# BRWKLYN UNITARIAN

#### VOLUME 59 • NUMBER 3 • SPRING 2017

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



In spite of everything, spring seems to be arriving. The fuzzy buds are on the trees; the rains are falling; the ground is moist with shoots peeking through the soil. We are looking forward to the flavors of the season. We are looking forward to the stories of new life, renewal, and liber-

ation in Easter and Passover. We are looking forward to the stories we hear every year of spiritual power overcoming earthly, imperial power. We need those stories more than ever right now.

Many of you are telling me that you are feeling overwhelmed by everything happening in our world on top of the normal freight we all carry by being human. While we are called to engage the meta struggles of our time, our own personal struggles have not magically resolved. It is a lot to carry. As a religious community, one antidote we can offer one another is our stories. We can tell the mythic stories of our traditions. This year, I've told a series of stories of humans and the earth, one from each of our six Unitarian Universalist sources. We can tell the stories of social justice movements from the past – at First Unitarian and far away – movements that have prevailed against impossible odds. And, perhaps most importantly, we can tell our own personal stories. Each of us has stories of struggle and failure and liberation in our own lives, stories with themes that repeat again and again across the human experience.

The practice of sharing our stories, both telling and listening deeply, can irrigate our souls and bring us hope in the hardest of times. It can help us feel connected to our community and help us better understand our own lives. So while we will be telling our Scriptural stories in services as we always do in this season, I encourage you to also give the gift of story to one another. Find each other at coffee hour, invite one another over for lunch, and share the stories of your own life mythologies. I believe we will take great solace in remembering how we are truly all connected and while each experience is unique, none of us has to be alone. I am also eager to hear your stories, so, as always, I invite you to come and talk with me.

To a joyful and meaningful spring and with many blessings, Rev. Ana

# Ride to Washington on Our Multi-Faith Bus! March for Climate, Jobs, and Justice: April 29th

First Unitarian is organizing a bus for members of several Brooklyn houses of worship to make the journey together to Washington, D.C. on Saturday, April 29. On the bus, we'll build community with our faith neighbors, sharing songs, prayers, and teachings (maybe even food) from our various traditions. We will join the faith contingent of the march, which will have its own entry chute as it did in the 2014 march. Please join for this powerful expression of our faith at this critical moment in human history. To sign up for the bus, contact Alison Derevensky (alisonismusica@gmail.com). Tickets are \$60 (financial assistance available). For more information about the march or the religious environmental movement in general, please contact Rev. Ana.

# Take Pärt, April 9th, Palm Sunday

"... the compositions resonate profoundly for the unconverted as well as the faithful... It is music that reveals itself gradually, with a harmonic stillness that conjures up an alternative to hectic everyday existence." Arthur Lubow, The New York Times (writing about Estonian composer, Arvo Pärt)

I am thrilled to continue our decades old Palm Sunday tradition with a program of choral and instrumental music. This year, we are planning a program featuring the world's most performed living composer, Arvo Pärt.

The program includes a choral performance of Pärt's *Salve Regina*, a substantial 12-minute setting of the popular Latin text which dates to the Middle Ages. The choir will be accompanied by Jason Asbury, conductor of the Brooklyn Heights based Grace Chorale, and violinist, Kiku Enomoto. The professional quartet will sing

Pärt's beloved setting of *The Beatitudes* accompanied by our historic pipe organ. Kiku Enomoto will perform Pärt's famous violin solo, *Spiegel Im Spiegel*, a transcendent and meditative instrumental piece that has been used in more than 20 films and documentaries, and is probably his best-known work.

Rev. Ana will preach a sermon addressing the "war on meaning" in the time of Jesus and in our modern world. Through the story of Palm Sunday and Jesus' encounter with Jerusalem, we will explore the tensions we all face when our spiritual and secular values come into conflict.

I hope you will all join us for what is sure to be a very special Sunday.

Adam Podd, Music Director adam@fuub.org

#### In Memoriam: Seth Faison

By Connie Newsom, deacon

Senior Deacon Seth Faison died peacefully in his home March 7th. He was 93. With his passing First Unitarian has lost a proud and dignified representative of our congregation and a vital link to our past and the decades of mindful changes which he supported.

