HIRING TEAM SEEKS YOUR INPUT!

To help us finalize our contract minister application, we need your input. Email your comments and suggestions to any of the hiring team below. We will incorporate your suggestions from the May 17 meeting as well.

Thank you!

Russell Stokes, Sarah Dinklage, Nancy Richman, Kelsey Briggs,
Danielle Bilecki, Barbara Pagh

APPLICATION DRAFT

1. **How did the last ministry end (or how is it ending)? How is the congregation doing with this time of transition? What momentum would you like to maintain in the next ministry?**

Our contract minister is leaving for family reasons and moving out of state. The hiring team is sharing their progress with the congregation and making the process transparent. We hope to maintain the momentum that was started with community conversations outlined in the answers to questions below.

2. **What does the congregation hope the minister will focus on in the next ministry partnership?**

Per the terms of the Minister's Letter of Agreement (attached below) the Minister will carry out the responsibilities of congregational ministry, with an emphasis on worship, spiritual leadership, pastoral care, social justice, and collaboration with UUCSC to fulfill its goals.

With these as the umbrella areas of focus, we hope to find someone who will:

- Respect the personality of our congregation and tap into the wealth of resources and skills we already have within our community, rather than taking over
- Help build the congregation's willingness to hear, believe, and implement solutions.
- Enable the congregation to participate in and accept change.
    - Help us develop a strategy for change while increasing general buy-in / skin-in-the-game from the community
- Help us listen to each other better, communicate honestly and directly, and build leadership and trust within our community.
- Help us get to the truth of our needs, the root issues, not just what we believe we need.

- Help us address the three overarching challenges the congregation has identified:
    - Long-term sustainability in relation to finances, leadership, and membership (we need more money, more members, and more leaders)
    - Our organizational structure may no longer align with our resources and needs.
    - The feeling of disconnect between "upstairs and downstairs" (congregation upstairs, children and young families downstairs). Many feel that the underlying issue here might really be a difficulty effectively incorporating new people and new ideas across generations into our work and life here at UUCSC.

Notice that each of these bullets keeps the actual work in the hands of the congregation. We are responsible for and want to ***do the work*** in tandem with building community and in collaboration with our Minister whose job it is to help us.

3. **Describe the minister's relationship to other paid staff. Who is responsible for hiring and firing other paid staff?**

The minister supervises the RE Director, Music Director and Office Administrator. The Treasurer supervises the Financial Administrator. At the same time, the staff work together very well as a team in planning congregational programming.

When hiring, the personnel committee recommends the make-up of a search committee, according to the Personnel Handbook. The search committee carries out the process and makes a recommendation for hiring to the Board. The Board has final approval of staff hiring.

Similarly, employees may be terminated by the UUCSC Board of Directors when, after receiving discipline from the supervisor, they are unwilling or unable to bring about the needed change in conduct, attitude or job performance. The Personnel Policy Handbook details our personnel policies.

4. **Is your congregation designated as a Welcoming Congregation? Please include information on Welcoming Congregation Renewal status.**

Yes. UUCSC was recognized as a Welcoming Congregation by the UUA in 1993. This means that we commit to being inclusive and expressive of the concerns of LGBTQ+ persons at every level of congregational life – in worship, in programs, and in social opportunities.

5. **Is your congregation designated as a Green Sanctuary? Are you participating in the Green Sanctuary 2030 process?**

Yes. While we are not currently participating in the 2030 process, we are a community committed to living in harmony with the Earth and creating sustainable lifestyles.

6. **Does your congregation support our association of congregations through the UUA's Annual Program Fund at the Honor level?**

No

7. **What debt does the congregation have? How is the debt structured (terms)? Reserves? How are reserves used/accessed?**

As of 31 March 2026, the congregation had $238,200 in cash and $31,207 in debt.

The $238,200 in cash includes $46,400 in checking accounts (including an operating account of about $30,000), and $191,800 in money market accounts, Treasury bills, and certificates of deposit.

The only debt the congregation has is a commercial mortgage on our building. The rate is 2.78% and the balance is $31,207. The only purpose for which reserves have been used in the recent past is to balance budgets in years when expenses have exceeded income.

