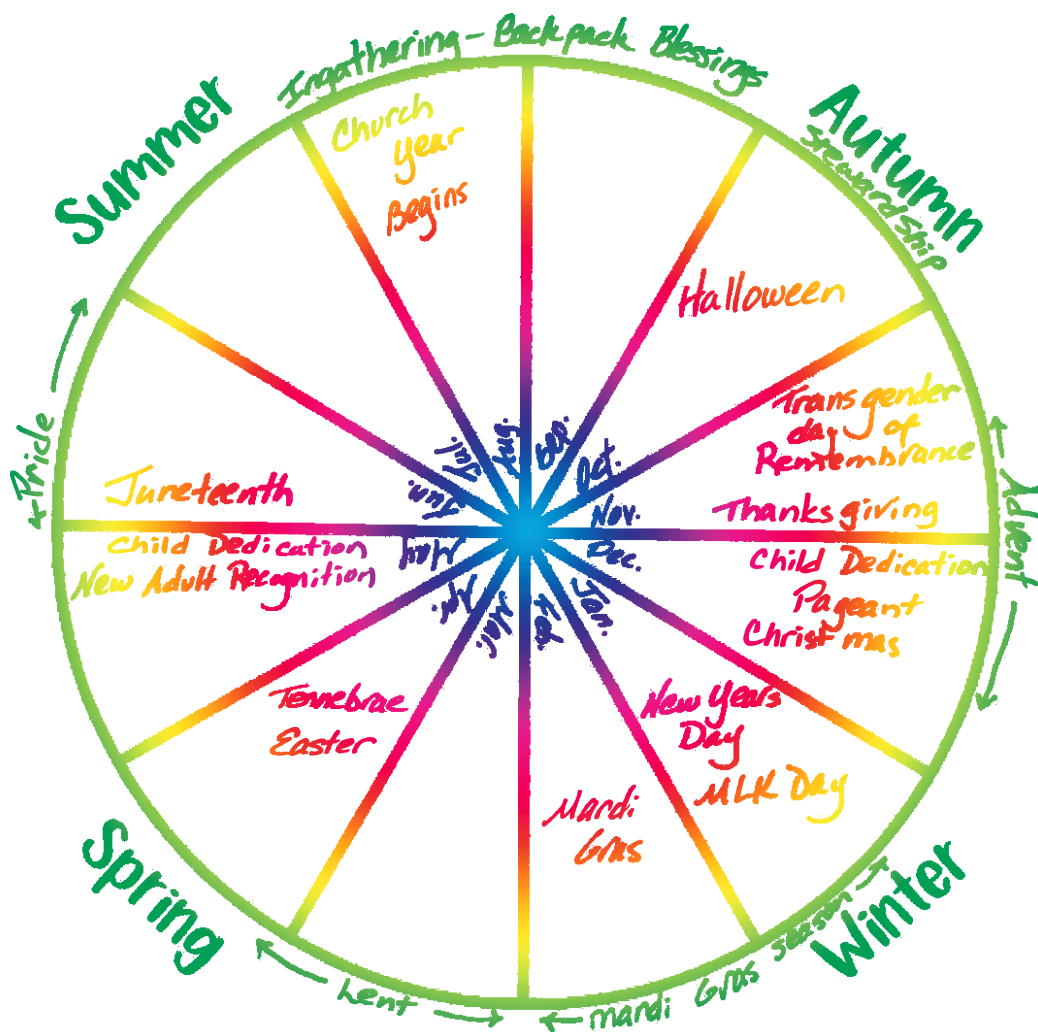
## Multi- and Intergenerational Programming

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@unitarianbr.org](mailto:education@unitarianbr.org).



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



## How Can I Help?

There are several 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!)
- 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. (Length of commitment: one to two hours once a month.)
- Speak at one of our Sunday morning Faith in Practice sessions about a spiritual practice that sustains you. (Length of commitment: one or more Sunday mornings.)

Contact: Kathy Smith, Director of Family Ministries, [education@unitarianbr.org](mailto:education@unitarianbr.org)



## Branches

Branches, our lay-led small-group ministry, deepens and expands our congregation's connections. Open to all members and friends, including those who've attended Introduction to our church or Branches Sampler sessions, these groups meet monthly up to two hours.

Sessions begin with personal check-ins, followed by discussions on topics often drawn from the UUA Small Group Ministry



### Branches

*Looking for something more?*

*Personal growth | Spiritual exploration | Deep relationships*

website. Members share and listen respectfully, maintaining confidentiality. Branches groups also provide a first level of care and support when needed. We currently have thirteen active groups.

Contact: Anne Nowak, Lang Baker, or MiJa Thompson at [branches@unitarianbr.org](mailto:branches@unitarianbr.org)





# Social Justice



Our Social Justice Team fosters discussion, reflection, and action on diversity, peace, and justice, with a focus on racial, LGBTQIA+, disability, and environmental justice. We collaborate with organizations like the Center for Common Ground, Together Baton Rouge, VOTE, and Sister Song.



The team selects recipients for our monthly shared offering, dedicating 50% of each Sunday's collection to local organizations addressing social justice, such as Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, Louisiana Environmental Action Network, and Diversity House at Youth Oasis.



The team meets during Middle Hour (10:15–11:15 a.m.) on the third Sunday of each month. All are welcome. Other Sundays highlight subgroups focused on **climate action**, **education**, **voting rights**, and **reproductive justice**.