Seth's death also approaches the end of the long line of prominent Brooklyn Heights residents who served the larger Brooklyn community. He was a member of the board of several Brooklyn institutions which he helped revive during Brooklyn's decline in the 1950's and 1960's. The Brooklyn Academy of Music, The Brooklyn Hospital Center, and the Brooklyn Heights Casino are among the iconic institutions he led in revival. Such was his reputation he was appointed the first Protestant to serve as a regent of St. Francis College.

Legend has it that Seth, whose family belonged to the Episcopal church,

was drawn to our church because as a teenager friends introduced him to the pool table in the undercroft. This charming story, while partly true, does not do Seth justice. He joined our congregation only after a carefully thought-out process prompted in large part by admiration for long-time minister, John Howland Lathrop.

Although from a conservative background, Seth accepted and supported the liberal causes in which the congregation became involved during the 1950's and 1960's. He moved carefully with conviction and helped the new minister, Donald McKinney, navigate his early years in the church. Seth's caution, openness, and acceptance during this period were of enormous importance in keeping the congregation centered.

Seth served our congregation as treasurer and member of the investment committee through the 1960's, 70's and 80's. His financial reports,

accompanied by appropriate charts, were delivered each year at the Annual Meeting, thus assuring the congregation its finances were being closely monitored. In 1971 Seth was elected Deacon, a position he took very seriously. Upon becoming Senior Deacon, he led with a steady hand.

Until the very end of his life, Seth's devotion to First Unitarian was exemplary, indeed inspirational. Because walking had become increasingly difficult, he and Sara had offered to hold the March meeting of the Deacons in their home March 5. His weakening condition prevented this gathering.

A man of deep integrity, Seth combined an old-fashioned dignity and civility with an up-to-date understanding of the role of change in preserving an institution.

A memorial service for Seth is planned for Sunday, May 21 at 3 PM.

#### From the Director of Congregational Life

I spend a lot of time thinking about why some people seem to connect to First Unitarian so quickly and so deeply and others struggle to find a place here, even to the point of drifting away. If I had the recipe for the secret sauce, I'd publish it because I know from discussions with membership professionals all over the country that this is the most confounding part of our job. We're pretty good at welcoming newcomers and even helping people along the path to become voting members, but after that we stumble, losing as many as half of our new members after one year. Of course, sometimes this can't be prevented. People move away or have life changes that impact their relationship with our congregation, but sometimes we, as a congregation, simply fail at helping people move from the first stage of membership to a deeper, lasting connection.

Last month, Eleanor Traubman, a 3-year member of First Unitarian, an office volunteer, and a friend, suggested that I write a guide that would instruct people on how to make the best of their relationship with First Unitarian. My first thought was, oh no, I can't possibly add one more thing to my list, but her idea kept coming back to me and, as I've thought about it, I began to realize that I've made some basic observations about what seems to work.

- 1) Come to fellowship hour. I know this is very challenging for some people. There is nothing worse than feeling alone in a room full of people. And I admit that we're not always good at making everyone feel welcome in that big, loud, empty space. We're working on it though. The folks at the welcome table are there to talk to you and our, new this year, table for newcomers is staffed with people who want to meet you that's why they're sitting at that table. Bite the bullet. It can be hard, I know, but the coffee (or tea) is free, there's often a pretty decent lunch, and you may just make a friend.
- 2) Volunteer to do something. Anything! I could make a comprehensive list, but it would take up this whole newsletter. Here are three things that I think a relative newcomer can do.
- Usher. This is the highest impact, lowest commitment volunteer job we have. Show up at 10:30 on Sunday morning, smile, hand out orders of service, be a welcoming presence. You're done by 11:30AM. (contact, Judy Boals judy@judyboals.com)

