

## Meet the Candidates for the Board of Trustees

The Leadership/Nominating Committee, consisting of Diane Gainforth, Russell Kirby, Russell Patterson and Ed Benedict, is pleased to announce that three members of our congregation have agreed to run for the three available positions on our Board of Trustees (BOT) at the May 1, 2016 Congregational Meeting.

To better acquaint you with these candidates, each has prepared a biographical sketch, which identifies their experience in the church, as well as their qualifications and strengths.

The three candidates standing for election are Trude Diamond, Jeff Stover and John Utt. Biographical information about the candidates is provided below



Trude Diamond

**How did I get here?** I've been a UU at heart, and in head, since the age of 10, when I rejected any orthodoxy that responded to a child's sincere questions with off-topic dogma or anger that she dare even ask. Not that I knew then that there was such a thing as Unitarian Universalism! I just knew I couldn't find a home in standard religious category I knew of. So I searched for 52 years, embracing some of my Jewish heritage and much of Buddhist and Humanist philosophy, until I found the UUCT. I've been a member here from 2009 to 2011, finding here a "home" in a beloved community whose members shared my own compatible worldview and sense of purpose. Then, I spent several years at the UU Clearwater congregation when my Sundays were best spent entirely in Pinellas, and rejoined here in 2014 when I gained greater control over my schedule. The UUCT has fostered my philosophical and spiritual growth, and provided a community wherein I can find meaningful personal friendships as well as goal-oriented groups.

**What do I bring to the table?** To date, my formal contributions to UUCT committees and groups has been limited to supporting the database for the annual auction in 2009, participating in the Tuesday Mindfulness Meditation group, and, in 2014-15, supporting the Ministerial Search Committee with editing services, working primarily with Mary Francis on the Search Package content and website editing. Last year, my Third-Monday Noon Chalice Circle enabled me to participate in the Labyrinth development project, contributing some time and treasure, but mostly talent, in identifying a fund-raising mechanism and then developing the consecration service and the slides for it. Those experiences make me eager to put more of my skills and experience into service for this congregation. I offer experience and skills gleaned from a checkered career: *adult*

*education*, useful for aligning Adult RE programs with our objectives; *industrial psychology*, useful for our strategies in communication and attracting a growing membership; and *language arts*, useful for writing and editing our communications. And I grew up in a family of small business entrepreneurs and accountants, so I may have absorbed some of those principles by osmosis around the dinner table. I have served on not-for-profit boards before, most recently, in 2006-2008, I served on the Board of Directors of United Professionals, a Washington DC based activist and lobbying organization that sought fair wages and labor practices for corporate professional employees who, to this day, have no labor union to look out for their interests and negotiate fair wages and benefits. Sadly, it was ahead of its time and eventually lost the labor union support it had. I served on that board with Barbara Ehrenreich and Jared Bernstein, among others, offering the in-the-trenches perspective of the very professional level, salaried, not hourly wage, employees these activists and think-tank experts hoped to help – those categorized as “exempt” (i.e., whose compensation is *not* protected under the Fair Labor Standards Act).

**What good can I do here?** This is my “home” congregation. It’s where I explore how to be fully what I truly am – a UU. Love abides here. Emotional safety for our vulnerabilities encompasses us here. And at home is where charity begins ... here, with commitment to nurturing this family of ours in the best way each of us can, so that we can expand to meet the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse membership. As a Board member, I would hope to contribute to the UUCT’s growth, so we can offer that same beloved community to the increasing number of people who seek an alternative to dogmatic, creedal religions ... who seek a fulfilling and loving home.



Jeff Stover

In 2010, I visited a UU church in north Florida while I was working on my Masters Degree in Art Education at UF. Once Michelle and I married, we began searching for a progressive church community that encouraged acceptance, social justice and spiritual growth. We were so fortunate to find a spiritual home in UUCT.

Throughout my life, I’ve had experiences I think would aid me in being a useful board member:

- In my twenty years of military service, I spent seventy five percent of that time as a Non-Commissioned Officer where I was given extensive training and practical experience in leadership.

- Today, I'm a teacher in the public school system where I find my respect and empathy for others grows daily.
- I serve on the Board of Directors at *Live Art Labs*, an artists' cooperative in Ybor City where I'm one of their Art Educators.
- Here at UUCT: I'm on the committee for The Green Service in April; I've worked with others to help restore the small dome; and, last autumn, Michelle and I were asked to co-lead a Social Justice class for Religious Exploration.

Opportunities like these, and my new role as a Father, have renewed my investment in equipping our next generation. Combined, these roles have given me a better understanding of the needs associated with an organized body of like-minded thinkers. I believe compromise and compassion, as well as creative problem solving skills, are necessary for any leadership role. If selected, I'll be happy to serve to the best of my ability.



John Utt

Bio unavailable at this time.