Contact: Megan Sheehan-Dean or Keket Sanders, [social.justice@unitarianbr.org](mailto:social.justice@unitarianbr.org)





# Caring Groups

## Congregational Care Team



The Congregational Care Team (CCT) includes about forty volunteers dedicated to meeting the tangible needs of members and their families. The team supports those who are sick or infirm by coordinating with Branches groups and other volunteers, providing meals, transportation, visiting, pet sitting, and grocery shopping.

CCT also oversees card ministries, sending get well, sympathy, or congratulatory messages signed by congregants, as well as holiday cards to homebound members. They coordinate sanctuary flower donations and organize receptions for memorial services.

The team meets bimonthly on the second Tuesday of odd-numbered months in the evening. New members are always welcome!

Contact: Melanie Borek, Vicki Barry, or Kitty Gantt at [cct@unitarianbr.org](mailto:cct@unitarianbr.org)



## Pastoral Care Associates

Pastoral Care Associates (PCAs) are a dedicated group of trained volunteers who assist the ministers in offering pastoral support to our congregation. Led by Rev. Chris Long, Minister of Congregational Life, their ministry is rooted in confidentiality and presence. PCAs provide support during times of need, such as pre-surgery visits, hospital stays, or mourning the loss of loved ones. They act as trusted liaisons between the congregation, ministers, and other care teams.



While not professional counselors, PCAs offer compassionate support under the guidance of the ministers.

In the Listening Room, a PCA is available every Sunday after the first service, providing a safe space to listen and offer support. Located next to the Fellowship Hall, it's open to anyone — no crisis required. Sometimes, it helps to talk things through.

Pastoral Care Associates: Karen Girardot, Holley Galland Haymaker, Alice Johnson, Jonny Parker, MiJa Thompson, Joyce Young, Nancy Grush, Jacqueline Coutee, and Penny Ramsdell

Contact: [care@unitarianbr.org](mailto:care@unitarianbr.org)

# Disaster Response Team

The Disaster Response Team (DRT) provides a caring presence to church members before, during, and after disasters. The team identifies resources and recruits volunteers in preparation for events and assesses needs to provide support afterward.

Disaster response is a collective effort across the church. Core members meet to plan, the ministry team offers guidance, staff handles communication and administrative support, and Phone Tree callers check in with members during natural disasters. The entire congregation helps by completing the DRT Resource Survey and volunteering resources and services.



The DRT is seeking additional volunteers, including Phone Tree Callers (who check in with up to 10 members before and after a disaster) and Resource Data Managers (who maintain an electronic list of volunteers and resources).

Contact: MiJa Thompson, Suzanne Besse, or Janet Moulder, [disaster.response@unitarianbr.org](mailto:disaster.response@unitarianbr.org)



DISASTER SUPPLIES CHECKLIST

<p><b>WATER</b> One gallon of water per person, per day, for at least three days. Use for drinking and sanitation.</p>	<p><b>RADIO</b> A small weather radio to help keep you informed of the current weather conditions.</p>
<p><b>FOOD</b> At least a three-day supply of non-perishable food.</p>	<p><b>CELLPHONE</b> with chargers and a back-up battery.</p>
<p><b>CAN-OPENER</b> Manual can opener for food.</p>	<p><b>IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS</b> Copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records saved electronically or stored on a storage device or in a portable waterproof container.</p>
<p><b>FLASHLIGHT</b> Keep extra batteries on hand as well.</p>	<p><b>DOWNLOAD THE APP</b> Download the RSR app for up-to-date emergency information and sanitation.</p>
<p><b>FIRST-AID</b> Keep at least the basics: band-aids, gauze, disinfectant, medical tape, medical scissors, disposable gloves, tweezers, cotton swabs and a thermometer.</p>	<p><b>COMMUNICATIONS CARDS</b> Complete the RSR communications cards with important numbers you may need if you lose battery power.</p>


@REDSTICKREADY  
[REDSTICKREADY.COM](http://REDSTICKREADY.COM)





# Serving the Congregation

## Membership Team

The Membership Team, led by the Minister of Congregational Life, is dedicated to growing and retaining a culturally diverse and engaged community at the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge. We aim to create a sense of belonging for all who share Unitarian Universalist values, working alongside ministers, staff, the board, and volunteers to foster lifelong faith development.



