

# BROOKLYN UNITARIAN

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The newsletter of the First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn, est. 1833



Dear Friends,

If you want to see joy, they say, go to Minneapolis in June. The winters there are so harsh and so long that when they finally end, people are overcome with gratitude. Everyone's out on the streets and in the parks, giddily eating their lunches on park benches, wearing flowy skirts, loosening ties, rolling up their shirtsleeves, laughing, and being nice to each other. We're getting a mini-version of this here in the northeast these days. This winter was unusually cold and we're all finally coming out of hibernation. We're noticing the blessings of our world that we might otherwise have overlooked – our bodies more relaxed not having to constantly navigate icy sidewalks, the sun warming our faces, our arms swinging more freely without multiple layers. And just as there are no proverbial atheists in foxholes, I imagine there are few true atheists on days like these.

These are the days when we overflow with gratitude and feel connected to the whole of the universe. We look at the world as if for the first time – as if waking from a dream – feeling free from whatever has constrained us. This feeling, where the self is subsumed by awe at the grandeur of it all, is the spiritual experience that so many religious teachers in our traditions have described – from Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Transcendentalists to the modern day teacher Thandeka. It's that place of grateful open-heartedness and joy that we seek to invoke on Sunday mornings and through spiritual practices. And it's that giddy feeling of release from places of constriction that characterize the spring holidays of Passover and Easter: the Israelites are liberated from slavery and Jesus is liberated from death.

May we carry this spirit of liberation and gratitude into all four seasons of our lives and translate that spirit into service and love for others. And may we enjoy the warmth and light of spring.

Many blessings,  
Rev. Ana

## **Holiday Worship at First Unitarian**

**March 29th, 11am - Palm Sunday** – Mozart's *Missa Brevis* in F major, and Monteverdi's *Laetatus Sum* (c. 1650). The choir and soloists, accompanied by our historic pipe organ, and chamber group

**Friday, April 3rd, 5:00pm** – Good Friday Communion Service

**April 5th, 11am - Easter Sunday** – Contemporary gospel anthem, supported by a full rhythm section.

**Thursday, April 9th, 6:30PM - Passover Seder**, reservations required 718-624-5466, \$25 suggested donation.

**May 2nd, 11am - Flower Communion** – A Uniquely UU Celebration

# From the Director of Membership and Communications

Dear Friends,

As both a member and an employee of First Unitarian I am in the position of experiencing our congregation from two angles. As a voting member of the congregation, I am privileged to be part of its vibrancy, its hospitality and, best of all, its joyful community. As a member of its dedicated staff, I am honored to work behind the scenes to help make it all happen. This can be a challenging dichotomy. I operate with one foot in each of two places. It gives me a unique perspective on our congregation. I revel in its successes and am all too aware of its growing edges.

Our congregation may be nearly 200 years old, but from where I sit, we have the energy of a colt. One Sunday in March, every room in the church was in use. From a group on the third floor creating shawls for those needing a little extra comfort, to another group exploring issues of racial inequality in the Chapel, to yet another group of parents and caregivers sharing experiences raising children and more, we were covering many bases and serving many needs.

Our music program continues to surprise us week after week. This spring we will hear Mozart and Monteverdi on Palm Sunday, Gospel on Easter and look forward to jazz in April (see more about music in worship in Adam's column).

Every week we welcome visitors of all ages, races and religious backgrounds. Our last class of new members may have been the most diverse we've ever had the pleasure to welcome.

With all of this growth and energy, it may be tempting to overlook our challenges. Fortunately, the Forward First team is keeping us honest. This group is working hard to focus our energies. They are drafting a vision

statement and creating goals and strategies that will provide us with a framework for serving each other and the world in which we belong.

This kind of focus requires all of us to participate and to take responsibility, to educate ourselves and to volunteer our time and energy. I encourage all of you to attend any one or all of the forums coming up this spring, one by the Forward Team on April 12th and two by the Finance Committee on April 26th and May 3rd and to participate in our Annual Meeting on May 17th.

Have you turned in your pledge form? There's no getting away from it, without financial support we will not be able to reach our goals. Let's get that done so we can move on to figuring out how we want to spend our bounty.

