

New York State Convention of Universalists Annual Meeting 2026 Report of the President and Board of Trustees

The 2026 Board of Trustees was comprised of officers Ann Rhody (President), Gay Canough (Vice-President), Rev. Linda Anderson (Secretary); and trustees Kimberly Bouchard, Jim D'Aloisio, Ken Drake, Sharon Piehler, John Roleke and Rev. Cindy Terlazzo.

Please note: Mark Berninghausen was elected to the Board by the Delegates at the 2025 Annual Meeting. However, it was later realized that Mark had completed two full terms on the Board and was not eligible to serve a third term. The Board of Trustees appointed Kimberly Bouchard to fill the vacant Board position.

Melissa Lesley-Fox and Tom Hackett have continued to serve as NYSCU Treasurer and Clerk, respectively. The Treasurer and Clerk are non-voting members of the Board, but they participate in dialogue and debate, and are important voices in our deliberations.

The Board's 2025-26 schedule followed the pattern we have used during the past several years:

- A Board meeting is held the day prior to the Annual Business Meeting. A budget is passed and other business discussed.
- A longer meeting takes place during late February/early March to consider grant and loan applications and committee appointments.
- We meet again in May or June to consider other Board business.

We meet in person, with online option, prior to the Annual Meeting. The other meetings are conducted remotely.

Following is a summary of some of the Board business conducted this year:

- There was a great deal of planning and decision making regarding the 2026 Annual Meeting combined with Silver Bay. A subcommittee of Ann Rhody, Gay Canough, Cindy Terlazzo, and Linda Anderson worked with Tom Hackett and Melissa Lesley-Fox to work out details and bring business items (such as the determination of delegate subsidies) to the whole Board.
- We awarded 20 grants totaling \$134,655.
- An operating budget was passed, and we affirmed the Service Gratuity Committee's recommendation to increase payments to Service Gratuity recipients by a COLA of 5%

- We passed a resolution to direct our investment advisors (JW Burns Co.) to divest from any companies with a rating of C, D, or F on FossilFreeFunds.org. Burns was responsive and the changes were made. We are continuing to work to clarify our investment policy with regard to social responsibility.
- The Grants and Loans policy was updated to include that organizations may only submit one grant application per cycle.
- We established a new Grants and Loans committee, to clarify the tasks and decision-making process which have worked well for the Board with Jim D'Aloisio facilitating.
- We appointed or confirmed members of the Finance, Service Gratuity, and Annual Meeting Planning committees.
- We appointed Kimberly Bouchard to serve on the Board when it was determined that Mark Berninghausen was not eligible to serve another term.

In the coming year, we are sad to say goodbye to our colleague, Jim D'Aloisio, who is concluding his service on the Board. Jim has done a wonderful job facilitating our Grants and Loans process, and he somehow gets us to consensus on grant recipients and amounts when we have varied ideas about who should receive what. Jim, the Board will miss you.

We look forward to welcoming Pheobe Vitharana, from Syracuse, as a new Board member this year.

Every member of the Board of Trustees is a person who is actively involved with their home congregation and/or other pursuits. I deeply appreciate the effort that each person makes to serve on the Board of NYSCU. In our work together, we respect and care for one another, and we challenge each other as well.

It is an honor to serve you, and to serve among you.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Rhody, President