

**2024-2025 Annual Report of the Worship & Music Committee**  
**First Unitarian Universalist Society of Marietta**

**Members:** Adeline Bailey, Reverend Kathryn Hawbaker (through November 2024), Virginia Henthorn, Martha McGovern (chair), Maggie Meyer, Suzyn Mills (Martha Webster – Choir Director; Randall Kidder – Pianist; Jane Tumas-Serna – Design & Decoration; Nancy Luthy – Board Liaison)

**Mission:** The mission of the Worship and Music Committee is to collaborate with the minister in planning and presenting meaningful and inspiring worship services of high quality.

**Goals:**

- Strive to achieve worship services that challenge the intellect, promote spiritual growth, connect emotionally, develop a sense of community, and inspire the congregation to action.
- Bring in speakers and provide services that represent diverse points of view.
- Continue to provide services and activities that promote interaction across the life span (generations) within the life of FUUSM.
- Increase the involvement of the congregation in the musical elements of the service through performances and hymn singing.
- Expand outreach to the community through performances and activities.
- Develop and encourage lay participation. Continue to recruit lay worship associates and leaders and provide ongoing guidance for laypersons to develop and deliver effective worship services.
- Strengthen a collaborative style of worship planning among the Worship Committee members, Worship Associates, members of the congregation and the minister, and (when it is reactivated) members of the BRIDGES Program Council.

**Highlights of the 2024-2025 Year in Relation to Stated Goals**

1. This has been a challenging year. We have tried to maintain the quality of our worship services during Reverend Hawbaker's sabbatical and leave of absence and after her resignation.
2. In terms of worship services, the Committee has endeavored to balance continuity and variety. Until December, we continued to organize services around the theme question of "How could we tire of hope? – so much is in bud" (words of Denise Levertov). In more recent months, we have focused on the questions of "Who are we as a congregation?" "What are our needs?" and "How can we help each other cope with transitions and changing circumstances?" We have provided variety of delivery by zooming in speakers, using videotaped segments, taking a fieldtrip to the Planetarium, holding a Committee Fair and a Holiday Card Workshop, having small group discussions, and combining a watch party with brunch.
3. We have been able to present diverse perspectives. In 31 services, members and friends either gave the Reflection entirely or were part of a group presentation. In 9 services, we have had guest speakers from outside our congregation. And, we have used recorded materials from UUA, General Assembly and other UU congregations. Membership and Worship & Music Committees, Green Sanctuary, and the Board have all coordinated specific worship services.

4. We have continued to encourage lay participation. During this year we have included voices of members and friends in both virtual and in-person statements and musical performances (LeeAnn Gallucci, Josie Jeffery, Laura DeLancy, Gerry Spiegler, Martha Webster). We have expanded the number of people who are willing to serve as Worship Leaders: Adeline Bailey, Shari Ballantyne, Debra Miller, Virginia Henthorn, Dawn Hewitt, Nancy Luthy, Martha McGovern, Suzyn Mills, Rebecca Phillips.
5. We continue to emphasize the musical aspects of our worship services. Choir, under the able leadership of Martha Webster, has grown in number and has performed once per month (September through May) and for the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. Martha also supports local musicians by inviting them to perform with the choir. Two examples are Riley Brumbaugh, percussionist, and Cynthia Puls, cellist. Pianist Randall Kidder continues to expand his musical repertoire and to enhance services with his inspired selections, compositions and improvisations. We routinely incorporate recorded vocal and instrumental music, and
6. We continue to promote interaction across the life span within the life of FUUSM. We have consistently included a Time for All Ages in services and are communicating with the childcare staff so they can prepare relevant follow-up activities. We have established a display of thematic books for borrowing in Social Hall, and - thanks to Stephanie Rector - we have made great progress in creating a spreadsheet of the total Search for Truth Library collection of books for the young people.
7. We have continued our consistent acknowledgement of indigenous peoples in services.
8. We have continued to weave diverse world faiths into our services by having representatives of various faiths and highlighting holidays, observing World Interfaith Harmony Week, and exploring concepts from the perspectives of multiple faiths.

### **Future Plans**

In this upcoming year, we will:

1. Adjust to changing circumstances in order to offer consistently meaningful and inspiring worship services of high quality.
2. Promote the display of thematic books and the process of borrowing books and familiarize the congregation with how to use the spreadsheet to find particular books.
3. Support the renewal of the BRIDGES program and collaborate on planning integrated activities.
4. Reenergize the Worship Associates Team.
5. Continue improvement of our technology capabilities for both in-church and virtual services and maintain and expand our use of new worship resources.

### **Thank You**

The Worship and Music Committee is grateful for all who have contributed to the worship services this year and we thank the congregation as a whole for its support and constructive feedback. We especially appreciate the aesthetic attention that Jane Tumas-Serna and the Design & Decoration Team have given to the seasonal and thematic displays in the Sanctuary. We thank the Tech Team of Mike Bailey, Elaine Barr, Kat Hawbaker, Ralph Olander, Meabh Daly, Al Tuttle, and Jonathan Brier for all their efforts.

Respectfully submitted, Martha McGovern, Chair, Worship & Music Committee