

2024-2025 Church Leadership Candidates

Recommendations from the Leadership Development and
Nominations Committee, April 2024

Background

The LDNC is tasked with developing church leaders and nominating candidates to fill vacancies in Board and Officer positions. We began our work early this year, with our first convening in August, 2023. At that time, Samantha Trumbull was chosen to serve as the Chair of the committee for the duration of this year. We set an aggressive timeline for our activities, beginning in September.

Among our primary goals for the 2023-2024 LDNC were:

1. Assist the Board with filling current Board vacancies
2. Shift recruitment to a year-round process that cultivates leaders at all points in the church year
3. Help the Board to meet its needs for leadership support, as well as to meet the needs of the Congregation for more transparency around Board processes and activities

We determined early on that filling the current Board vacancies would likely take more than a month or two, and decided to shift our focus to recruitment for the 2024-2025 year while maintaining openness to and exploring possibilities for current vacancies.

Our approach to recruitment took several different avenues. First, we engaged with members who were recommended to us when we reached out to long-time members for suggestions. This did not pan out, as we discovered that many of the long-time members of the church are experiencing leadership burnout, or are unwilling to step into a role that they view as being on the receiving end of poor treatment by the Congregation.

Second, we made a direct appeal to the Congregation from the pulpit and in the church newsletter. While we did not find that this yielded great results, we believe that if the LDNC is going to be successful in meeting future goals more pulpit/ministerial support is very important.

Third, we reached out to All Souls Committees and Affinity Groups. We specifically reached out with the message that the LDNC is seeking members of all tenures, and that we welcome all levels of experience. This was by far the most successful route. We held two outreach events, which were poorly attended, but the message got out through the affinity groups and we had several candidates apply through that avenue.

Challenges

It was a difficult recruitment year. The burnout mentioned above led to a lot of people declining to apply for a leadership role. Because the LDNC was concerned about the number of declinations, we reached out to all the folks whom we canvassed and asked for candid feedback regarding their reasons for declining. The good news is: some things never change. Many folks indicated that their lives were too demanding to make space for another commitment at this time. We particularly found that this was the case with members in the “Souls in the Center” age group—many of whom are caring for both children and parents. However, we also heard that the same folks have been tapped repeatedly for leadership positions within the church, and they feel burnt out or already over-committed. Lastly, we heard that people were fearful of taking on this leadership position because there is a perception that 1. The board is poorly treated by the Congregation in times of conflict, and 2. That there is a tension between the board and and ET.

Addressing Diversity

At the beginning of the church year, the Board President expressed to the LDNC that the Board was not interested in worsening the diversity of the Board. While we understand that she was referring specifically to the racial diversity of the board, we heard repeatedly from People of Color at All Souls that they were feeling burned out or especially challenged by recent events at the church. Through many discussions, the LDNC determined that our best course forward was to work with the “tools” available to us. By that we mean that we cannot hold up the business of the church because the demographics of the Board don’t look the way we want them to. It isn’t the job of People of Color to do the work of making the church a welcoming spiritual home for people of all races, and we must continue to center the 8th principle without placing the burden on doing so on those most impacted by the injustices we are working to undo.

Recommendations

Our first recommendation is that the LDNC continue its work recruiting new voices to leadership roles through the affinity groups and direct recruitment among congregants. It is clear that we should honor the contributions of those who have served in leadership in part by not asking more than they are able to give.

Our second recommendation is that the board continue to increase transparency. There is a lot of confusion about what the board does, how it works, and what its relationship is to the rest of the church functions. We believe this will only be improved through more open sharing of information, in line with the principles of democracy and congregational polity.

Our third recommendation is that the board engage in more togetherness. We encourage the board to have a more intentional, perhaps facilitated, process for transitioning from one board to

the next, with a focus on onboarding new trustees. We hope that this will not only build relationships among the members, but develop shared understandings of the principles and values inherent to Unitarian Universalism. We believe this will yield more productive approaches to conflict that honor our commitment to beloved community, as well as allow greater centering of the 8th principle through shared knowledge and understanding.

2024-2025 Leadership Candidates

The LDNC took a broad look at the diversity of the board in many dimensions, including race. We determined that there are many other ways in which the board is lacking diversity, and sought to address diversity as a holistic issue. We were only partially successful in this regard, though we believe the candidates we have selected represent the skills and experiences needed on the board at this time. The LDNC's 2024-2025 leadership slate is as follows:

Board of Trustees

Trustee - Toni Lewis

Toni Lewis has been an active member of Young Souls and has served as the Social Justice chair of this group. She has strong experience and academic training in non-profit organization operation, a lifelong personal commitment to DEI work, and the perspective of a young Black woman raised in the rural South and churching by a loving United Methodist community. She has been a member of the Falls Church oversight committee on police use of force and founded a DEI working group at the Carlos Rosario School. Toni is deeply committed to All Souls and looks forward to participating in its governance and leadership community-building.

Trustee - Shari Gilbert

Shari Gilbert has been a member of All Souls for many years and has served as a Worship Associate, and as the co-chair of the 200th Anniversary Celebration. As an RE parent, Shari raised two gender non-conforming children at All Souls. Shari has long experience as a property manager (she runs her own business), in social justice organizing, and in higher education and non-profit institution management. Her references unanimously cited her pragmatic knowledge of physical building challenges, ability to remain calm and hear all sides in situations of complex cross-cutting interests, and her caring, thoughtful communication skills as key elements of what would make her an excellent board member.

Trustee - Emily Hogin

A life-long UU, Emily Hogin has been an active participant at All Souls since 2016 and interned at the UUSC from 2006-2007. She has worked with All Souls youth for the last five years as a Coming of Age Mentor and teaching OWL. More recently, she has co-facilitated the Anti-Racism for White People Adult Spiritual Development course with Rev. Rob Keithan. As an

attorney, Emily has worked extensively with non-profits in both board development and in conflict/crisis management.

Officers

Assistant Secretary - Eva Newbold

Eva Newbold is a life-long UU who served as Interim Director of Religious Education at her church in Savannah GA. A member of the LGBTQI community, she has strong experience working with non-profits managing tight budgets and developing collaborative work teams. Eva is an extremely active member of All Souls, having served for three years on the board of Young Souls including as Vice President, the Reeb Voting Rights project (where she is co-leading the phone banking work this year), and the Beckner fund as well as teaching pre-school RE. She has also participated in the Transformative Leadership workshops.

Assistant Treasurer - Tyler Dewey

Tyler is an active member of Young Souls and a life-long UU; he participated in various leadership roles as a youth in his home church of Rochester NY. Tyler is trained in data analytics. He has strong experience in non-profit budget management, financial oversight and team-building as well as conflict resolution and residential and commercial building construction.

Membership Secretary - Lea Krichvenia

A life-long UU, active in her local church and summer camp through high-school and college, and a member of the All Souls choir, Lea has many years of experience as a senior manager of international non-profits. She also has done peace and conflict work at a community level in the U.S. and internationally. She has a keen eye for understanding how organizations function and how to build stronger and more effective connections within them.

Moderator - Sam Trumbull

A life-long UU, Sam is a long-term member of the All Souls Choir, an RE parent, and is currently the chair of the Leadership Development and Nominating Committee. Sam has held leadership roles in non-profits and federal agencies. She has long experience in organizational relationship building and anti-racist work. Sam is an experienced facilitator and is deeply committed to reviving the Church Council and nourishing cross-group leadership relationships as All Souls moves into our next phase of building the Beloved the Community.

We were unanimous in our confirmation of these candidates.