There are a few weeks left in the program year. Now is the time to fulfill your commitment to our congregation by serving as an usher ([dawn.brekke@gmail.com](mailto:dawn.brekke@gmail.com)), providing soup or sandwiches for coffee hour ([vonda615@gmail.com](mailto:vonda615@gmail.com)), participating in our next clean-up day ([ead1142@yahoo.com](mailto:ead1142@yahoo.com)), offering to lead a summer service ([cara.haft@gmail.com](mailto:cara.haft@gmail.com)) and by taking the small steps that keep our community together: pick up after a meeting, turn out lights when you leave a room, take a pile of dirty tablecloths home to be washed. Believe me, there is never a shortage of ways to chip in. I am here to help you get started. Reach out to me by phone or email. I would be delighted to help you find your way.

Happy Spring to all,  
Garnett

PS. There is still one more opportunity to sign the membership book. If you feel a connection to First U and are ready to take that step, let me know.

## Mark Your Calendars! The Finance Committee will be hosting two congregational forums:

**Sunday, April 26th** - Amending Investment Policy and other conformance with other UUA resolutions

**May 3rd** - Fiscal Year 2015-16 Budgeting

## **Welcome to Our Newest Members**

**Rebecca Chin** – Rebecca is a child of the congregation who signed the membership book when she was 16. After several years away, she is happy to be back. She works as a pre-school teacher.

**Gloria Howard** – Gloria is an attorney who commutes to Westchester. She has been attending First U for 10 years. She lives with her partner Rochelle who came to support Gloria when she signed the book.

**Danny DiGiacomo and Chris Singh** – Danny is a Chef and Chris is a teacher. They will be getting married in our Sanctuary in a ceremony officiated by Rev. Ana

**John Lenker** – John came to NY to work at a tech start-up. His wife lives in Minnesota. They see each other on many weekends either here in Brooklyn or in Minnesota

**Annie Stone** – Annie sings in the choir. She works in publishing as an editor. She is a lifelong UU!

**Amanda White** – Amanda just finished Yoga teacher training. She coordinates the TNT brunches and volunteered to host one of our Stewardship events this year.

**Ashleigh Wilkinson** – Ashleigh's grandfather and great grandfather are both UU ministers! She works as an artist's assistant.

## **Save the Date – Sunday, May 17 Service of the Living Tradition**

Every year we honor our members who have reached anniversary years of membership. This year we are honoring those who have achieved 10-15 years:

**Julie Bero, Catalina Bertani, Robert Brackbill, Rebecca Chin, Lenny Derevensky, Wendy Derevensky, Stephanie Gannon, Lorna Hollander, Marc Hollander, Elizabeth Huffman, Georgia Larson, Cara Muller, Jeff Muller, Lisa Pacenza, Rita Pearl, Michael Richardson, Marie Schloeder, Jennifer Stevens, June Wohlhorn**

This year we are particularly pleased to be honoring three members who grew up in our congregation: Julie Bero, Rebecca Chin, and Becky Huffman. Please join us at worship on May 17 to honor these 19 individuals who have been devoted members of the congregation for 10-15 years.

**Going Once, Going Twice, Going Three Times  
Saturday, May 9th**

**The First U Annual Dinner and Auction**

**Our biggest fundraiser and our most fun event of the whole year.  
Watch the Announcements and the Order of Service for  
more information in the coming weeks.**

## A Message from Meagan, Director of Education Ministries

Dear Friends,

The Spring holiday season can be a difficult time for Unitarian Universalist parents trying to explain the various Easter symbols and their meaning for us a religious community. Many children are thrilled by the excitement of waking up on Easter morning and finding that the Easter Bunny came and hid eggs and candy for them or left them a basket of goodies. But why did the Easter Bunny do this, and what does it have to do with the Christian holiday of Easter? And does it have anything to do with Passover? When our children and grandchildren, nieces and nephews ask these questions, a wonderful opportunity for religious education happens. My theory is if they are old enough to ask the questions, they are old enough to hear our opinions and learn what we know. Although many UUs do not

believe in the resurrection of Christ, many of us see the connection between this Biblical story and a cele-

bration of new life that fits so well with the season of spring. It is helpful to share with children that the word 'resurrection' means rising from the dead. When we begin to see green shoots emerging from the ground, hear birds chirping, witness the leaves budding on the trees and the azaleas blooming vibrantly around us, we can truly say we are witnessing the earth awakening, or even "rising from the dead." These very real signs of new life can be seen in the many familiar symbols of Easter: eggs, chicks, grass, bunnies, flowers - all of which stand for fertility and life. After the long, cold, and snowy winter, it is certainly a relief to acknowledge our excitement for the earth's awakening. Happy Spring to us all!

