

BROOKLYN UNITARIAN

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



CHRISTMAS EVE



*Join us for Christmas Eve Worship,
Thursday, December 24th
4:00PM Family Service
5:00PM traditional Candlelight Music Service.*

4:00PM Family Service

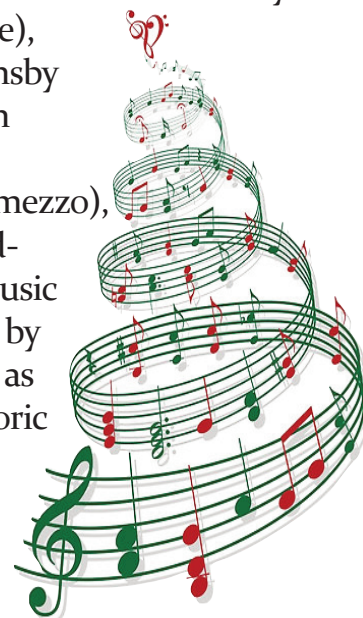
We'll have hot cocoa and animal crackers, sing familiar carols and hear classic Christmas readings. This is a magical service for young and old! The service, will be led by Director of Education Ministries, Meagan Henry. The service will be held in the Chapel which will be decorated with Christmas greens and poinsettias.

5:00PM Candlelight Music Service

From Bach and Praetorius, to Holst and Vaughan-Williams, we'll hear new stunning arrangements of carols and spirituals, and even a touch of contemporary gospel. Excerpts from some larger works will include Bach's Christmas Oratorio, Vaughan-Williams' Fantasia on Christmas Carols, and Praetorius' *Mussae Sioniae*. Several stand-alone

arrangements of Christmas favorites will feature more contemporary composers and arrangers including Burt, Dawson, Gjeilo, and First U's own music director, Adam Podd.

This year's featured vocalists will be Wayne Arthur Paul (baritone), Brandon Selvin-Hornsby (tenor), Liz Bachman Thompson (mezzo), Melissa Paul-Perez (mezzo), and Candice Helfand-Rogers (soprano). Music will be accompanied by brass quartet, as well as First Unitarian's historic Mann & Trupiano pipe organ.



From the Senior Minister



We enter this holiday season at a bleak time in the history of our nation and our world. The global unrest and violence that formed the backdrop of the Christmas and Hanukah stories seems to be mirrored in our story today. So many of us are sad, angry, and frightened by

the violence and vitriol coming across our airwaves. The world seems to be shifting under our feet in inexplicable ways. It's hard to feel the light, breezy cheer of the holidays when so much cries out for healing.

Yet the fact that there are violent and dangerous people operating in the world doesn't negate the fact that there are also kind, peace-making souls at work all around us. The fact that the news we read is unrelentingly bad doesn't negate the fact that there are many good things happening too. The fact that there are ominous clouds in our skies doesn't require us to live under those clouds every minute. The holidays are upon us and they literally challenge us to find joy, to experience it, to express it, and to spread it.

In this spirit, let's continue our efforts to make small but substantive differences in this grieving world. If we know of people who are alone this holiday season, let's give them a call and see if we can visit. Or invite them over for a holiday meal. Or send them an unexpected gift. Let's connect with more people and organizations that are working to stem the vicious cycle of hatred and mistrust. Let's find more ways, individually and as a faith community, to send messages of support to the mosques in Brooklyn and combat racism in all its forms. Let's spread an ethic of relating to the earth with reverence and love. Let's not shrink in despair, but rather let's foment peace in an un-peaceful time. Let's inject some love into a world that's heartsick. Let's be the life-affirming antidote to what ails the world.

And finally, let's give a gift to ourselves and each other and make this holiday season a good one. Guilt-free, full-on, and joy-abounding. May the new year bring peace to our hearts, to our homes, to our communities, and to the world.