8. **Describe how the congregation defines good preaching and worship:**

The needs of the congregation with regard to defining good preaching and worship are as varied as the number of people in the congregation! While many people prefer quiet, meditative, spiritually deep and inspiring worship, others prefer more intellectual sermons with stimulating and challenging ideas; still others prefer child-integrated, lively, participatory services. The congregation also enjoys services that are playful and creative as well (kids doing skits, stories for all ages, parades, dancing, humor…)!). Balancing the variety of needs among us is a continuous challenge – the congregation is used to changes on Sundays: different ways of arranging chairs, rearranging service elements, different speakers, different types of readings, songs…

One of our strengths in worship is the involvement of lay worship assistants who assist with the chalice lighting, readings, spiritual reflections, and music. Quarterly trainings for those who are interested in service as worship assistants have been held for the past couple of years. During Sundays when the Minister is not preaching, our Worship Committee plans amazing services with varied worship leaders and speakers.

Another of our strengths regarding worship is the diversity of services: some, such as the Tenebrae service lean toward Christian ritual; others emphasize the Jewish tradition; we

also offer seasonal and earth-based services such as Beltane, Samhain, and winter equinox sermons and gatherings.

Music is also a central element of our worship services. Our Music Director has been with us for one year - another transition the congregation went through together. While our previous MD was a classically trained conductor and pianist, by intention the congregation sought a MD who would move the choir toward increased accessibility, and less performance. As such, this year's Eve Eve service was more of a community carols sing, while in the past few years that service was a formal, almost high church, performance with hired soloists. We have also enjoyed services that included drumming, a "sound bath" with gongs and singing bowls. Music in its many forms is an essential component of our worship.

9. How does the congregation handle conflict?

UUCSC has two primary means of handling conflict. The Committee on Right Relations (CORR) assists in resolving conflicts among members and Friends of the Congregation, staff, or Board members. The Committee on Ministry (COM) supports, assists and evaluates the Minister and facilitates communication between the Minister and the Congregation. We see the CORR as handling interpersonal conflict, and the COM as handling systemic conflict.

UUCSC is guided by the eight principles and strives to be an inclusive community that affirms our members' differences in beliefs, opinions and life experiences. As with any close knit community, at times, we recognize conflicts that arise and are committed to their resolution with respect and love.

Currently UUCSC is in the middle of a process to address the overarching challenges bulleted above in the question on what the **congregation hopes the minister will focus on**. These challenges are not necessarily "conflict" per se, but systemic challenges that are not yet fully resolved. The context for these challenges is described below.

10. What is a current source of pride for your congregation?

There are several sources of pride for the UUCSC congregation as summarized below (not all inclusive).

Religious Exploration (programs for Children)

- The "Wünder Academy of Metamorphosis" summer program - this is a justice-based summer program that, this summer, will be held for the third time. Many

congregation members volunteer to lead activities for children and teens. Created by our DRE, this program has been highly successful.

- Dungeons and Dragons - A favorite of our teens that has recently begun for elementary school aged kids. Run by a volunteer Dungeon Master, this activity has drawn teens who are not from families that attend UUCSC.
- Earth-centered rituals - Run by our Director of Faith Exploration (DRE), these activities include seasonal rituals, such as a winter labyrinth, the Maypole, and others.
- Earth-centered and nature-based practices are incorporated into our worship as well.
- The OWL program for adults, teens, and elementary aged children was implemented about 4 years ago. The OWL training for facilitators and the programs have been done in collaboration with Westminster UU congregation in East Greenwich, RI.
- Chalice days activities

Choir and music program

- All-ages choir, directed by our Music Director, is a time for children to learn our hymns as well as resistance and social justice songs.
- A tradition at UUCSC is our Christmas Eve Eve service (the night before Christmas Eve) - This family-friendly service is planned by our DRE, Music Director, Minister and Worship Committee. An annual favorite.

Social Justice

- LBGTQ+ Beyond the Binary program - this is the second year for this inspiring program
- Speakers from the Narragansett Nation - through the Tomaquag Museum
- Hosting a booth at the annual South County PRIDE Day
- Organizing attendance at the various No Kings and other protests
- Monthly food collection on Sunday
- Book group and potluck supper - currently reading “The Dawn of Everything.”