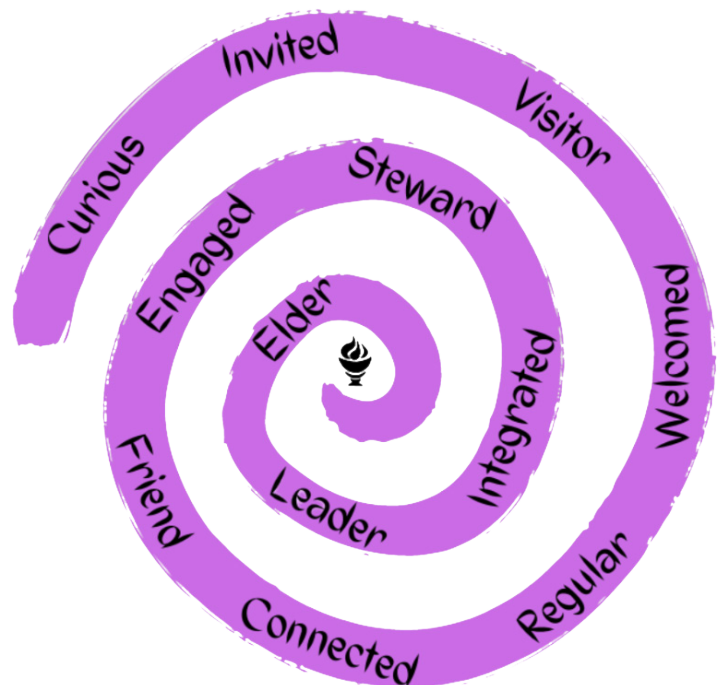
Our team promotes discussions on welcoming, hospitality, and the need for growth to ensure the church's sustainability. We equip members, volunteers, and leaders with the tools to support the church's long-term vitality, transforming our congregation from a group of individuals into an interdependent web of diverse communities.

The Membership Team also supports outreach efforts to curious seekers, cultivating a welcoming environment for people of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. We aim to make the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge a dynamic, self-sustaining community that is open to all, while recognizing that some may remain friends of the church rather than members.

Our work spans the entire lifecycle of faith formation, from cradle to grave, and includes:

- Embracing children and families.
- Attracting and welcoming guests.
- Creating a pathway to belonging for all.
- Facilitating volunteerism and lay leadership.
- Supporting engagement from youth through end of life.

## Spiral of Faithful Relationship







The Membership Team collaborates with ministers, staff, and other teams to ensure the church thrives. Key tasks include:

- Marketing and outreach to attract curious seekers.
- Welcoming guests and extending hospitality.
- Following up with guests and integrating new members into church life, including small groups and volunteer teams.
- Promoting events that foster relationships.
- Recruiting, supporting, and developing volunteers and leaders.
- Focusing on member retention and engagement.
- Analyzing membership data enhancing the Breeze database.

Contact: Donna Yelverton at [membership@unitarianbr.org](mailto:membership@unitarianbr.org)





# Subgroups of the Membership Team

## COM-unity Team

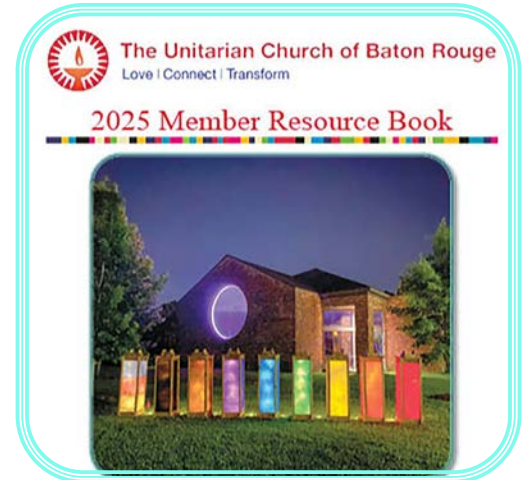
The COM-Unity liaison includes the Communications, Outreach, and Marketing Teams.

### Communications Team

This team works closely with the Communications Staff to ensure effective messaging and information flow between the church and its members, while also managing the church's social media presence.

The team's goal is to create a centralized, up-to-date communication system that serves both volunteers and members. By collaborating with Marketing and Outreach, they aim to increase the church's visibility and extend its message to the wider community, including through social media platforms.

Contact: Marla Elsea, Pennie Nichols



### Outreach Team

The Outreach Team connects the church to the broader community, including the Unitarian Universalist Association, Louisiana UU congregations, and local interfaith organizations.

The team works to raise awareness of the church and its mission in Baton Rouge, making it easier for people to find us. They facilitate community service through volunteer activities and ensure timely news releases about church events are shared with the media.

Contact: Denise Crowe



### Marketing Team

The Marketing Team is responsible for creating, communicating, and delivering programs and promotions that provide value to our constituents, including seekers, guests, members, partners, and the broader community. This includes publicity, targeted advertising, and branding efforts.

Contact: Roman García

## Welcoming and Hospitality

### *Ushers and Welcomers*

Ushers and Welcomers staff the Welcome Table and assist with ushering at Sunday services and memorial services as needed.