Happy holidays everyone!
Rev. Ana

Visit First Unitarian for the Holidays

Sunday, December 20th

11:00 AM

Festivals of Light Worship Service
and Holiday Party

Tuesday, December 22nd

6:30 PM (Chapel)

Solstice Celebration

Thursday, December 24th

4:00 PM (Chapel)

Family Christmas Eve Worship Service

5:00 PM

Christmas Eve Candlelight Music Service

Sunday, December 27th

4:00 PM

Holiday Vespers, Reflections & Carols
(no 11:00am worship service this day)

From the Board of Trustees

It has been a busy few months since we came back together in September. Your Board of Trustees has been busy too. Look elsewhere in this newsletter for updates on the Board's work implementing our Forward First Plan, promoting UniFair as a Sustainability event, and plans for how we will use our end of year fundraiser to improve our congregational life.

In November the Board held a congregational meeting. We reported on the Forward First plan. Our new Treasurer, Lake Wise, informed everyone that our income and expenses look good so far. Our four delegates to last June's Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly reported on their experiences and presented resolutions from GA for our members to consider. The congregation endorsed the 2015 Statement of Conscience on Reproductive Justice and also three Actions of Immediate Witness on Black Lives Matter, Environmental Sustainability and Releasing Undocumented Children and Families from Detention Centers.

On October 15 our Maintenance Manager, Paul Eisemann, injured his hand so severely that he has been unable to work. Since then the Board has increased the hours of Robert Petrillo, Director of Congregational Services, to handle some building management tasks and hired David Loughlin to fill in as our Sunday host. The Board is still developing long-term plans to manage the challenges we face in these circumstances.

I wish everyone in our congregation the happiest of holidays, and I hope I will see you at some of our many holiday events and celebrations.

In Faith and Fellowship,
Lee Pardee, Board President

Trustees

Roger Cooper, Liz Davis, Sean Fischer,
Elaine Macken, Rachel Michael, Mary Most,
Jeff Muller, Kurt Steele

From the Director of Congregational Life

For most of the past decade, I have had a standing date with Leah Brekke, one of our Sunday school students, to bake and decorate Christmas cookies. We've gone from Leah, barely more than a toddler, standing on a chair while her mother and I guided her hand to carefully sprinkle colored sugar on prepared cut-out cookies, to Leah, as tall as I, coming to my house by herself to help mix, bake and cut the dough before decorating. Every year I ask her if she's too old to help me and every year she responds that she'll never be too old.

Isn't this what participation in congregational life is all about? Leah is not my daughter. Her mother is my friend and her older brother Sean, grew up with my son, Joe, but my

cookie relationship with Leah is ours alone. Our friendship (and yes, despite our 40+ year age difference, it is a friendship) is fostered by our shared congregational experience. It is an experience that continues through Leah's graduations and my job and career changes. Our spiritual community is the glue that binds us together.

When people ask me why they should join First Unitarian, I often tell them about Leah and baking cookies. The relationships that are built here are unique. Congregational life does not end with a matriculation, or a promotion or a move across town. It continues through thick and thin, through sorrow and joy, from birth to death. From holiday to holiday.

I imagine a time in the future when Leah and I will decorate cookies over a glass of wine. She will tell me about her boyfriends (or her new husband or her children) and her career. I will ask her to get something for me out of a high cabinet and will show her pictures of my growing family. The cookies will be secondary. Our friendship will be forever.

My family and I have another holiday tradition. After the 5:00 Christmas Eve Candlelight Music service, we eat Chinese at a local restaurant. It is a community affair. Join us! All are welcome!

Wishing you the happiest and healthiest of holiday seasons,

Garnett

A Message from Meagan, Director of Education Ministries

Dear Friends,

I love this time of year. I really do. The festivities, the decorations, the music in the air, and the feeling of goodwill and excitement emanating from unexpected people and places. But I especially love all the lights! Just when we've become accustomed to dreary winter nights descending upon us earlier and earlier each evening, the holiday lights emerge to bring a colorful twinkle to our darkened streets.