- Anything in the kitchen. There are often opportunities to prepare food, help with clean-up, even run the dishwasher. Kitchen work is social, it's contained and it's appreciated.
- Light the chalice. I look for a chalice lighter (or lighters) every Sunday morning. If you want to participate in worship in this way, just ask. The job is yours. By the way, many children love to do this. We welcome families to light the chalice together.
- 3) Take a class. I hope everyone will attend a newcomers' orientation (first Sunday of every month), but I encourage you to sign up for any number of adult faith development classes throughout the year. You'll learn something, meet new people, and connect with a minister or staff leader.
- 4) Read the weekly E-News and/or "like" our Facebook page. They are both packed full of information about what's going on at First U and how to get involved. If you're not a subscriber, let me know. We are also on Twitter @firstubrooklyn.
- 5) Make an appointment to meet with any member of our staff. We are all eager to get to know you and listen to your story. Our email addresses and phone numbers can be found on the back page of this newsletter.
- 6) Come to Worship!! I know this sounds obvious, but I can't stress it enough. There are so many activities that compete for our time and attention, especially on the weekends. But, just like anything else, if you get out of practice you'll lose the skill. People who attend worship regularly (at least 2 times per month) will know more people and feel more at home. When you're not there, your absence will be felt. If you have children, regular attendance at Sunday school is the key to raising children who embody Unitarian Universalist values and become lifelong UU's. You'll know you're hooked if you seek out the local UU church when you're on vacation (I do).

The membership committee and I are committed to making the experience of each and every person who walks through our doors welcoming and spiritually rewarding so, if you're a relatively new member or a newcomer to First Unitarian, let me know how it's going for you. I really want to know.

In Service,
Garnett Losak garnett@fuub.org

# **Religious Education**

#### Spring Happenings at First Unitarian

Dear Friends,

The Spring is always chock full of milestones, special holidays, and transitions. Here at First U we have some wonderful traditions that have been passed down through generations. Traditions such as our honoring the memory of Czech Unitarian minister, Norbert Čapek, through the annual Flower Communion and the gifting of Bibles in honor of Alice Davol, a young woman who taught Sunday School at our church in the early 1900s. We also like to honor the work of our current teachers and volunteers as we close out the church year. Our program is a cooperative and we have many volunteers planning throughout the week and serving in a variety of positions on Sunday morning. We've been blessed with three new additions to the Religious Education Council: Joy Gabriel, Justin Parkinson, and Chris Singh. We are so happy to have them join our team!

If you have questions, concerns, or want to explore your family's participation and connections here at First U, please reach out to Meagan Henry.

Here are some of our upcoming special events and traditions. We hope you will be a part of them!

April 16th: Easter Spring Celebration and party for children and youth - Come join in our annual Easter Egg hunt, do some spring crafts, and eat delicious treats! This is a wonderful Sunday to invite extended family! All are welcome.

**April 30th: Coming of Age Service -** Our young teens have been working towards this Sunday all year! Come help us honor four special people as they make the transition from childhood to youth. We especially invite 4th-6th graders to attend this service.

**May 7th: Flower Communion -** A special Unitarian tradition of bringing and sharing flowers with each other. Bring a blossom to church!

May 14th: Mother's Day, Davol Bible Ceremony - In a tradition unique to First U Brooklyn, we present a bible to every 7 (or turning 7) year old in our congregation.

June 4th: Senior High School Students Bridging Ceremony and Teacher Appreciation - We have an amazing group of seniors about to graduate into the wider world! We will show our appreciation to them, and to all the teachers and mentors who have helped shape our children's lives this year. The Children's Choir will perform.

June 4th: All Congregation Picnic - Details forthcoming

June 11th: Everybody's Birthday Party - Happy Birthday to YOU, and YOU, and YOU! We'll have treats, balloons, games and of course, CAKE!

#### Summer RE!

School may be out but Church is IN! This summer our children and youth will explore our amazing environment through stories, hands-on projects, and games. Each Sunday is led by a member of our teaching staff and is open to children ages 4 to 12. Younger children are invited to play in our Nursery. Teens are invited to join in the worship service.

Summer RE Classes are each Sunday from 11:00am-12:15pm in the undercroft, and there is punch and cookies for snack!

Classes begin June 18th and run through August 27th. All Are Always Welcome!

In Faith & Fellowship,

Meagan Henry meagan@fuub.org Director of Education Ministries

Becky Huffman Becky7676@gmail.com Chair of the Religious Education Council

# **Welcome Original Blessing**

We are pleased to announce that our sister congregation, Original Blessing will be worshipping in our Chapel one Sunday a month at 5:00PM. All are welcome to join the congregation at their next worship service on April 23rd.

