

Worship Associates Charter

Mission Statement: The purpose of the Worship Associates is to create, in collaboration with the minister(s) and program staff, a year round program of worship that:

- offers inspiration and opportunities for deepening personal spirituality of our members
- connects people to each other
- enhances our Unitarian Universalist identity and
- challenges people to act on the principles of our faith.

Goals: In the first years of this new Shared Ministry program we have two primary goals:

- To learn together about the nature of worship in general, and in particular the nature of worship at The Unitarian Church in Westport. This will include learning about the history of worship in a UU context, and about current best practices across the UU movement. Our learning will also focus on the different elements of the worship service; we learn together how to make each of those elements meaningful as well as how to integrate all the elements into a cohesive whole.
- To educate the congregation about the nature of shared ministry in worship by bringing new voices and viewpoints into the pulpit

Roles: The Worship Associates, for the most part, work in a consensus format in collaboration with the Senior Minister. A Convener will be chosen from the group who will be responsible for group communication. In the absence of the minister, the Convener will set meetings, create an agenda, and facilitate meetings.

Responsibilities: All of the first class of Worship Associates who were recruited and trained agreed to make a two year commitment to the program. This is to insure stability as the interim ministry ends and a new settled minister begins their work. At the end of the two year term, the group will work out a rotation so that the Worship Associates begin to rotate off in an orderly manner, making room for new recruits.

All of the Worship Associates fulfill four basic roles. One is to collaborate with the minister(s) in planning and implementing a quality worship program year round. Another is to act as lectors in worship services that our ministers present. A third is to support members of the congregation who are invited to present worship

services, helping them with logistics, flow, and execution. The fourth is to serve as lectors and facilitators to guest ministers. Many Worship Associates will also choose to ‘fill the pulpit’ and create their own worship services whether sermon based, ritual based, or some other alternative form of worship.

Occasionally Worship Associates may agree to write an article for Soundings or take on other special responsibilities.

Guidelines: The group meets monthly. At the monthly meetings the Associates will have a conversation about how the worship program is going. They will look at the worship calendar and make sure sufficient support for upcoming services has been planned. They will spend part of each meeting discussing a ‘continuing education’ topic which could emerge from assigned reading, a workshop that somebody attended, or a practical issue (such as how to use the new microphones). Worship Associates communicate with the congregation through articles in Soundings, as well as comments from the pulpit about changes to the worship services or other issues relevant to the worship life of the congregation.

Accountability: As a Shared Ministry program, the Worship Associates are accountable to the senior minister, who, by virtue of Letter of Agreement, has ultimate responsibility for the quality of the worship program.