This month, our children are preparing for the Winter Holiday Pageant: A Celebration of Winter Festivals of Lights. One of the things I like most about this holiday pageant is the way it gives children an opportunity to learn about the season and a variety of religious holidays, while having fun. December's holidays in many of the world's religions focus on light, hope, and gifts. Through the Pageant, our children are exposed to religious traditions and cultures they may not have previously known about, and in doing this, they are learning a little more about the diverse world in which we live. What a wonderful way to experience our Unitarian Universalist faith!

So in this season of love and light and generosity, let us ponder our own inner light - the gift that is our unique spark - and the power of sharing ourselves with our communities.

Religious Education Holiday Happenings

Sunday, 12/20 11AM Festival of Lights

A family-friendly worship service featuring holiday scenes performed by our children, youth, and adults, with songs performed by our Children's Choir!

Sunday 12/20 12-1PM 2015 Winter Festival

After the Festival of Lights worship, come celebrate the season with warm food, sweet treats, and fun crafts!

Thursday 12/24 Christmas Eve Family Service 4PM

A family friendly holiday celebration of traditional readings and carols. Hot cocoa and cookies will be served!

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Happy Holidays and much love and light to you all!

In Faith, Meagan Henry

New Small Group Ministry Forming in January

Small Group Ministry (SGM) is intentional lay facilitated groups of 6-10 people who meet to deepen and expand the ministry of the congregation. Group members have the opportunity to build relationships and delve into spiritual discussions based on Rev. Ana's sermons in a safe environment.

There have been five groups meeting this fall and we are looking forward to starting new groups in January. Groups meet monthly in the evenings or Sunday afternoons.

So often in coffee hour we get distracted with "business things" and we lose that moment to reflect on a sermon that may have spoken to us. Some of us have outside commitments or teach in our Sunday school causing us to miss worship services. SGM is a wonderful way to set aside time to really engage with our spiritual practices whether or not we are able to regularly attend Sunday worship services.

Comments from participants attest to the value of this important program of our congregation:

"I loved meeting members of the community. I am not a member, but I feel a much stronger sense of community at FUUB now."

"As a new member, I found it to be quite helpful as a way to get connected to other members of the church in a deeper, more meaningful way."

"It's valuable when we connect as a community and this is something that furthers that mission."

If you are interested in joining a small group or have questions, please contact me directly at dawn.brekke@gmail.com subject: SGM or come to the welcome table on Sunday.

Dawn Brekke
Small Group Ministry Coordinator

From our Director of Music

Ain'-a-That Good News!

I've got some good news and some more good news, and then a little better news... which would you like to hear first? Great choice!

I am so happy to share with the members and friends of this congregation, a progress report for our music program here at the First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn. From what I've heard and experienced, it is clear to me that music has always played a central role in the life of worship here at First U. The people here truly love good music, and our worship service is jam-packed with it. Well, the good news is this: We're just getting started!

Having put in just over a year as the Music Director, I already have plenty of reasons to be thrilled with how far we've come, and I'm even happier about where we're headed.

1. The First U Choir - I've said it before, and I'll say it again: This wonderful group of singers is the key ingredient to the great music at First U. The ensemble has nearly doubled over the past year and we're finding (and exploring) a varied repertoire that speaks to the energy of its members. I am in regular conversation with newcomers and visitors who enquire about how our choir and music program work, so I am hopeful the trend will continue.

2. Second Sunday Jazz Services - With only 3 down, and another several to go, our new monthly jazz services are quickly gaining a reputation as a joyful, life-giving, and spiritually fulfilling way to spend Sunday. Our resident jazz ensemble, The Rad Trads, has been an absolute pleasure to collaborate with and the response from the congregation has been overwhelmingly positivity.