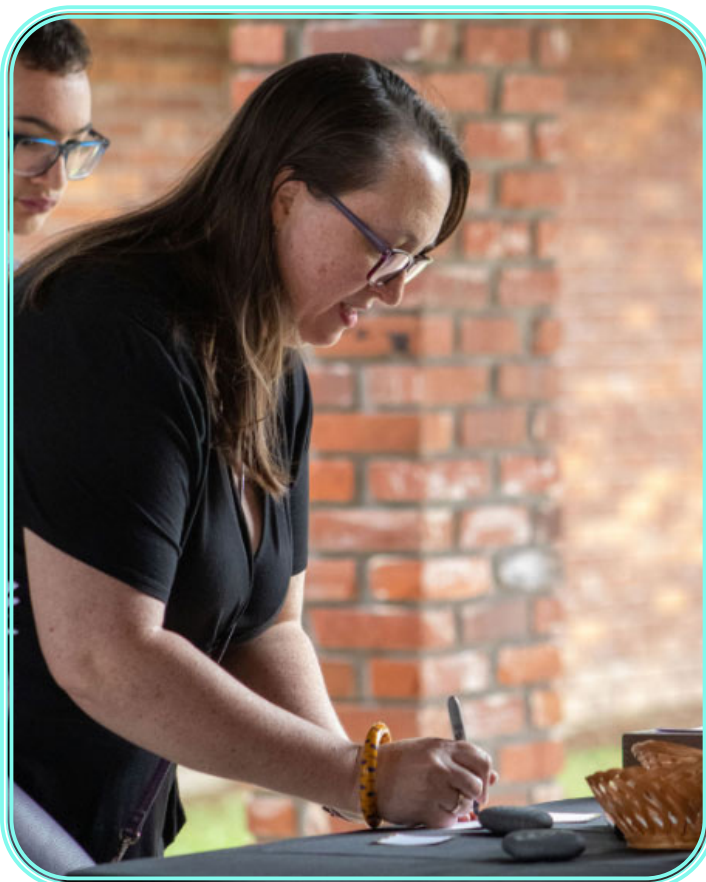
As the first point of contact for new visitors, they are trained to greet everyone with a warm smile and are ready to answer questions. The Welcome Table offers simple UU literature and a sign-up sheet for guests interested in learning more about the church.

Ushers greet attendees at the sanctuary entrance, provide preemptive hospitality by anticipating accessibility needs, and collect, count, and secure the offerings.

Contact: David Lindenfeld and Marla Elsea



### *Hosts and Greeters*



We all serve as greeters focusing on relationship-building and sharing information before services, while also inviting attendees to gather for refreshments and conversation after the service.

Hosts are responsible for setting up refreshments and preparing the space for post-service gatherings. Their primary role, however, is to welcome guests and newcomers in a way that fosters connection and supports our beloved community. Hosts, along with other members of the Welcoming and Hospitality Team, are trained to welcome others in a non-othering way, reflecting our church's mission and values of multiculturalism, anti-oppression, and preemptive hospitality.

Contact: Suzanne Besse and Nancy Grush





## Member Engagement and Retention

The Member Engagement and Retention Team collaborates with Faith Development and Family Ministry to accomplish key tasks, including:

- 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.

The team strives to create a clear path to membership, anticipating growth in both numbers and diversity. The welcoming process will support this growth and encourage guests and friends, in accordance with church bylaws, to become members.

This team maintains connections with all members of the church community — adults, children, and youth — through accessible worship, caring, programming, social justice initiatives, small group ministry, and other opportunities for connection. The goal is to ensure that community members rarely leave unless they move or dies, and that those who do leave are always welcomed back when they choose to reconnect.

Contact: Diana Dorroh and Dottie Kelly



## Caring for Volunteers



*This church envisions a day when volunteers share such inspiring stories that enthusiasm spreads naturally, and leaders never need to ask for help. Our goal is a "zero recruitment" culture, where volunteers are fully supported, empowered in their roles, and feel a strong sense of community and purpose. We aim to create a church that attracts motivated volunteers and builds a system that develops leaders and plans for succession.*

Contact: Donna Yelverton

## Developing Leaders

This subteam of the Membership Team collaborates with the Nominating Committee to fill leadership volunteer positions and plan for succession.

Contact: Holley Haymaker

## Breeze Database Enhancement and Shared Filing System Support

Contact: Allison Hall, Donna Yelverton, or Don Couvillion

For information or to volunteer, contact [membership@unitarianbr.org](mailto:membership@unitarianbr.org)

# Generosity Team



The Generosity Team, guided by the Ministry Team Leader, focuses on the long-term stewardship of the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge. The goal is to cultivate a culture of generosity where members:



- Are financially proficient, informed about church finances, and comfortable discussing money.
- Joyfully participate in stewardship drives, fundraising events, and capital campaigns.
- Have opportunities for planned giving and endowment contributions.
- Can connect the congregation's mission to its resources.

The team collaborates with ministers, staff, board, and volunteer leaders to foster an abundance mindset — focused on vision, opportunity, trust, gratitude, and long-term growth. If this resonates with you, consider joining one of our task groups.

Contact: Capi Landreneau and Donna Yelverton

## Generosity Team Task Groups

### FUNdraising Team

The FUNdraising Team organizes events that celebrate community, honor volunteer efforts, and support key areas of the church's budget, all while aligning with our mission, vision, and values. Events include the UU Auction, Easter Hat Rental, Garden Sale, Art & Jewelry Sale, QUUer Fête, and more. The team is also exploring residual income opportunities, such as T-shirt sales.

Contact: Kristina St. George or Rachel Stevens



### Education

The Education Team facilitates conversations and learning opportunities about the culture of money within our church and our lives. Upcoming topics include budgeting, saving, giving, and receiving. Share with the

team what you'd like to learn more about regarding money matters.

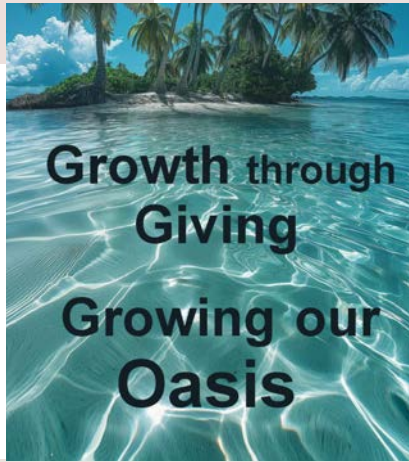
Contact: Aaron Sheehan-Dean, Jackie Blaney, Kristie Boudreaux, or Rob Johnson



## Stewardship Team

The Stewardship Team leads the annual budget drive campaign, including campaign design, planning, and communicating our mission in relation to giving. If this resonates with you, get in touch.