Blessings,  
Meagan

## From our Music Director, Adam Podd

### Music Abounds this Spring at First U

I'm thrilled to offer you all a sneak peak at what is sure to be an exciting season of eclectic music at First Unitarian.

On Palm Sunday we will feature two great works by two great composers. The choir and soloists will sing portions of Mozart's *Missa Brevis in F major*, as well as Monteverdi's *Laetatus Sum* (c. 1650). The choir will be accompanied by our historic pipe organ, and a chamber group of some of NYC's top early-music musicians playing period string instruments.

We will change flavors completely on Easter Sunday presenting a contemporary gospel anthem from our choir, supported by a full rhythm section.

Jazz Sunday, on April 26th this year, is always a special treat. This will be an especially memorable worship service you won't want to miss! We will pack our beautiful worship space with The Rad Trads, an 8-piece New Orleans style horn band. I can't possibly say enough great things about the personalities and musical abilities of this group! Their joyful and soulful approach to

music is absolutely infectious. FAIR WARNING: Sitting still in the pews will prove extremely difficult this week! More on the Rad Trads below:

As you can see, there's something for everyone this spring. Musical variety and excitement are the reasons I love my job and the world of church music. By creating a vibrant musical landscape, we are able reach the diverse group of congregants who come to worship here each week. I'm grateful that my yearning for variety and new musical experiences can be put to good use at First U.

About the Rad Trads: The Rad Trads have quickly gained a reputation as one of New York's most entertaining live acts. Comprised of some of NYC's top instrumentalists & vocalists who perform with top groups such as Truth & Soul Record's "Lady," EMEFE, Juice Box, & Jonathan Batiste, The Rad Trads bring their love of the game to a diverse range of soulful American music, from early jazz to New Orleans brass band, R&B and the Delta Blues. Fronted by four powerful horns, stirred up by a driving rhythm section, and featuring soulful vocal harmonies to boot, The Rad Trads consistently win over audiences with their unique energy and enthusiasm. [www.theradtrads.com](http://www.theradtrads.com).

## **Worship and Music Committee**

### **Call for Summer Worship Leaders - Do you have a Summer Sermon in you??**

Every summer, First Unitarian's congregation moves services to our Sunday get-away place, the McKinney Chapel (conveniently located right next door on Pierrepoint St.). We leave behind the pews and the impressive gothic architecture of our beloved Sanctuary for a more home-grown style of worship, led each week by our very own members.

The Worship and Music Committee encourages anyone with a seed of an idea for a worship service to come forward and talk with us. Rev. Ana will be offering a workshop in Worship Service Leadership to anyone committed to designing and leading a service this summer, and the committee members, most of whom have led services, are here to guide and support you as you develop your ideas. What kind of spiritual exploration would you like to take us on?

We encourage members to team up as co-leaders; congregational groups can develop a service to share their spiritual practice. If you have a unique approach to

spirituality (and what Unitarian Universalist doesn't?!), consider sharing it with us.

Interested? Watch for our sign-up table in the Undercroft starting in April, or contact any one of us to learn how to get started!

Cara Haft ([cara.haft@gmail.com](mailto:cara.haft@gmail.com)),  
Worship & Music Committee Chair  
Bob Bero  
Robert Brackbill  
Drew Peterson-Roach  
Claire Sexton  
Bruce Wilde

Note: Our committee is also looking for new members to contribute to our year-round work assisting Rev. Ana and Adam with the weekly and holiday services and fundraisers to support our congregation's mission. See one of us for details, or attend one of our meetings to see what we do. We meet the first Tuesday of every month at 7:30. Our upcoming meetings are on April 7th and May 5th.

