



# First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

# Statement of Purpose

*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, May 17, 2015*

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# CLERGY AND STAFF REPORTS

## Senior Minister

Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons

In my stewardship sermon of February 3, “Jazz, Coffee, and Purpose,” I recounted a conversation between two women overheard at a Brooklyn coffee shop. One of them had just visited First U for the first time and was sharing her impressions with the other. Without knowing it, she had noticed the very elements that are most central to our vision of who we are and who we want to be. She mentioned our “jazz thing” (our music and worship that is spiritually alluring enough to pull people out of bed on a Sunday morning), our coffee hour (which we now call fellowship hour, our loving community), and our sense of purpose (helping others and transforming the world in which we live.) These are the three components of our mission statement: *“Grow spiritually, Care for one another, and Work for social justice and stewardship of the earth.”*

This year at First U has been one of continued growth in congregational body and spirit in all three of these areas. Worship services are full and joyful. Our music program continues to thrive under the leadership of our Music Director, Adam Podd, with a growing choir, a diverse and creative repertoire, and collaborations with world-class musicians and music projects beyond our walls that enrich us all. Our religious education program, led by our Director of Education and Family Ministry, Meagan Henry, is bursting at the seams. We average 61 children and youth on Sunday morning with many more enrolled, dynamic curricula for lifespan spiritual formation, and a service-oriented social justice focus. With the leadership of Garnett Losak, our Director of Congregational Life, we are building deep and lasting community -- bringing new congregants into our embrace while honoring our longest-term members and everyone in between. Our membership is continuing to grow – we’re now 304 members strong, the first time we’ve broken the 300 barrier possibly ever.

Our Director of Facilities, Chris Johnson, and our custodian, Ian Hurt, have supported all this congregational growth, as well as tremendous growth in our rental business, through their tireless work in keeping our 175-year-old building clean, safe, and functional. Our Office Manager, Wendy Russell, has provided the organizational backbone of our operations, managing everything from finances to copy machine dramas with grace. Our staff team this year has also included Allie Lewis, our first Music Ministry Intern (see Adam’s report); and Sara Gush, our Women’s Leadership Alliance seminarian (see Meagan’s report). We have continued to serve as a teaching congregation this year, learning with our Intern Minister, Karen Madrone. Karen has preached, led classes, jumped into social justice work, and has been invaluable in nurturing our Caring Ministry. She will be ordained as a Unitarian Universalist minister on June 2 and we wish her all the best in her ministry. We are blessed to have the staff that we do – every staff member works hard and brings their full selves to their work every day.

Here are some of the highlights of this year, organized according to the goals of our strategic plan:

**Goal 1: Promote spiritual exploration, development and practice**

- **First U Liturgical Calendar:** We have further refined our homegrown First U rituals, which are becoming beloved by many in the congregation – the Hunger Communion Fast, the Gifts of the Magi on Christmas Eve, New Year Letters to one’s future self, the Purim Spiel, and the Easter Fire Ritual. We have also continued our longstanding traditions of the Water Ceremony, the Flower Ceremony, the Passover Seder, Good Friday, and special music services on Christmas Eve and Palm Sunday.
- **Sermon Series: Technology & Religion:** My sermon series this year explored the theological dimension of the technologies we use today, from virtual reality to cellphone use, to GPS to artificial intelligence. This theme formed the basis of a new Covenant Group and this year’s Reflections with Rev. Ana.
- **Reflections with Rev. Ana:** This ongoing monthly potluck for young adults. We discussed one aspect of technology each month, along with a check-in and social time.
- **Covenant Groups:** This year we started up Covenant Groups again (also called “Small Group Ministry”), after a several year hiatus. They required an extended commitment from participants, which we (the staff) offered as a spiritual growth practice in itself.
  - “Living a Spiritual Life Through the Ten Commandments:” Based on the new Study Guide to my book, *No Other Gods*, this covenant group experimented with practices grounded in the spiritual dimensions of the Ten Commandments. I led one group and Rachel Michael and Joy Gabriel led a second group.
  - “Technology & Religion:” Karen Madrone led this group, focused on the sermon series theme.
  - “Pushing the Envelope:” Meagan Henry led this short-term group based on intention-setting for the New Year.
- **Silent Meditation:** Members have expressed a desire for more extended meditation and prayer during the service. So we are experimenting with lengthening our period of silence and offering Zen meditation as a new worship modality this year. Peggy Schubert, a Dharma Holder, and a meditation teacher in the Zen Buddhist tradition, has led us in meditation a couple times.
- **Massage Ministry:** Emphasizing our commitment to honor our bodies, Dawn Elane Reed announced the beginning of a “massage ministry,” in which she offers massages to the First U community on a sliding scale with all proceeds going to the congregation. Thank you, Dawn Elane!
- **Theists at First U (April 30):** I met with a group of theistically-oriented congregants who have expressed a desire to connect more with others and with me around scripture study and the movement of God in their lives. We are planning a regular group meeting for next year.