- We are fortunate that a congregant left us a significant bequest to enable us to provide grants for social justice initiatives in the local community and UUCSC.
- Monthly, "Share the Plate" where 50% of plate collections go to a local non-profit organization.
- In RE we prioritize helping our children learn a variety of justice and ally building concepts, values, and direct action
- UUCSC participated in a local Habitat for Humanity build

ArtTeam

- UUCSC is home to several artists and other creative folks who come together to create and install art in various forms for the back wall of the sanctuary.

11. What work is slow, stuck, or left undone within the congregation?

As noted above, there is the normal gamut of interpersonal conflict in our congregation, and there is a great interest in conflict resolution as well. Interpersonal conflict is referred to the CORR to address.

There are also systemic challenges that the COM is working to address with the congregation. Two years ago, a series of incidents occurred within a fairly short period of time that created tension, conflict, distrust, and dissatisfaction within parts of the congregation. A number of issues rose to the surface that hadn't been spoken publicly to that point. For example, some parents didn't feel welcome "upstairs" because their kids were hushed. Some non-parents were annoyed that when kids were present, they made noise. Other incidents had more to do with miscommunication, inconsistent interpretations of the Bylaws, the lack of transparency in processes and mixed messages (e.g. was masking encouraged and eating together discouraged? Or not?).

As tension and dissatisfaction started to boil to the surface, the COM decided that a broad-scope systemic process was needed to understand the dynamics that were causing such distrust. The COM held an initial "listening session" in early April 2025 during which about 30 congregants came together to answer the question: *What are the greatest issues our congregation is facing?* Following that brainstorm, the group was asked to select what they felt was the most important issue.

The top issue endorsed at that time was the “disconnect between the families downstairs and the rest of the congregation”. More specifically: are these families represented in leadership? In decision-making? Are their voices being heard?

The second endorsed issue had to do with finances and the need for additional expertise with regard to fundraising.

Finally, the third umbrella issue selected was the need for more transparency regarding how the congregation operates. This included the need for information about our finances, about our committees and their responsibilities, about how to connect volunteers with tasks to be done. It was suggested that there was, perhaps, a need to review, and maybe reorganize, the structure of our committees.

A consistent concern underlying many of these issues was the need for honoring our covenant with each other, i.e., treating each other with respect, ensuring we feel safe enough to speak up and communicate honestly directly with another person without fear of recrimination, defensiveness, or reprisal. The need for a clear process for conflict resolution was raised as well.

This process is still very much underway, although not yet completed, and we look forward to our new minister helping us think through our strategy for addressing these issues.

Since that initial meeting there was one additional meeting in May 2025 and then a gap in time until a third meeting was held recently. Interestingly, the overarching challenges identified, as noted above, are essentially the same as one year ago:

- How to ensure our long-term financial sustainability? (including maintaining our aging building)
- How to find more volunteers to take on leadership roles?
- How to invite new people to join our community?
- What is the organizational structure to best support our mission?
- How can we better incorporate new people and new ideas across generations into our work and life here at UUCSC?

Looking through the lens of these questions, we are finding it difficult to agree on the “right” way to work through, dismantle, and decolonize unhelpful/harmful/oppressive cultural norms. At a micro-level, we have identified that we need to improve our skills with direct honest communication, rather than triangulation and avoidance.

After the most recent listening session, two committees were formed: one was tasked with exploring the question of whether we need an external facilitator to help us and who that might be (costs, etc.); the other was tasked with talking to congregants to understand more deeply what the issues are. The process is paused while we look for our next minister. The COM and congregation are committed to continuing the process.

Again, we want to make sure we're actively doing the work to bring about healthy changes (we don't want to create a plan that just sits on a shelf, nor do we want to sweep the issues under the rug and be let off the hook). At a macro level we know we are not alone in addressing/deconstructing these challenging topics and norms - and we welcome support in this multi-faceted venture.

12. How is trust in your congregation right now? Historically? Do people trust the minister? Do congregants trust leaders to lead? How can the minister best build trust with the congregation? How could a minister break trust in your congregation?