3. Share-ability - In this modern digital age, as the excitement over music at First U grows, there has been a desire to share it with others, and I am often asked if and when we will record some of these great performances. Recently, some of the special musical selections from our worship services have been captured on video by an enthusiastic, music-loving congregant, and have made the rounds on social media to be shared and reposted by other members. Even these simple and crude cellphone videos get wonderfully positive feedback, and give members of our church an easy and tangible way to share part of their spiritual selves with others. We recognize the importance of this, and are starting to take steps toward increasing the quality and frequency of these videos. This effort is still in its early stages, but we plan to do more in the near future to make our congregation's exciting musical landscape known far and wide! Part of this effort will be better video and audio equipment, and some people with basic video editing skills. If you'd like to be part of this team, please let one of the staff know.

Obviously there's lots to be proud of already, and just as much to look forward to. Feel free to contact me with your great ideas or questions surrounding First Unitarian's music program. The bottom line - we've come a long way in just over a year, and the future of music is even brighter.

Adam Podd

On-Line Credit Card Payments Coming Soon

Beginning next month, you will be able to make donations and payments to First Unitarian through our website (www.fuub.org). If you choose to use this service, please consider adding 3% to your total to cover bank charges. Stay tuned for more information.

Give a Gift to Your Congregation this Holiday Season!

It has become our tradition to give the church building a holiday gift. This year the Board of Trustees with input from the staff, has committed to upgrade our kitchen facilities. We plan to install a larger commercial grade sink and faucet fixture, remove and replace the ancient, unsightly sink cabinet and purchase counter-height work tables.

An official cost estimate is forthcoming, but early research suggests that this upgrade will cost approximately \$5,000 including labor.

If we raise \$7,000 we will purchase video and audio equipment needed

to upload our Sunday worship service to the Internet for all to see (see Adam's letter in this issue).

And...if we can raise \$9-10,000 we will purchase new, lighter weight folding trestle tables and tablecloths for our many events. These tables will be easier to move and store than the wood ones we have been using for many, many years making set-up and clean-up more convenient for staff and volunteers alike.

We believe that each of these wish list items will greatly enhance congregational life, providing a more pleasing work and volunteer envi-

ronment, opening our wonderful worship service to those who are unable to attend in person (and encouraging even more people to find us) and finally replacing our old tables with more functional models.

If all 300 active members and friends of our congregation donate \$33 each, we will reach our goals to upgrade the kitchen, video cast our worship services, and have brand new tables in time for the spring auction.

Checks can be made out to First Unitarian and mailed to 48 Monroe Place, Brooklyn, NY 11201. All donations are received with gratitude.

Another Successful UniFair

UniFair has been one of First Unitarian's biggest fundraisers for close to 40 years. By some estimates, the event has raised nearly half a million dollars in support of our congregation's mission and purpose.

Besides being a fundraiser, UniFair supports the congregation by building community and helps us to work for a sustainable planet as we keep truckloads of perfectly useable clothing and housewares out of landfills and into the homes of people who can put them to use.

The final results won't be available until all the expenses have been paid out, but UniFair grossed over \$11,000. We will most definitely net our budget goal of \$9,700 plus a little more.

There are way too many people to thank. Virtually every member and friend of First Unitarian participates in UniFair in one way or another.

However, we would like to recognize those folks who stepped up to be this year's leaders.

Chair

Lee Pardee

Sort Captains

Lee Pardee

Nancy Welles

Nancy Witherell

Bake Table Captain

Emily Levine

Clean-up Captain

Brandi Martin

Boutique Captain

Ludmilla Goldberg

Jewelry Captain

Liz Davis

Publicity Design

Dieter Klipstein

Office Manager

Samira Kawash

Wreaths

Nancy Wolf

Fruitcake Baker

Vonda Brunsting

Chef

Danny DiGiacomo

To everyone who baked, cleaned-up, set-up, sold, donated, cooked served and participated in all ways large and small, we couldn't do it without you. Pat yourselves (and each other) on the back.