Contact: Aaron Rogerson or Kaitlin Dyer

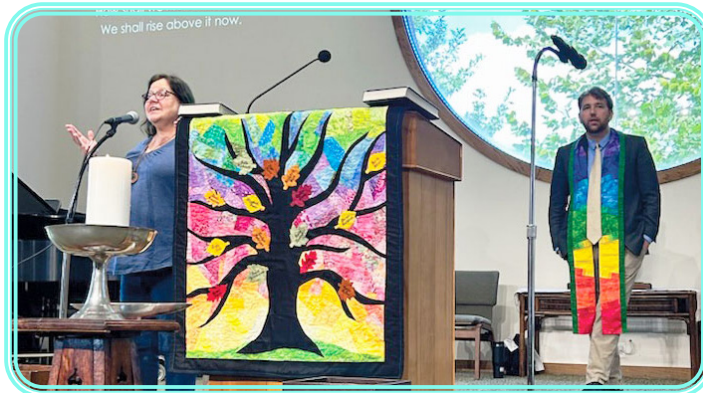


## Data Management

The Data Management Team reviews data systems and develops strategies to effectively manage and utilize information. If you have tech skills or enjoy working with data, let the team know!

Contact: Diana Dorroh

## Planned Giving



The Planned Giving Team is developing a legacy giving program to help members include the church in their estate planning, supporting future generations and strengthening our financial reserves. Please consider adding the church to your will or as a beneficiary and let us know so we can include you in our legacy society. If you have time or expertise to share, we welcome your involvement.

Contact: Donna Yelverton

## Buildings and Grounds

Maintaining our church requires professional services, but many tasks — like changing light bulbs, cleaning gutters, trimming branches, and repairing broken hinges — are made possible through the volunteer efforts of our congregation. Your talents and willingness to assist with these everyday tasks are a special ministry and greatly appreciated.

Allison Hall, the Congregational Administrator, manages routine contractor services (lawn care, AC maintenance, custodial services), maintains a list of contractors, and calls upon volunteers as needed.

Contact: Congregational Administrator Allison Hall, [office@unitarianbr.org](mailto:office@unitarianbr.org)



## Archives

The Archives Team preserves the history of our church through words and artifacts. This includes maintaining records from weekly Orders of Service, bulletins, newsletters, and announcements, which serve as references for worship planning. The team works closely with Becky Cureau to safeguard photos, books, plaques, banners, newspaper clippings, and other materials documenting our church's life from its founding to the present.



In 2015, the team organized the archives room, which houses materials previously stored in boxes from former ministers and administrators. The archives room, located next to the Lending Library, is open for visitors.



Please do not remove any items, as they are often one-of-a-kind. Donations of photos and documents from personal collections are welcome. Special thanks to Connie Holmes for creating the Finding Index spreadsheet, which is updated as new items are added. This index will help locate specific documents in the future.

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 community outreach effort where our members and friends donate blood to support the greater Baton Rouge area. Blood drives are held three times a year at the church, or individuals can donate at the OLOL Blood Center. Donations of red cells, platelets, and plasma help both children and adults in need.

Additionally, our OLOL Family Blood Group Plan ensures that blood units are available for church family members and friends who need replacements after a transfusion. Requests for replacements can be made to the chairperson, who will 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, meeting on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. The group fosters opportunities for sharing, learning, understanding, growth, and connection.



Contact: Leslie Taylor-Grover or Cynthia Bryant

## Open Circle Book Club

The Open Circle Book Club is open to all and meets at 7:00 p.m. on the first Sunday of each month in person and via Zoom video conference.

Contact: Pierre Sargent



## Women's Book Club

The Women's Book Club meets monthly on the second Monday from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. This year, the club will hold hybrid meetings both at the church and on Zoom. Book selections are made annually during the September meeting, and the person who recommended the book serves as the presenter, followed by a group discussion. New members are always welcome.

Contact: Carolyn Stutts

## Fun and Fellowship

The Fun and Fellowship Team continues our tradition of organizing after-church Lunch Bunch gatherings at local restaurants. Open to all members and guests, these informal lunches offer a relaxed setting to build friendships and strengthen community. For new members and guests, attending Lunch Bunch is a great way to connect with others in the congregation.

Lunch Bunch events are announced in the weekly bulletin emails and during Sunday services. Reservations are made for 1 p.m. following the second service.

Contact: Sandy Hubbard Sargent

## Guided Meditation

Blue Lotus Meditation Center holds meditation sessions at UCBR on Wednesdays and Saturdays.



## Gen ZUU

In 2024, Gen ZUU was formed for Gen Z adults to connect over lunch and conversation. The group meets at rotating locations at 1:00 p.m. on the first Sunday of each month.