The issues related to the congregation trusting each other have been addressed above. It's important to note, though, that even with the challenges addressed above, we are working well together, across the generations - on the board, on the hiring committee, on the Committee on Ministry, in listening circles, and in a widely attended book group (The Dawn of Everything, by David Graeber and David Wengrow).

While we haven't formally assessed the question of trust in the minister and leadership, again, the answer will likely be - it depends on who one asks! Not everyone will be happy about everything all the time! We know and expect that. From what we can tell, it appears that the vast majority of people trust the minister and the leaders to lead. Others do not.

The minister can best build trust with the congregation by talking with people and listening deeply; by being easily accessible; by learning who we are while giving us the opportunity to know you. By learning about the process in which we are engaged and offering possible strategies and approaches, without taking over. By not having a lot of barriers between us and you. By walking the walk - acting with integrity and admitting when one is mistaken. By being open to respectful feedback without defensiveness. By delegating and demonstrating self-care and not taking on more than one can handle. By being authentic.

13. How has your ministry changed since COVID began? Where do you see decline? What have you let go of? Where do you see fresh energy?

During the height of the COVID pandemic, when UUCSC was closed to in-person services, the congregation lost some people. However, services were held on zoom, and the music director was creative with splicing voices and continuing to offer wonderful music.

When UUCSC re-opened, the president and board, in collaboration with the staff, actively rebuilt program and administrative operations through re-instating committees and creatively offering community building activities, such as the minister's weekly "Beverages and Banter" (meeting with anyone choosing to attend at a local coffee shop), quarterly community dinners, kayaking, "Side-kicks" (pairing people up to get to know each other)… This renewed energy and enthusiasm has continued with earth-centered rituals, community contra dances, backyard picnics, coffee hour, reflection circles, monthly meditation, book group, and a youth choir - to name only a handful!

In addition, using zoom has enabled us to increase access to our Sunday services.

14. Imagine that, early in the next ministry partnership, a member of your congregation behaves in a way that escalates over time from curmudgeonly criticism to disruptive actions to bullying staff or other members. Keeping in mind your congregation's real experiences, policies, and covenant, how would leaders handle this situation?

UUCSC has a policy for dealing with disruptive behavior - section IV in our policy handbook.

Within the past year learning and taking action relating to this question are some of current top priorities of the COM Committee and the congregation at large. We are open to any help learning about the best way to deal with situations like this. We understand there is a fine line between being too passive and being too aggressive in relationships. In RE we have talked about the paradox of tolerance, and as adults we know building community can be done safely and lovingly; we are always looking to learn how to do so. As a result of our COM listening sessions many of our congregants took a Kingian Nonviolence training.

15. There have been some theological divisions and spirited discussions in Unitarian Universalist circles in the last several years about our shared values, how to articulate these values, and what these values call us to do, especially around equity, inclusion, power, and covenantal relationship. Please share some examples of how this is playing out in your congregation.

In recent years, our congregation has been actively engaging with the broader theological conversations within Unitarian Universalism around shared values, equity, inclusion,

power, and covenant. While these discussions have at times been spirited, they have also invited us into deeper reflection and more intentional action—both within our congregation and in the wider community.

One clear expression of this engagement is our adoption of the 8th Principle, a commitment to dismantling racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions. This process involved thoughtful dialogue, differing perspectives, and ultimately a collective willingness to name justice as central to our faith. It continues to shape how we examine our governance, our relationships, and our role in the community.

Our values are also evident in our public witness. Members of our congregation regularly attend and support local protests and community actions, standing in solidarity on issues such as racial justice, LGBTQ+ rights, and immigrant justice. We participate in South County Pride events each year, not only as attendees but as visible, welcoming partners, affirming our commitment to inclusion and celebration of diverse identities.

We also host an annual *Beyond the Binary* event, which creates space for learning, storytelling, and deeper understanding of gender diversity. This program reflects our belief that living our values requires both education and relationship-building, especially around issues that invite growth and challenge assumptions.

Education and faith development across the lifespan are central to our congregational life. Our Offerings include the *Our Whole Lives (OWL)* program, a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum that emphasizes self-worth, justice, inclusivity, and responsible decision-making. OWL is one way we live into our commitment to raising informed, compassionate, and justice-oriented individuals of all ages.