## **Weaving the Fabric of Diversity**

**SATURDAY, APRIL 25TH 7:00-9:00 PM  
DINNER WITH ENTERTAINMENT TO  
CELEBRATE TOGETHERNESS AND LIVE  
OUR PRINCIPLES.**

Sun, warmth, mangoes and coconuts hanging from surrounding palm trees. Combine this with extreme poverty, lack of infrastructure or public services, disappearing forests, and people still living in tents years after a devastating earthquake and this is Haiti. Haitians rely on each other to survive on a day-to-day basis. One of the most serious recent issues has been disappearing forests. Action for Reforestation is now critical.

Shortly after the Haitian earthquake in 2011 Weaving the Fabric of Diversity was asked by the church board to see if we could form a relationship with a local Haitian group. We began to meet with FEDADSE (Federation

des Associations pour le Developpement du Sud-Est). This is a non-profit umbrella group of emigrees from 8 communities in the South-East of Haiti who raise funds to build projects in their hometowns. All the labor is donated by those involved in the projects. These projects are determined by each local group and to date have included the building of schoolrooms, a clinic, a road, local libraries, and funding the tuition of schoolchildren in a nation where there is virtually no free public education. Most of this focus has turned recently to creating fruit tree nurseries. Picking and selling the fruit can be a source of income insuring that the trees flourish.

Join us for a delicious dinner, music and dance in a joint effort by members of our congregation and members of FEDADSE who provide half the food and entertainment. This will be a fundraiser to aid in the planting of fruit trees.



## **V-Day Production of The Vagina Monologues is a Resounding Success**

Two performances of Eve Ensler's play produced and performed by members and friends of First Unitarian on March 13th and 14th were sold out! Audience members were riveted by the depth and range of this near classic play as they watched the cast of 22 come together in laughter, sorrow and playful reflection. The show was a benefit to support V-Day's mission of ending global violence against women and girls. The benefit partner for the production is the Spiritual Alliance to Stop Intimate Violence (SAIV.org)

One highlight of the weekend was the attendance of three separate High School groups, one there as the final assignment on a unit on consent, another focused on human rights and women's issues. It was amazing to have this play available for them.

In addition to the dedicated cast, there are many people who participated and helped make this a wonderful event: Creative team: Alexa Devin, Dawn Elane Reed and Christine Lloyd; Additional Directors: Cynthia Eisemann, Ashley Straw and Krystalla Pearce; Marketing assistant: Rosemarie Stupel; House Manager: Koren Manning. Thank you to the staff and congregation of Brooklyn First Unitarian for supporting this artistic endeavor in the pursuit of justice. Our next projects are in the planning stages and we look forward to having more participating in future events.

With deep gratitude,  
Dawn Marie Brekke, Chair

## **Save the Date Sunday, April 12 Forward First Brooklyn**

On Sunday, April 12 the Forward First Brooklyn Planning Team will host a forum to share the work we have been doing this year. We will present a revised purpose statement that reflects the input we received at the March 1 congregational meeting. We will also present our goals and strategies, which will be a guide to our work for the next several years.

We would love to hear what you think about all of this. Our goal is to use the feedback from this forum to finalize the plan that will be presented for congregational ratification at the annual meeting on Sunday, May 17.

Please join us as we plan our congregation's path forward. If you are not able to attend the meeting on April 12, feel free to email us your comments.

Lee Pardee  
Chair, Forward First

## **Sunday Flowers**

If you would like to sponsor the flowers for an upcoming Sunday service, please contact Rob Petrillo at 718-624-5466 x108 or email [dcs@fuub.org](mailto:dcs@fuub.org). Flowers can be sponsored (\$50) for numerous reasons including the memory of a loved one, congratulations for a special event, etc. Your name and dedication will be printed in that week's order of service and you may take the flowers home after the service. Available Sundays are: April 19, April 26, May 10 (Mother's Day), May 31, June 7.

## Stewardship Update

Every year we ask our members and friends to declare their financial support of First Unitarian by completing a pledge form promising to give money to the congregation in the year that begins the following July. These pledges are the source of our revenue projections for the budget that will be presented to the congregation for approval at the annual meeting on the third Sunday in May (May 17th this year).

The Stewardship Campaign is the one time every year when we touch every one of our members in some way. For some people that will be a one on one meeting, for others it will be through attendance at a party and for others the touch will be a mere brush as they are happy to complete a pledge form in private. However each household chooses to go through the process, the end result tell our leaders a lot about how we're doing. Are people reporting their satisfaction with their congregational experience? Are we hearing a consistent complaint or dissatisfaction? This process is one way that we are able to take the temperature of the congregation and made adjustments as necessary.