**Goal 2: Equip people with the skill and confidence to become change makers**

- **Confronting Systemic Racism:** We continued our practice of offering a summer reading list of books about race and racism, followed by discussions about them led by staff. This year we read *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo, *When They Call You a Terrorist* by Patrisse Kahn-Cullors and Asha Bandele, and *The Education of Kevin Powell* by Kevin Powell (service and discussion led by the author). Most significantly, Meagan Henry organized two sessions of Beloved Conversations for the board and other members. It was a powerful experience for all involved, looking at systemic racism at First U and in the wider community.
- **Immigrant Solidarity Team:** We have hosted and supported several refugees and asylum seekers through the work of a large group of congregational volunteers (see separate report).
- **Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Support and Inclusion:**
  - Trans Identity Support Gathering (Oct. 24): Conceived and led by our Intern Minister, Karen Madrone.
  - Transgender Day of Remembrance (Nov. 20): I offered a prayer as part of this service at All Souls, NYC.
  - Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Identity Group meeting: Garnett and I held a meeting for trans and GNC congregants who gave us excellent feedback on how to be more welcoming, including a practice we have already integrated – when Lay Worship Leaders or staff introduce ourselves during worship, we now indicate our pronouns.
- **Lay Worship Leader Program:** This is a leadership training program designed to support members moving into leadership at First U and in the wider world. They receive training in worship theology, public speaking, and sermon-writing. We had a wonderful group this year: Parrish Turner, Julie Lam, Adrian Gonzalez, Amit Mehta, Declan Gunn, and Karen Madrone.
- **Brooklyn Heights Interfaith Clergy Association:** I continued as co-chair of this group. Among other projects, I helped lead our annual commemoration of the 9/11 attacks on the Promenade with a water ritual similar to our water communion. This event is open to the entire Brooklyn multi-faith community.

**Goal 3: Cultivate a caring, welcoming community that models a just and loving world**

- **Accessibility Project** (see Garnett Losak’s and Christopher Johnson’s reports)
- **Community Sabbath Meals:** On the second Sunday of each month, groups hosted lunches for the entire community after the service to enjoy an extended Sabbath time together. The meals were vegetarian with a vegan option and they served as a fundraiser for the groups hosting (see Garnett’s report).
- **Daytime Discussion Group:** This is a discussion circle for retired and/or non-traditional schedule people. We discuss a different topic each month, ideally one with both personal and universal application.

- **Caring Ministry in the Chapel of All Faiths:** This is a program of the Caring Ministry Team in which a specially trained member of the team is available after services in the Chapel of All Faiths to offer pastoral care and make appropriate referrals for people in distress.
- **Preaching on Community:** I periodically preach sermons designed to cultivate community as a value in the congregation. For example, “The Portable Gift Economy” (Sept 23): This service lifted up the communitarian world of a tiny island in Maine as a model for how true, gift-based community can be infectious and help transform the loneliness and cynicism of the wider world.
- **A Christmas Carol** (Dec. 23): Our first production of this Dickens spiritual/moral holiday classic was a joyful community event, with a cast and crew of 16 members of the congregation who worked hard to put it together, led by Julie Lam and Dave Garvoille.
- **Farewell Blessings:** I offered words of gratitude, a blessing, and a prayer shawl on behalf of the congregation to members moving away.
  - Dale Addington (Feb 10)
  - Danny and Chris DiGiacomo-Singh (March 31)