#### **Ministerial Intern**

If you don't read another sentence of this article, just know that I am so very grateful for this church year together. In August my husband, Justin, and I packed everything we owned into a moving van and set out on an adventure. That trip from Minneapolis to Brooklyn took a few days and then the real adventure began.

Since August the world has changed. We've cried, laughed, protested, prayed, and sat in silence together as a community. I've been so very fortunate to journey with you this year as your ministerial intern. When I'm in class in downtown Chicago, I get to share what this amazing congregation is teaching me with students and ministers from across the country.

I'm excited to be part of this community as we move into spring and this is only the beginning. I am fortunate enough to get a second year with you. I have learned so much in my first year and I cannot wait to see what next year brings. Again, thank you.

Kevin W. Jagoe kevin@fuub.org

# Membership

We Are All on the Welcoming Team!

First Unitarian is a busy place! We are growing and expanding in numerous ways. At our March New Member Sunday, we welcomed 18 new members (plus two more who signed the previous week). That gives us a total of 287! We are also attracting more newcomers. So far this year we have received 250 welcome cards, already more than the 217 we received in total from all of last year. Our Sunday attendance is also up. We are averaging 270 worshippers during the sermon and another 50 or more children and adults in the Sunday school. That is a lot of people to welcome and to help connect to our larger community. We need everyone's help. For some of us, talking to people we don't know can be intimidating at first. But with intentionality and practice we can make sure everyone feels welcome. Here are some ways we can all help to make our newcomers feel at home:

• Before the service starts, notice the people around you in the pews. Any new faces? Say hello and introduce yourself.

- Not sure what to say? Try: "Good morning! I don't think we've met. I'm \_\_\_\_\_. What's your name?"
- Wear your nametag! We all need help remembering names.
- Volunteer to be a greeter/usher. You will be the first person someone sees when they visit our congregation (contact Judy Boals, (judy@judyboals.com).
- Keep in mind the people who stand up and introduce themselves during the service. Chat with them for a few minutes after the service or find them at coffee hour.
- Coffee hour can be intimidating. Notice if anyone is standing alone and bring him or her into your conversation.
- Introduce a newcomer to one other person. Now they have met two people!
- Come by the visitors and newcomers table in the Undercroft. People who sit there are open to conversation.
- There is a fine line between being welcoming and smothering. It's different for every person. If a visitor seems to just want to leave, that is okay too.

As we continue to grow we all need to be members of the Welcoming Team, charged with making every person who walks through our door feel included.

> Rachel Michael Rdmichael\_14@yahoo.com Membership Chair

#### **Share the Plate**

We are proud to announce that the new Share the Plate Committee met for the first time this past month. Based on any and all nominations from the congregation, we will be selecting qualified organizations to receive each week's Share the Plate portion of the offertory. On-line nomination forms can be found of the church website (http://www.fuub.org/home/justice-2/share-the-plate-2/) You may also speak with one of the committee members during Sunday coffee hour. On the team are Gloria Howard, Joe Gabriel, Takako Kono, James Mills, and Hillary Scott. We look forward to hearing from you!

# **Queer Caucus Spring Events!**

Sunday April 9th, following worship - LGBTQAI Advocacy

If you are looking for a way to get more involved in LGBTQAI advocacy, please join our Forward Justice group. We will gather together after service to meet each other, make connections and discuss our hopes and plans for LGBTQAI+ advocacy at First U.

#### Sat May 6th Lingo Bingo Night! 6pm

Queer Caucus and WFD will be co-sponsoring an LGBTQAI+ "Lingo Bingo Night" in the Chapel. This will be a fun way for the entire First U community to come together and learn about the terminology, lingo and issues surrounding the queer community.

Rachael Warner (warnerrach@gmail.com).

If you identify as LQBTQAI and would like to join the Queer Caucus please find us on Facebook (queer caucus: first unitarian universalist of Brooklyn). If you are a member or friend of First Unitarian and would like to get more involved in LGBTQAI advocacy, please join our Forward Justice Group list serve. Our Mission Statement: Queer Caucus is a community of LGBTQIA members and friends at the First Unitarian Universalist Congregational Society in Brooklyn. For its members, QC provides fellowship, fun, and a queer space for spiritual exploration; for the larger congregation, QC offers educational opportunities on queer issues; and for the wider world, QC fights for justice.