The Next Step Forward

Last May, FUUB members voted to adopt our “Forward First” plan to guide our work over the next three to five years. The plan, which can be found on the FUUB website (www.fuub.org), organizes our work into several goals and strategies, such as creating an adult spiritual development program, strengthening pastoral care, and providing leadership training to become

change makers in our communities. Forward First is a large-scale effort that promises to touch many different parts of our congregation. As such, the Board is convening a number of teams to begin planning and implementing the work. We expect most of these teams to hold their kick-off meetings by early 2016 and begin engaging the congregation around this important work in the

coming months. As we continue to explore what “Forward” means at FUUB, we hope that everyone will contribute their thoughts, feedback and energy toward this growing vision of ourselves and this community. Comments and questions can be addressed to Sean Fischer (sean.fischer@gmail.com) Lee Pardee (leepar@earthlink.net).

New Storages Spaces created at First Unitarian

You may have noticed that the Undercroft feels a little larger these days. That’s because the alcove (the room with the double doors adjacent to the undercroft) has been entirely cleared out to accommodate the daycare center toys and the racks of folding chairs that were stored against the west wall. We now have extra room to set up some tables for coffee hour and the entire space just looks a little tidier.

In addition, we have built new shelving in the passthrough (the space between the chapel and the

undercroft). The new shelves will be used to store materials for our step-groups, yoga classes and Sunday activities.

It is very important that both of these new storage spaces do not become catchalls. Our custodians have been given instructions to dispose of anything that is left on the floor of the passthrough or left in the alcove without permission from office staff.

Please help us to keep our spaces pleasant. Use garbage and recycling containers appropriately, put coffee

cups and dishes in the kitchen, do not leave any unauthorized items in our public spaces. If you have materials that you must leave in the church building, please contact Garnett Losak to discuss your needs.

First Unitarian cannot be responsible for any items that are left in the building.

Very special thanks go to Paul Eisemann who started the passthrough shelving and Bob Levine who completed them as a volunteer. David Loughlin gets the credit for clearing out the alcove.

Winter Preview: Credo Workshop Series

January 24, January 31, February 7, and February 14 (last session optional): 12:30-2:00 PM

This winter, congregants are invited to join a series of intergenerational workshops to focus on articulating our faith and values. These afternoon workshops, led by Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons and Meagan Henry, will help us to dive deep on our values and purpose. Through the sessions, we'll look inward at our personal lives and learn a vocabulary to more clearly express our beliefs. By the end, each attendee will develop a personal credo: a statement on the faith principles and beliefs that guide our actions.

The sessions require commitment, as they are meant to be attended in their entirety and will include reading and writing assignments. Participants will have the opportunity to share their credos with each other at the fourth session, at which attendance will be optional. The organization of this series was initiated for the congregation by the Twenties and Thirties (INT's). For more information please email Julie Bero at jnbero@gmail.com or Rev Ana at ana@fuub.org.

Sign-up will begin the first weekend in January.

Worship Schedule - Winter 2015

December 20th

Festivals of Light Worship Service
and Holiday Celebration – Multigenerational

December 24th

Family Service (4PM, Chapel)
Candlelight Music Service (5PM)

December 27th (4PM, no 11AM worship)

Vespers Service of Carols & Relections

January 3rd

Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons preaching

January 10th

Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons preaching

January 17th

Meagan Henry preaching

January 23rd - Sabbath Sunday

Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons preaching

January 31st - New Member Sunday

Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons preaching

February 7th

Tim DeChristopher preaching

February 14th

Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons preaching

February 21st

Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons preaching

February 28th

Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons preaching

March 6th

Rev. Fletcher Harper, Exec. Dir. GreenFaith

March 13th

Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons preaching

March 20th - Palm Sunday Music Service

Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons preaching

March 25th - Good Friday (5:00PM)

March 27th - Easter Sunday

Rev. Ana Levy Lyons preaching

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.

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Meagan Henry Director of Education Ministries

Robert F. Petrillo Dir. Congregational Services

Adam Podd Music Director

Garnett Losak Dir. Congregational Life

Paul Eisemann Building Manager

Carl Davis, David Loughlin Custodians

Rebecca Chin Youth Ministry Coordinator

Elizabeth Deterville Nursery Coordinator

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