Similarly, our *Wunder Academy* focuses on nurturing character, community, and a commitment to justice in our younger members. Through storytelling, service, and shared experiences, children are invited to explore what it means to live out our values in their daily lives.

We also seek to deepen our understanding of justice through partnerships and learning opportunities. Presentations from organizations such as the Tomaquag Museum have helped us engage more deeply with Indigenous history and contemporary issues, challenging us to listen, learn, and act with greater awareness and respect.

Our *Share the Plate* program is another tangible expression of our values, as we regularly dedicate a portion of our offerings to local organizations aligned with our mission. This practice connects our financial stewardship with our commitment to justice and community support.

Amid these many efforts, we have also worked to articulate our identity more clearly and simply. We recently distilled our mission statement to six words: **Welcoming, Loving, Growing Spiritually, Seeking Justice.** This concise statement serves as both a grounding and a guide, helping us stay focused on what matters most as we navigate complexity and change.

Like many congregations, we continue to wrestle with how best to live into our values—balancing differing perspectives, addressing power and communication challenges, and strengthening our covenantal relationships. While this work is ongoing, we are committed to engaging in it with honesty, humility, and care, trusting that it is through this process that we grow more fully into the congregation we aspire to be.

16. What else would you like potential applicants to know about your congregation?

Our congregation has a diverse background of religious faiths and occupations.We are in a growing university town and are close to the ocean and Narragansett Bay. Our neighbors in Peace Dale include the Jonnycake Center food pantry and the Welcome House homeless shelter.

An important part of our Sunday morning service is the sharing of “joys and concerns” where we drop a pebble into a bowl of water. The children share “roses, buds and thorns”. At the end of the Sunday service we stand in a large circle singing, “carry the flame of peace and love until we meet again.”

II. Congregational Life section

17. Describe Your Congregation and its Culture. How are you together on your best, average, and worst days? (this is the first question candidates will see)

Are you looking to serve a congregation where people are committed to welcoming the stranger, loving each other, seeking justice, and growing spiritually? We invite you to consider the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of South County (UUCSC), located in the historic village of Peace Dale, Rhode Island, on the banks of the beautiful Saugatucket River.

At UUCSC, we are young, old, single, and families with kids, LGBTQ+, retirees and workers from occupations across the board. We honor the interdependence of life and respect the dignity of all; we care for the land upon which we walk. We own a beautiful building, with gardens created and nurtured with love by our volunteer gardeners. Our colorful playground welcomes children in a space that is enjoyed by all. Together we strive to live out our common principles: To bring justice, equity and compassion into our daily lives; To resist all that threatens the earth and its people; To live out our dream of a world community of peace. We are active in social justice efforts locally and nationally.

Whatever one's citizenship status, whatever one's ethnicity, race, or faith background, whomever one loves, however one identifies all the facets of their being, we welcome them into our congregation.

At its best, the congregation of UUCSC lives its covenant to its fullest – where love is the spirit of this congregation, and service is its prayer … we dwell together in peace; we seek the truth in love, and we help one another. As such, at our best, we work together in covenantal harmony. We respect each other's contributions, strengths, and uniqueness. We allow each other their faults and growing edges. We listen with respect and assume good intentions. Together we celebrate our joys and sit in sadness with each other. At its best, UUCSC is a place where one can be oneself … perfectly imperfect. When we remember to look around, we see the faces of individuals – each one of us with our own story, needs, strengths and faults.

On our worst days, we are not in covenantal harmony. We have difficulty with direct, honest communication. Instead, the fear of reprisal can lead to triangulation rather than directness. Trust is broken and we are vulnerable to making negative attributions rather than assuming good intentions. Sometimes, we might be quick to anger and suspicious of motives. We become more aware of our differences than our shared principles. Conflict arises. At our worst, perspectives that challenge the status quo are rejected.

Currently, we are working as a community to address the systemic inequalities and biases that have been both internalized and structuralized over the years. Through this process we are challenging the dominant cultural narratives in order to promote a more inclusive culture where we truly integrate diverse perspectives and voices. While this process represents our community at its best, it evolved from our community at its worst. The COM is leading this process which requires creating inclusive cultural spaces where everyone feels valued and respected. We are a work in progress.