### Stewardship

Joy Gabriel, Stewardship Chair joy.gabriel@gmail.com

This time of year makes me restless. A few weeks ago, after a particularly rough bedtime, I looked at Joe Gabriel (as I affectionately call my husband) and said, "Nothing in our life is working!" "It's winter, honey" he said. "When does our life ever work in the winter?" You can see why I married him. This winter wasn't particularly harsh but it was emotionally and spiritually exhausting. Was it for you, too? We are desperate for spring because we want to move on to brighter, greener days already.

As difficult as it can be to weather the seasons of our lives, I take tremendous strength in the messages of transformation and salvation our religion provides. The transformation of a seed, pushing up through the dark earth and turning into something unrecognizable from how it began. The kind of salvation that points us to each other, not to heaven, because we know how much we depend on one another in this very moment. We are the ones called to do this work: one

hug, one lunch, one march at a time. In small and extraordinary ways, it takes All of Us. This is our religion, not a shared belief in a Supreme Being or a set of ancient rules we agree to live by, but a shared vision of a world we know is possible.

On behalf of the Stewardship Team, thank you from the bottom of our hearts for giving your time, talents and financial means to help build this vision. We are in this together.

# Facilities Management Committee Liz Davis, Chair ead1142@yahoo.com

The Facilities Management Committee (F.M.C.) has been discussing a range of topics related to the preservation and maintenance of our historic church buildings, and has been working with our Director of Facilities, Chris Johnson. Recently, Connie Newsom has arranged for the green sofa in the Frances White Room to be reupholstered and refurbished. The project was funded in part by donations from members and friends during the December, 2016 year-end congregational appeal. The sofa is scheduled to be picked up to be reupholstered in late March. We believe the refurbished sofa will enhance our congregation's use of the Frances White Room during the many events that are held there. F.M.C. Members are also working on plans to purchase

and install a new bench in the Chapel garden, to encourage the use of this beautiful outdoor space during warmer weather. Nancy Wolf is coordinating this effort. The F.M.C. is also planning possible volunteer work parties and clean-up days for later this spring. The following congregational members have attended meetings during the 2016-2017 program year: Liz Davis (Chair), Elaine Macken, Gloria Furman, Nancy Wolf, Steve Richetts, and David Thebus. Chris Johnson, our director of facilities, also regularly attends F.M.C. Meetings. Longtime member Connie Newsom is serving as a consultant to the F.M.C. The F.M.C. generally meets on the fourth Wednesday each month at 7:30 PM, in the church office.

# First U Annual Auction & Dinner: April 22 @ 6 pm

We are planning a mouth-watering menu designed by food entrepreneur (and new member!) Anita Shepherd and executive chef and auction co-chair, Danny DiGiacamo-Singh. The dinner setting will be elegant and served in our beautiful chapel where we will also hold the live auction.

The silent auction will be in the undercroft where you can bid, nibble on passed hors d'oeuvres and sip on a Flaming Chalice, the auction's kicker signature cocktail.

The night's music director, Jack Rossiter-Munley (also a new member!) is lining up live music during the silent auction and crafting a short dinner program in observance of Earth Day.

Rachael Warner and Steven Richetts will be making it all beautiful with a bunch of help from the children of our religious education program and members of the Queer Caucus. The theme is New York harbor. We'll be re-purposing our decorations at the Climate March in Washington DC the following weekend.

#### Three ways you can make this year's auction super successful...

First, donate something that will excite people to bid! Host a gourmet dinner, mimosa brunch, or backyard BBQ. If you have roof access and a view, throw a 4th of July fireworks party. Use your connections to get a behind-the-scenes tour of a gallery, science lab, historical archive, or major arts or music institution. Auction off the back seat of your car for a day trip to the countryside or beach. Host a Brooklyn gay pride party so we all have someplace to go after the Brooklyn Pride Parade. Offer Babysitting or children's party planning services! We have a baby boom at First U and more than 100 children enrolled in our Sunday school.