To join the mailing list for announcements, email [UCBRGenZuu@gmail.com](mailto:UCBRGenZuu@gmail.com)

Contact: Emma Elsea



## Sixth Source Sharing Circle

The Sixth Source Sharing Circle is a gathering for members practicing earth-centered traditions to come together, share experiences, and learn from each other. The group embraces a community "stone gumbo" approach, where everyone contributes their knowledge and insights. The space is open to all, whether you are curious, an experienced practitioner, or a beginner. Meetings are held on the second Sunday of each month, following the second service.



Contact: Salvatore Culotta

## The Cakes Group

The Cakes for the Queen of Heaven group is inspired by the feminist theology curriculum created in 1986 by Rev. Shirley Ranck, a UU minister, and revised in 2008. The curriculum is named in honor of the Queen of Heaven, an ancient goddess revered in the Bible (Jeremiah 7: 17-18).

In 1987, our church was among the first to offer this transformative curriculum. The first class was facilitated by Lone Jensen, then a lay leader, and focused on the exploration of pre- and post-Judeo-Christian cultures and their influence on women's lives. The 12-session course provides participants with opportunities to share experiences and beliefs, fostering trust and bonds of friendship.



## Retirement Support Group

The Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge Retirement Support Group focuses on providing support for retirees. The group meets on the first Thursday of each month at 10 a.m. at various coffee houses around Baton Rouge, with meetings typically lasting two hours. Afterward, some members continue the conversation over lunch. Members share information about upcoming events, recommend contractors, and discuss great places to visit. All retirees are welcome to join.

Contact: Pierre Sargent



Rev. Lone Jensen returned to lead a Cakes Reunion and Celebration 26 years later, marking a milestone in the group's history. In 2020, 19 women made history by completing the first Cakes class at our church exclusively via Zoom. The class culminated in a celebration featuring original artwork, poetry, stories, and dance, all documented in a booklet created by Julie Ruckstuhl, one of the facilitators.

Today, 90 women continue to stay connected through a Cakes email distribution list, and many former participants meet regularly for sharing and sisterhood.

Contact: Suzanne Besse



# Governance Organizational Overview



Our church operates under a Policy Governance model, where leadership is a shared responsibility among the congregation, the Board of Trustees, and the Ministry Team. Congregation members play an integral role in discerning the church's mission and organizing to fulfill it. The church is not owned by individuals or groups for personal benefit, but is held in trust for the broader community, both now and in the future.

Leadership duties, aside from those specifically reserved for the congregation as outlined in the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, and Governance Policy Manual, are delegated to the Board of Trustees and the Ministry Team Leader (MTL). Our church's bylaws and Governance Policy Manual are available in the members' area of the website, and copies of Board meeting minutes can be reviewed in the church office.

## Board of Trustees

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

Contact: Adam Vos, 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 supports the Board by providing careful oversight, reviewing financial policies, and facilitating communication on financial matters. Its responsibilities include:

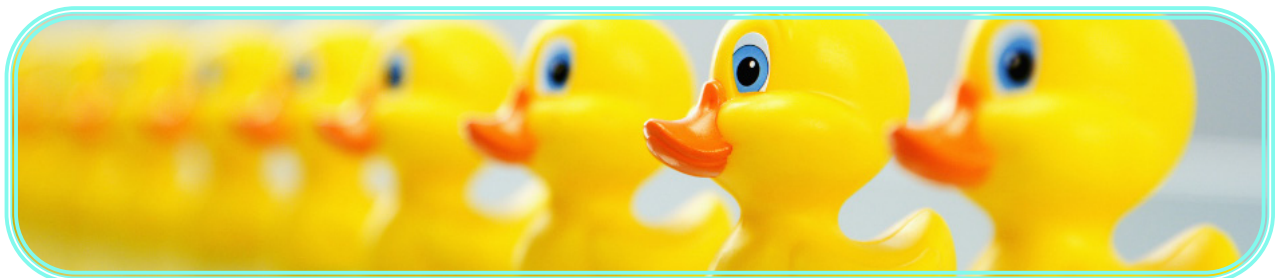
- Reviewing church financial policies and recommending changes as needed.
- Overseeing and reconciling all church funds, including bank accounts, capital fund drives, memorial funds, stocks, and asset sales.
- Coordinating an audit of internal financial procedures on behalf of the Board.
- Holding educational sessions to ensure the Board understands the congregation's financial status and goals.
- Ensuring routine financial reports are clear and useful.



The committee consists of three to five members: the MTL (or designee), at least one Board member, and additional members appointed by the Board President. The Committee Chair is designated by the Board President. Committee membership should balance skills and experience in finance and financial management, as well as an understanding of the church's mission and goals.

Contact: Bonita Brown, Chair

## Governance Committee



The Governance Committee supports the Board by providing oversight, reviewing, and proposing policies, and facilitating communication on governance matters. Its responsibilities include:

- Creating, reviewing, and updating church policies and bylaws to ensure internal consistency.
- Holding annual educational sessions for lay leaders to ensure understanding of the congregation's governance structure.
- Serving as an in-house resource to clarify roles and responsibilities for staff and lay leaders.

The committee consists of three to five members: the President of the Board, the MTL (or designee), and up to five additional members appointed by the Board President. The Board President also designates the Committee Chair. Committee membership should balance skills and experience in governance, understanding the church's history and policies, and knowledge of its mission and goals.



## Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee supports the Board by monitoring, reviewing, and proposing policies related to personnel matters and practices. Its responsibilities include:

- Reviewing new church policies in relation to existing personnel policies and proposing changes as necessary.
- Coordinating periodic audits of Human Resource procedures on behalf of the Board.
- Conducting periodic compensation studies and making recommendations for adjustments to the Board regarding compensation scales.
- Holding educational sessions at least biannually to ensure Board members have a thorough understanding of the congregation's personnel policies and goals.



The committee consists of three to five members, including the MTL, at least one Board member, and additional members appointed by the President from the congregation. The Board President designates the Committee Chair. Committee membership should balance knowledge and experience in human resources or personnel management, along with an understanding of the church's mission and goals.

Contact: Liz Hamlin, Chair

## Treasurer

The Treasurer is an officer of the church, serving at the pleasure of the Board of Trustees. While not a Board member, the Treasurer plays a crucial role as the primary fiscal monitor for the Board. This position requires expertise in finance, accounting, auditing, budgeting, long-term forecasting, and strategic planning. Strong communication and management skills are essential for this role. The Treasurer is a member of the Finance Committee and works closely with various committees, evaluating staff financial operations as needed and collaborating with the Ministry Team Leader on all financial matters. A BA, MBA, CPA, or similar professional finance designation is highly preferred.

Key responsibilities include ensuring the fiscal health of the Church Corporation, understanding and complying with the congregation's financial

policies and relevant government laws. The Treasurer provides financial oversight for all church funds and fiscal activities, including:

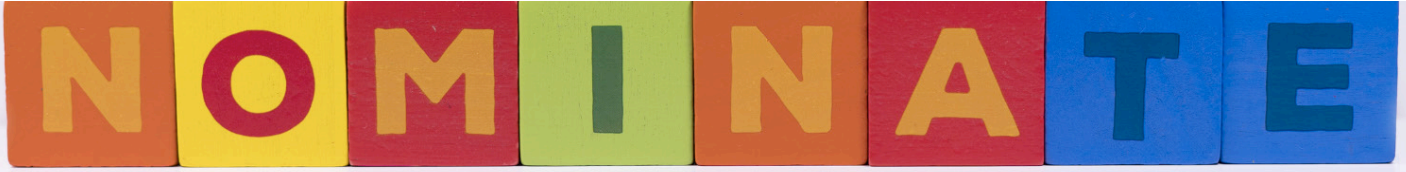
- Reviewing bank statements, deposits, payments, checks, timecards, and online transactions.
- Conducting monthly reviews of the operating budget and balance sheet.
- Monitoring income and expenses in coordination with the Finance, Special Funds, and Endowment Committees.
- Providing financial reports to the Board and congregation.
- Assisting in the development and presentation of 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 Adam Vos, Board President.

The Board establishes and maintains standing independent committees, such as the Nominating Committee, Endowment Fund Committee, and Healthy Congregation Committee, which operate independently of the Board's supervision. Members of these committees are elected by the congregation.

## Nominating Committee



The Nominating Committee consists of six members elected to three-year terms, plus the Senior Minister or a designee. Committee members must have been members of the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge for at least two years, with at least one member being a past Board of Trustees member. Two members are elected annually at the April membership meeting.

The Ministry Team Leader convenes the committee at least one month prior to the April meeting to select a chair, and

will notify the Board of the chairperson. The committee assists the Ministry Team Leader and Board in identifying qualified candidates for Board member, Board officer, and committee positions, and publishes a slate of candidates.

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

Contact: Andreas Hansen

## Endowment Fund Committee

The Endowment Fund is a separate account from all other church funds, dedicated solely to the purposes of the church. Once the Fund reaches a minimum threshold amount, the income generated may be used to support religious, charitable, and educational activities, as well as non-recurring expenses not regularly included in

the church's budget.

The Endowment Committee, which oversees the fund, is currently being restructured to align with the vision for the Generosity Team. The committee will be reinstated once the Fund reaches the threshold amount specified in the bylaws.





## Healthy Congregation Committee



The Healthy Congregation Committee (HCC) was established in 2018 to support church members, friends, and staff in living in covenant and promoting healthy interactions. It provides a way to address disruptive behavior and improve the culture surrounding conflict, ensuring the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge approaches conflict in a healthy manner that encourages openness, respect, communication, healthy debate, and collaboration.

Responsibilities of the HCC include:

- Resolving disputes and interpersonal conflicts when necessary and appropriate, in line with the Conflict and Disruptive Behavior Resolution Policy.
- Developing and facilitating programs to enhance the church's ability to manage conflicts and promote communication before issues escalate.
- Serving as a resource for church members, friends, and staff to address conflicts and grievances healthily.

The HCC is composed of three members elected by the congregation for three-year terms, with a church Minister serving as an ex officio member. No prior training is required, but each member must be committed to the mission of the church, the values of Unitarian Universalism, and demonstrate respect, honesty, and kindness in all interactions.