On average, though, UUCSC is much like any other politically progressive faith community, where, basically, people like each other and would go out of their way to help someone in trouble.

Right now, during this time of great transition, we are showing up and navigating uncertainty with imagination, care, listening, and coming together.

18. Your Congregation's Mission

Interestingly, there is not one consistent mission statement. The website, Bylaws, Articles of Incorporation and other places, all seem to have slightly differently worded statements. In a congregational meeting a few years ago, together, we decided that the core of all these statements can be summarized in 6 words: Welcoming, Loving, Growing Spiritually, Seeking Justice. Those 6 words have come to be our mission statement. And it's perfect.

Our mission as stated in our Bylaws: We are bound together by our shared consent to promote love, equity, and transformation. Our mission is to provide a safe, respectful environment for personal and spiritual growth for adults and children, and a resource for the advancement of social and environmental justice.

19. Describe and provide examples of how your Congregation lives its values

We try to live our covenant every day:

Love is the spirit of this congregation,
And service is its prayer.
This is our great covenant:
To dwell together in peace,
To seek the truth in love,
And to help one another.
This question is further covered in detail above in the section on theological divisions and how we articulate our shared values. Many examples are provided.

20. What should potential applicants know about your congregation's lay leadership?

At the Unitarian Universalist Church of South County, lay leadership is at the heart of who we are. Our lay leaders are active partners in ministry and are deeply involved in all aspects of congregational life as we live into our mission of welcoming, loving, growing spiritually, and seeking justice.

Our elected Board of Directors provides steady and thoughtful leadership. As volunteers, they balance big-picture thinking with the day-to-day realities of congregational life, working to ensure that decisions are made with care, transparency, and respect. They take

seriously their responsibility to the whole community and strive to build trust and connection across the congregation.

Much of the work of the church happens with our committees, all made up of lay leaders. These are people who show up with dedication, creativity, and a real sense of ownership. They help carry the life of the congregation in both visible and behind-the-scenes ways, and their contributions are essential.

Here are just a few examples of how lay leadership helps bring our mission to life:

- **Welcoming:** Lay leaders greet people each Sunday, offering a warm and genuine welcome to newcomers and familiar faces alike. They also organize and lead our new member ceremonies, helping people find their place in the community.
- **Loving:** Our Pastoral Care Committee is made up of trained lay leaders who offer support through a "ministry of presence." They support people during times of transition or difficulty, focusing on listening and being present rather than offering advice.
- **Growing Spiritually:** The Worship Committee works closely with the minister, Music Director, and Director of Faith Exploration to help shape meaningful Sunday services. Lay leaders also take the lead on summer services, bringing in guest speakers and musicians and keeping our worship life vibrant year-round.
- **Seeking Justice:** Lay leaders are actively engaged beyond our walls, working with community partners to address the root causes of inequality, including poverty, homelessness, and racism. They help organize and participate in community actions and public witness, reflecting our shared commitment to justice.

Overall, our lay leadership is engaged, thoughtful, and deeply invested in this community. A new minister will find people who are ready to collaborate, share responsibility, and continue building something meaningful together.

III. MORE QUESTIONS FROM THE APPLICATION [working on these]

21. Describe the diversity in congregational staffing, now and in the past. Detail how leadership can assure opportunities and on-going support for people with marginalized identities in hiring practices:

The UUCSC Personal Policy Manual states:

“The UUCSC affirms its commitment to equal employment opportunity for all individuals. Decisions about recruiting, hiring, training, promotions, compensation, benefits, and any similar employment decisions must be made in compliance with all federal, state and local laws and without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation or any other classification protected by law. Any discrimination in the workplace based upon any protected classification is illegal and against policy. Employees who have questions about discrimination in the workplace, or who believe this policy has been violated, should report their concerns immediately to the Minister, Personnel Committee or direct supervisor, or if necessary, the Board President.”

Our congregation has a history of openness to all individuals regardless of immigration status, race, ethnicity, how you identify, which pronouns you use and whom you love.