**Second, come to the auction and get your ticket in advance.** Advanced tickets help to purchase the right amount of food and cut down on waste. This year's ticket levels are: "pay-what-you-can," \$25 Supporter, \$50 Sustainer, and \$100 Benefactor. If you can purchase a higher priced ticket, you make the event more affordable for those who might not be able to attend otherwise.

**Third, bid on stuff!** If you budget \$200 or more for spring and summer fun, consider spending it at the auction. One-hundred percent of the auction proceeds goes to support First U. This is our biggest fundraising event of the year -- we're shooting to raise \$15,000. We can reach that goal if we all come to the auction knowing what we can spend and having fun doing it.

**New this year...**If you can't make the auction, we'll be reserving 10-15 fixed-priced items for the undercroft during coffee hour on April 16th and 23th. These items will be fair priced at levels that will fit different pocketbooks. So, if you get "auction paddle anxiety" these fixed-priced items are perfect for you. The auction is for everyone!

Get tickets, donate, and see the auction catalog here:

### www.auction2017fuub.blogspot.com

Check back often! We're adding donations as fast as we can! (Thank you to Pat Lawrence for her creating and writing the blog and Danny Yoder for data/tech support!)

Email me if you have questions or if you'd like to volunteer, especially if you're a new member, davidgarvoille@gmail.com.

With love and light, Your auction co-chairs, David Garvoille & Danny DiGiacomo-Singh

#### Worship Calendar - Spring 2017

April 9th - Palm Sunday Music Worship Service

**Friday, April 14th, 5:30PM** – Good Friday Communion Rev. Dr. Kelly Murphy Mason

April 16th – Easter Sunday Worship and Spring Celebration

**Tuesday, April 18th, 6:30PM** – Passover Seder, Rev. Ana *(reservations required, 718-624-5466)* 

April, 23rd - Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons Preaching

April 30th – Coming of Age Service

May 7th - Flower Communion

May 14th – Second Sunday Jazz, Davol Bible Sunday

May 21st – Service of the Living Tradition

**May 26th** – Part 4 of our series on World Religions, Humanism Kevin Jagoe Preaching

**June 4th** – Sr. High School Bridging & Teacher Appreciation; Following Worship, All Congregation Picnic

June 11th – Program Year Ends

June 18th – Juneteenth Celebration

June 25th – First Chapel Service

All services start at 11:00AM in the Sanctuary unless noted otherwise.

# Notice of Annual Meeting Sunday, May 21st, 12:45PM

Votes on: Trustees, Clerk, Nominating Committee,

Operating Budget

Possible votes on: One or more significant capital projects,

By-law changes

#### Budget Forum - Sunday, May 7, 12:45PM

Discussion of proposed operating budget and possible capital projects. This is your opportunity to learn specific details about the budget and add your comments. All members and friends of the congregation are welcome.

Please note: Only members of the congregation may vote. Members of the congregation have submitted a pledge form for the 2017-2018 fiscal year, have made at least of partial payment on their 2016-2017 pledge and have signed the membership book. If you are unsure of your membership status, please contact Garnett Losak (garnett@fuub.org) as soon as possible.

Lee Pardee - Chair, Board of Trustees leepar@earthlink.net

# FIRST UNITARIAN CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY BROKLYN

#### PURPOSE STATEMENT

The First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn is a joyful, caring, religious community that inspires and empowers people to Grow spiritually, Care for one another, and Work for social justice and stewardship of the earth.

#### **OFFICE** The Lathrop House

48 Monroe Place, Brooklyn, NY 11201

HOURS Mon-Thurs, 9:30AM-4:00PM PHONE/FAX 718-624-5466/718-797-2916 E-MAIL Office@fuub.org

#### 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 Director Congregational Life Chris Johnson Director of Facilities Kevin Jagoe Ministerial Intern Elizabeth Deterville Nursery Coordinator Rev. Dr. Kelly Murphy Mason Community Minister Shari Halliday-Quan Seminarian Nicole Tuszynski Ceremonies Coordinator Dr. Donald W. McKinney Minister Emeritus William Peek Music Director Emeritus

#### **OFFICERS**

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