

# **Board Report - Music**

## **2023-2024**

In many ways this is a difficult report to write. The focus of my job, music ministry, is mostly unaffected by recent changes. In fact music ministry at the Unitarian Church of Lincoln has continued to thrive. The administration and logistical aspects of it have deteriorated tremendously.

Music continues to be a cornerstone of worship at the Unitarian Church of Lincoln. Throughout much of the year our programs have fulfilled their mission as representatives of the UCL Community.

### **UCL Choir**

The choir has continued to excel under the direction of Julie Enersen, centering the work of composers of many identities. Though the membership/numbers fluctuate from service to service, the quality of performance continues to be high. I would also like to highlight the fine work of our collaborative pianist Bill Carpenter. We are blessed to have them on staff. The volunteers have stepped up and provided a fantastic service to the congregation. The choir performs every month during the church year and involves anywhere from ten to forty volunteers.

### **The A Street Band**

The band has become a vital component of UCL music. From early in 2023 to the recently completed tent revival, they have been on an absolute tear. The band performs at an extremely high level, and their creativity has become unbound. I would point to the band as a stellar example of music ministry, where volunteers have grown and pushed their own boundaries to create something truly incredible. The band is also a fine example of intergenerational worship, as the group is comprised of members from their teens into their seventies. If you are not attending these services you're missing out, plain and simple. The band performs every other month at the Third Thursday vespers service, including opening the year at Antelope Park and ending the year with the Tent Revival.

### **Guest Musicians**

Guest music remains a capstone of the music area. From our music staff to congregants to special guests to recorded music across the UUA, the music presented during Sunday services fulfills our quest to be a supporter of the arts. I

am particularly proud of the variety of musics presented. I am grateful that the guest music budget was restored fully - reductions would be detrimental to the health of the area and to the vibrancy of Sunday services.

## **Community Partnerships**

UCL currently has partnerships of various degrees of involvement with several local organisations.

- Lincoln Music Teacher's Association - the church is a regular space for hosting LMTA events; the Music Director is a member and chairs the Sheet Music Committee; the church provides space for donated music and other items down in the music area across from the Music Director's office
- Lincoln Association for the Traditional Arts - the Music Director has previously served on the board, but has done so in a limited capacity due to time constraints and staff cuts; the church remains a viable host for LAFTA events
- The Nebraska Chamber Players - the chamber players perform all of their ticketed events at the church; they pay for the piano to be tuned several times a year; the Music Director provides A/V support for all events

Note - these partnerships were formed before staff cuts, and the Music Director's participation has been severely curtailed in 2024 as a result.

## **Waystation Concerts**

Due to staff cuts Waystation Concerts no longer have the support of the music area or the involvement of the Music Director. They will continue to be run by volunteers with staff involvement limited to calendar approval.

## **A Center of Culture**

Due to staff cuts all work toward making UCL a center of culture and supporter of the arts in Lincoln has ceased. Anything happening now is volunteer led and does not have the support, approval, or involvement of the Music Director.

## **Audio/Visual Support**

In the early part of the church year the Music Director oversaw the completion of a project in which an area/room microphone was installed. This was at the behest of the congregation, who wished to hear more of the service participants when singing hymns.

As of January 1st, 2024, the Music Director is no longer overseeing nor is he available for A/V support unless hired as a consultant at an hourly rate.

## **Summation**

The music area as a whole has continued to be a jewel in the church's crown, one that reaches people across spectrums and supports the original charge given to us. Our mission and goals in music has not changed, and we continue to work hard and achieve results.

Cuts to the budget and staff salaries, among other things, have made all but the barest functions of the area possible, and volunteers have expressed concerns about what that means for the future. For myself it amounts to the feeling of being punished despite the good work that has been done. I feel like more is being asked of me and my area while support both administratively and financially has dwindled.

I will ensure that music is always relevant to our values and of the highest quality no matter what happens. I would be happy to discuss it further, and I hope for better communication in the future.

Please let me know if there are any further questions.

Sincerely,

Bob Fuson, DMA  
Music Director