#### **Goal 4: Become an environmentally responsible congregation**

- **Green Team:** With leadership from Karen Madrone, we have assembled a team to move us toward certification as a UU “Green Sanctuary.” This is a way to structure our work toward greater ecological sustainability and public engagement.
- **Composting** – The Green Team working with the city composting system, is offering composting on Sunday mornings to congregants with the eventual goal of becoming a neighborhood compost drop-off site. Thank you to Mary Most for leadership on this.
- **Climate Action at First U:**
  - **Kickoff** (Jan 6): For members wanting to confront our climate crisis through direct political activism, we held an informational meeting, led by Jeff Levy-Lyons. Around 25 people participated and we formed a google group to be able to coordinate our actions and some ideas began brewing.
  - **Rev. Ana’s Actions for the Next Seven Generations:** This year I’ve continued to research and publish a weekly action for people to take, usually related to New York City or State environmental initiatives.
  - **Rallies and Marches:** First U members joined me for public actions this year, including Rise for Climate, Jobs, and Justice (Sept. 6). I helped organize the faith contingent of this march. Several First U members participated and we led the faith contingent with a banner, “Praying with Our Feet.” The week before, we co-hosted a sign-making potluck gathering with All Souls in Manhattan. One of our members has gotten arrested engaging in civil disobedience at climate actions.
  - **Space Grants:** This year we have provided pro bono or low-cost space for Regenerative Culture and youth climate organization meetings.

- **Diorama Collective** – a group of First U artists and activists is working to create a life-scale diorama depicting the extinct homo sapiens family I described in my sermon, “The Second Best Time to Plant a Tree.”
- **Preaching:** I preached on environmental themes several times this year, with a goal of inspiring significant religiously-grounded changes in our personal practices and public activism. For example, “The Second Best Time to Plant a Tree” (Dec. 2) challenged us to evolve from *homo sapiens* (smart human, whose smarts and aggression are causing environmental collapse and injustice) into “*homo amandi*” (loving human who builds life-sustaining communities).

### **Goal 5: Develop and responsibly manage congregational resources**

- **Testimonials:** Based on the success of last year’s testimonials (success in terms of people’s enthusiasm for them, community-building value, and possibly a role in raising pledges) we continued them for a second year. I invited people to offer the testimonials and Parrish Turner continued serving as our editor for a second year.
- **Stewardship:** John Wimberly joined us on Feb. 3, the kickoff of our stewardship campaign, for a forum on stewardship with the congregation and a separate conversation with the board. He recommended several changes to support our growth which we are trying to implement. (See Garnett’s report for stewardship numbers.)
- **Giving Tuesday-** We encouraged select members who had not yet paid their pledge to contribute through Facebook’s matching grant program on Nov. 27. We gained an extra \$5,000 from this.
- **Re-consecration Service** (May 5): In honor of the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the building, we oriented a service around the concept of sacred space and I preached on the value of intentionality in building and maintaining sacred spaces. This was intended to lay the conceptual groundwork for our restricted capital fund campaign next year.
- **Sexual harassment policy:** The policy required by NY state has been distributed to the staff and posted in the office.
- **Seminarian search:** I have interviewed several candidates for an intern or field ed position with us for the 2019-2020 program year and have not yet found a good fit. I am still hoping to find someone, possibly a community minister who could be with us long term.
- **Special Forces Worship Team:** I assembled a worship team of 10 people specifically to help with producing our special services (Hunger Communion, Christmas Eve, etc.). This has proven to be a helpful system, although not full proof, in getting the extra support these services require.
- **VISION Program:** I have been accepted to a two-year professional development program at Union Theological Seminary for mid-career clergy. The program is fully funded, with no cost to First U or to me. It entails monthly meetings at Union, three retreats, and includes a \$5000 grant for a ministry project in the second year.