The Stewardship Campaign is also a time for our members and friends to evaluate their relationship to the congregation. For some people changes in employment, or a family pressure, may cause them to decrease their pledge. However, over time, as most people become more connected and involved with their congregation, they generally want to give more support. A family that pledges \$600 in their first year may be giving \$3000 five years later. By that time, the congregation has become an integral part of their family's life and they are committed to its purpose.

Finally, by requiring our voting members to turn in a pledge form every year, we are able to accurately track our membership, one of several metrics we use to assess the health of the congregation.

This year's stewardship campaign was our most aspirational yet. The team set a goal of \$290,000 a 5% increase over last year. As of this writing, half-way through the campaign and with still over 100 households to go, we have reached \$183,000, 63% to the

goal. We are confident that we will reach or overtake the mark.

In the next few weeks we will be reaching out to those of you who have not yet turned in pledge forms. You can help us by being pro-active. Contact Garnett Losak ([garnett@fuub.org](mailto:garnett@fuub.org))

To those of you have generously turned in your pledge form, thank you. Now comes the fun part, putting our resources to good work for in the next fiscal year!

Your Stewardship Team,

Marty Bernstein  
Lynn Chandhok  
David Garvoille, Co-Chair  
Marie Johnson  
Diana Lu  
Koren Manning  
Sarah Morgan  
Peter Norling, Co-Chair  
Lee Pardee  
Nancy Welles  
Bruce Wilde

With very special thanks to this year's party hosts:

Tom Check and Nancy Witherell  
Meena Dieterich  
Carolyn Ellis and Lake Wise  
Marie Johnson  
Diana Lu  
Jeff Muller  
Dawn Elane Reed  
Kurt and Pat Steele  
Coco and Bruce Wilde  
Amanda White

# Worship Schedule - Spring 2015

March 29th - Palm Sunday Music Service

April 3rd, 5:00PM - Good Friday Commemorative  
Communion Service

April 5th - Easter Sunday Worship and Spring  
Celebration, Sanctuary, Chapel and Undercroft

April 9th, 6:30PM - Passover Seder, Undercroft  
(suggested donation \$25.00)

April 12th, - Derek Mitchell - Guest Preacher

April 19th - Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons

April 26th - Jazz Sunday

May 3rd - Flower Communion, Bring a blossom to share.

May 10th - Mother's Day, presentation of the Davol Bibles

May 17th - Service of the Living Tradition; Annual Meeting

May 31st - Coming of Age, Senior High School Bridging,  
Teacher Appreciation, Sabbath Sunday

June 7th - New Member Sunday

June 14th - Juneteenth

June 21st - Summer Services Begin

All Services begin at 11:00AM in the Sanctuary unless  
otherwise indicated.

**Please note:** This schedule is subject to change. Please watch the  
weekly e-announcements and the Order of Service for updates.  
The nursery will be open every Sunday for children 2 and under.

## FIRST UNITARIAN CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY BROOKLYN A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

### MISSION & COVENANT

We strive to be an embracing and diverse community of all ages whose members nurture, strengthen, and challenge each other to grow. We gather to celebrate our shared Unitarian Universalist values while affirming our individual beliefs. A spirit of hope and possibility inspires us to fulfill our responsibility to the larger society by promoting justice and peace. Because the congregation is meaningful in our lives and we freely choose to be here, we commit our talents and resources to live this mission.

### OFFICE

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HOURS Mon-Thursday, 9:30AM-4:00PM  
Friday, 9:30AM-Noon

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### CLERGY & STAFF

Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons Senior Minister  
Meagan Henry Director of Education Ministries  
Robert F. Petrillo Dir. Congregational Services  
Adam Podd Music Director  
Garnett Losak Dir. Membership/Communications  
Bert Eisenstadt Children's Music Director  
Carl Davis, Paul Eisemann Custodians  
Elizabeth Deterville Nursery Coordinator  
Rev. Donald McKinney Minister Emeritus  
Rev. Orlanda Brugnola Chaplain Emerita  
William Peek Music Director Emeritus

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