22. Provide your Congregation's founding history:

Our congregation was founded in 1989, when Joan and Tom Patterson and Winnie and Pete Bennis decided to start a Unitarian Universalist congregation that would fill the need for a liberal religious voice in southern Rhode Island. Twelve people attended the first meeting at the Pattersons’ home in Richmond. With financial support from our denomination, the UUA, the congregation became a nonprofit corporation on July 1, 1991, and elected its first board of directors, with Cindy Cole Berry as president. Regular Sunday services led by guest ministers began in September of 1991. On January 17, 1993, Charter Sunday, thirty-one people signed the membership book.

23. Describe important events in your Congregation's history:

Our first gatherings were at members’ homes. When our numbers grew, we began to meet at a local library, and later moved to St. Augustine’s Church, on URI’s Kingston campus, where we held Sunday afternoon services for several years. Our next meeting place was American Legion Post 39, on Kingstown Road between Peace Dale and Kingston. During that time we rented office space in Wakefield, increasing our visibility in the community. In May of 2004 we reached a major milestone when Rev. Betty Kornitzer answered our call to become our first settled minister. Betty’s enthusiasm and warmth drew many new members, and we soon outgrew our rented space. In August of 2008, after an ambitious

capital campaign, we bought our current home at Lily Pads Professional Center in Peace Dale. In February 2009, after extensive renovations, we moved in.

24. List the resources and programs your Congregation used or participated in during the past year: [working on it]

- Share The Plate
- OWL
- **…**

25. Describe your religious educational programs:

We use play-based learning through which kids and adults are encouraged to live and model UU values in the ways they interact with each other

We've formed a Covenant and frequently refer to it, to remind ourselves of the agreements we make when we come together. We allow each child to choose what they want to do from a variety of options when they come to RE; this honors their autonomy, fosters independence, and respects the needs of neuro-diverse individuals to retain agency over how they will interact with the group.

- We model the basics of non-violent communication in the main RE classroom as well as the nursery.

We strive to model healthy communication and conflict resolution as a normal part of our morning routine. We practice a style of communication that emphasizes describing over evaluating and identifies and honors feelings and needs.

- We emphasize building relationships over instruction.

Our teachers do not pursue lessons at the expense of joyful interaction. The way we structure the morning provides many opportunities for closer connections and one-on-one conversations, where we can communicate with our kids that they matter and we value them.

- Our main classroom does not separate children by age, allowing them to freely interact with kids and adults of all ages.

Our Covenant:

- Be ourselves.
- We listen to ourselves.
- We listen to others.

- We play together.
- We respect ourselves and others.
- We treat others as they wish to be treated.
- We have options.

26. Describe the character of the surrounding community, including population and demographics:

UUCSC is in the eastern part of Washington County, geographically the largest and southernmost county in Rhode Island, colloquially known as “South County”. Our congregants draw from several towns in South County including North Kingstown, South Kingstown, Narragansett, Charlestown, Richmond, Hopkinton and Westerly. Peace Dale is a village within the town of South Kingstown which has a year-round population of 32,000. The University of Rhode Island, located in South Kingstown, has a student body of 16,500 that fluctuates with the academic calendar.

Within our extended community, The University of Rhode Island (URI) is the most racially diverse, with 23% of first-year students identifying as students of color. South Kingstown is slightly more diverse than the rest of the county but still primarily White, 91% (compared to the state’s 86.3%); Hispanic/Latino 5.3% and Black/African American, 2.1%. South Kingstown has the largest concentration of Native Americans in Rhode Island, at 1.5%.

27. Describe how your Congregation is known/perceived by the larger community:

Among community organizers, the UUCSC is known as an ally- if you need resources, but also if you need people to show up (particularly at protests, parades, or other justice oriented community gathering events) - or offer a space to hold such events.

Liberal and progressive.

28. Describe your Congregation's religious, political, and social context from a historical and current perspective.

Like most justice oriented institutions in 2026 there are growing pains, as we have mentioned. Particularly in the sentiment that we, as a community, have been working through since early 2025 - “How can we better incorporate new people and new ideas

across generations into our work and life here at UUCSC?" Sometimes this might manifest in questions of "intent vs impact" or "ally vs accomplice."