Contact: Kathy Judy



# Special Services and Events



Easter Egg Hunt



Tennebrae Service



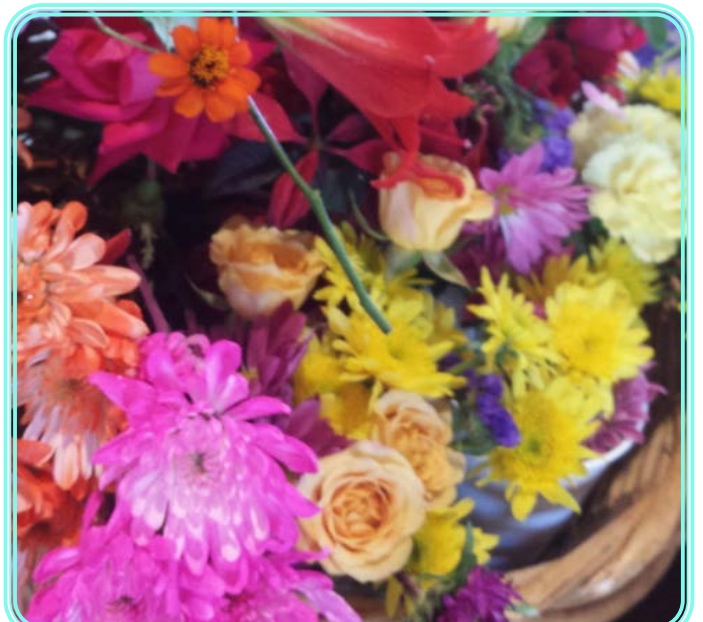
Gospel Service



Brass Service



QUEER Fête



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@unitarianbr.org)
Music Program.....	Lee Hartman (music.office@unitarianbr.org)
Archives.....	Dottie Kelly, Connie Holmes
Black Joy Collective .....	Leslie Taylor-Grover, Cynthia Bryant
Blood Drive .....	JoAnn Fryling
Branches.....	Anne Nowack, MiJa Thompson, Lang Baker (branches@unitarianbr.org)
Buildings and Grounds .....	Allison Hall (225-926-2291, office@unitarianbr.org)
The Cakes Group.....	Suzanne Besse
Communications Staff.....	Allison Hall (office@unitarianbr.org), Lee Hartman (music.office@unitarianbr.org)
Congregational Care Team.....	Melanie Borek, Vicki Barry, Kitty Gantt
Disaster Response Team.....	Janet Moulder, Suzanne Besse, MiJa Thompson (disaster.response@unitarianbr.org)
Fun and Fellowship .....	Sandy Hubbard Sargent
Gen ZUU .....	Emma Elsea
Generosity Team .....	Capi Landreneau, Donna Yelverton
Data Management.....	Diana Dorroh
Education.....	Aaron Sheehan-Dean, Jackie Blaney, Kristie Boudreaux, Rob Johnson
FUNdraising Team .....	Kristina St. George, Rachel Stevens
Planned Giving.....	Donna Yelverton
Stewardship .....	Aaron Rogerson, Kaitlin Dyer
Guided Meditation .....	Rev. Chris Long, Casey Savant
Membership Team .....	Donna Yelverton (membership@unitarianbr.org)
Breeze Administrative Support .....	Allison Hall (office@unitarianbr.org)
Caring for Volunteers.....	Donna Yelverton
Communications Team.....	Pennie Nichols, Marla Elsea
Developing Leaders .....	Holley Haymaker
Marketing.....	Roman Garcia
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
Pastoral Care Associates.....	MiJa Thompson (care@unitarianbr.org)
Retirement Support Group .....	Pierre Sargent
Sixth Source Sharing Circle .....	Salvatore Culotta
Social Justice Team.....	Megan Sheehan-Dean, Keket Sanders (social.justice@unitarianbr.org)
Treehouse Team.....	Mike Patton
Women’s Book Club .....	Carolyn Stutts
Worship Guild .....	Leslie Taylor-Grover



# Getting Involved

## **Worship Sunday Mornings**

Join us at 9 a.m. (in person and streamed online) or 11:30 a.m. (in person). Participate in activities during the Middle Hour between services to foster deeper connections with the community.

## **Stay in Touch**

Read your Order of Service, Saturday announcements, and Wednesday Bulletins. Visit our website regularly for upcoming events and opportunities to engage.

## **Take a Class**

Check out the Family Ministries section for available classes to deepen your involvement.

## **Join a Branches Group**

Branches groups are small, relational groups led by experienced church members, where you can connect deeply with others. We encourage all members, new or long-time, to join.

## **Begin Financial Support**

Consider what pledge level is appropriate for you, based on your financial situation and commitment to the church's mission.

## **Lunch with Members**

Join the Lunch Bunch or the Gen ZUU group after the second service (at 1 p.m.) on designated Sundays.

## **Participate in the Music Program**

For those who enjoy singing, the Adult Choir meets weekly and performs regularly. See the Music Program section for more details.

## **Bring Your Children to Religious Education**

Help your children connect by bringing them to our vibrant Religious Education program during the Middle Hour.

## **Volunteer with Children's Religious Education**

See the Family Ministries section for volunteer opportunities in our children's program.

## **Volunteer for Events or Fundraisers**

Volunteer opportunities for events and fundraisers are a great way to build connections. Watch for announcements in the bulletin.

## **Support Social Justice**

Join our social justice initiatives and put our values into action. Many friendships are formed while working together for a better world.

## **Join a Ministry Team or Committee**

Explore joining a ministry team or committee, whether you're new to the church or a long-time member looking for deeper engagement. Many teams need new members. Contact leadership or check the bulletin for upcoming opportunities.







**Thanks for the editorial and production efforts from:**

Donna Yelverton  
Irene Kato

Pennie Nichols  
Marla Elsea