## Life Cycle Ceremonies

- Wedding of KatyAnna Johnson and Upayan Mitra (Sept. 7): I officiated at their wedding in Ft. Greene park.
- Baby blessing for Lucas Robinson, son of Clare and Matt Robinson-Henrie (Oct. 7)
- Baby blessing for Micah Douglas Murray, son of Katie Falzetta-Murray and Jason Murray and grandson of Garnett Losak (Oct. 21)
- Baby blessing for Emeline Lenz, child of Kirsten deFur and Mark Lenz (Nov. 11)
- Grave marker dedication for Orlanda Brugnola, Greenwood Cemetery (Nov. 15)
- Wedding, part 1, for Elizabeth and James Ellis, First U (Dec. 5)
- Baby Blessing for Roseanna Schaffer, child of Kelly and Noah Schaffer (Feb. 3, 2019)
- Baby Blessing for Oliver Podd, son of Adam Podd and Giuliana Sarullo (Jan. 13)
- Memorial for Roan Louch, dear family friend of Catalina Bertani and her son Luca (Jan. 13)
- Memorial service for longtime member Ann Ware (Jan. 20)
- Memorial service for John Mancini, father of Hannah Mancini (Karen Madrone officiated) (Jan. 20)

## Notable Speaking/ Preaching Engagements:

- Integral Politics with Marianne Williamson (Oct. 3): I was the guest in dialogue with Marianne Williamson as part of her series on the intersection between spirituality and politics at Deepak Chopra's "Homebase" at ABC Home.
- Kevin Jagoe Ordination/Installation (Oct. 21): I preached the ordination sermon at this joyful service at BuxMont UU Fellowship in PA for Kevin, our former Intern Minister.
- Hofstra University Day of Dialogue (Oct 24): I served on a panel titled, "The Ethics of Immigration: Is U.S. Policy Immoral?" I brought a religious/ spiritual perspective; other panelists included professors, non-profit leaders, and a DACA recipient at Hofstra.
- Kelly Murphy Mason Installation (April 7): I preached the installation sermon at the UU congregation at Wellesley Hills, MA, for Kelly, our former community minister.

## Publications:

- The paperback edition of my book *No Other Gods: The Politics of the Ten Commandments* was published by Hachette/ Center Street in March, 2019.
- An article adaptation of my sermon, "The Second Best Time to Plant a Tree," was published in *YES! Magazine* (Jan, 2019) and shared online over 1200 times. It conveys the urgency of our climate crisis and offers language for the spiritual evolution we need. <https://www.yesmagazine.org/planet/the-second-best-time-to-plant-a-tree-is-now-20190104>
- My review of Peter Gabel's new book, *The Desire for Mutual Recognition*, is published Truthout (March, 2019). It explores our longing to see the sacred in one another and be truly seen. (<https://truthout.org/articles/when-we-see-the-sacred-in-each-other-social-movements-flourish/>)



- My article, “God as Virtuality,” based on my sermon by the same name, is published in the Winter, 2019 issue of *Tikkun* magazine. The theme of this issue is Beyond Patriarchy, and my article analyses our obsession with the virtual world in terms of gender and a denial of the body.

## Director of Education & Family Ministry

Meagan Henry

This has been another year of growth, energy, and excitement at First U! The number of children and youth in our Religious Education (RE) program continues to grow, and more importantly, our families are deepening their relationship to our congregation through fellowship and service. We held several children and youth programs: two sessions of Elementary Our Whole Lives for grades K-1 and 4-5, Children’s Chapel once a month for children in Kindergarten through fifth grade, and regular RE Sunday morning classes. Our Adult Faith Development offerings this year were led by a combination of staff and lay leaders. I worked with facilitators to offer four Covenant Groups for adults and I’m looking forward to offering more sessions next year.

Thanks to the continued and generous financial support from the Women’s Leadership Alliance, I was able to hire Sara Gush, a Field Education Student from Union Theological Seminary, to serve as the Religious Education Assistant from August until mid-May. Ms. Gush’s duties have included coordinating the Coming of Age program and providing administrative support for the Our Who Lives program. This administrative assistance freed me up to do more pastoral care and one-to-one check-ins and relationship building with RE families, as well giving me the space to be centered and present on Sunday mornings.

For the remainder of my report, I have organized items according to the goals as set forth by the Forward First Strategic Plan. The work I do is made possible because of the constant support I receive from the Chair of the Religious Education Council, Becky Huffman. See her report for even more information about our program this year. Volunteer members of the REC this year are MariaSara Alcott, Michele Ascione, Becky Huffman, Andrea Parkinson, Laura Rizzo, Denise Wharton, and June Wohlhorn. Many thanks to our REC Board liaison, Dawn Elane Reed and my staff liaison to the Board, Sam McKelvie!

### **Promote spiritual exploration, development, and practice**

- Monthly Children’s Chapels on second Sundays explored the theme of Spirituality and Technology, in conjunction with Rev. Ana’s sermon series.
- Children’s Chorus, led by Bert Eisenstadt, met regularly to learn songs for the Winter Holiday Service and they sang two songs for the Anthem in Worship on March 31st.
- Introduced a world religions curriculum to the 6th and 7th graders this year called Building Bridges.
- Offered a full program year Coming of Age program for seven 8th & 9th grade students. Seven congregants worked all year with these youth, serving as their teachers and

mentors. The group had regular classes on Sunday mornings and participated in two weekend retreats, a full day meditation retreat, and worked together to provide a Sabbath lunch for the congregation.

- Offered several Adult Religious Education classes and groups throughout the year, including: Our Whole Lives, Unitarian Universalist History, Beloved Conversations, and four Covenant Groups.

### **Equip people with the skills and confidence to become change makers**

- Preached sermon, The Reluctant Prophet, about finding our voice as UU People of Prophecy.
- Offered two Our Whole Lives (OWL) sessions for elementary age students in grades K-1 and 4th-5th and six sessions of Adult OWL.
- The High School Youth Group went on a Service Learning Immersion Journey to West Virginia last summer to explore the significant environmental, social, and economic injustices due to the state's long history of coal mining. The Youth Group chose to return to WVA this summer in order to deepen their relationship to the community through our partnership with Big Creek People in Action, a local, grassroots organization that provides education and resources to the community. As we all grapple with the current political moment, our Youth have this opportunity to cross boundaries within our own country, to humbly listen, and try to make sense of the various struggles people are facing. David Garvoille and I will accompany the Youth on this journey which takes place June 26 - July 3.

### **Cultivate a caring, welcoming community that models a just and loving world**

- Preached sermon on the theme of holy imperfection, a pastoral message about loving ourselves and one another, flaws and all.
- Our children's Winter Holiday service this year was a retelling of the nativity story through the lens of immigration justice with an emphasis on welcoming the stranger.
- Collected toys and clothes during the Winter Holidays for families in the Good Shepherd program.
- I offered the blessing and reflection on the importance of reforestation in Haiti at the Haitian dinner with our partner organization, Fédération des Associations pour le Développement du Sud-Est (FEDADSE).

### **Become an environmentally responsible congregation**

- The RE program continues to use existing materials most of the time, rather than purchasing new items.
- Using reusable cups whenever possible for Religious Education snack.
- Continued use of an online Religious Education registration form instead of using paper forms.
- The Re Council met online using the Zoom video conference tool, enabling us to meet from home rather than traveling to the church building for monthly meetings.

- Ongoing practice of teaching the children to use our recycling bins correctly.

### **Develop and responsibly manage congregational resources**

- Tracking the Religious Education Program expenses.
- The RE program pays for much of its own supplies and programming through fundraisers and soliciting donations from families. We also ask parents to pay a registration fee per child to help cover the costs of supplies and snack.
- Sent a stewardship letter tailored to parents with children in RE.
- Fundraising for the High School Youth Service Learning Immersion Journey.
- Offered two RE sponsorships at the annual auction which raised money for the Coming of Age celebration and the High School Youth Service Learning Immersion Journey.

## **Director of Music**

Adam Podd

This has been my fifth program year as Music Director at First Unitarian. I'm proud of another great year of quality music-making and community in First U's music department.

Our dedicated choir has sung for every single Sunday morning worship service since Ingathering. We've been fortunate to have the same 4 section-leaders in place for a few years now, and it really feels like family. (An extremely talented family:)

Outside our normal rigor of weekly choir rehearsals, we upheld the long-standing traditions of special music services on Christmas Eve and Palm Sunday, featuring our choir, section-leaders, and various configurations of instrumentalists, playing and singing staple works from the repertoire, as well as new arrangements (written by me especially for the occasions.)

Our monthly jazz services have continued for a fourth consecutive year. Feedback from the congregation continues to show that people love these services, and find them joyful, spiritual, and moving. These monthly services are paid for entirely by contributions to the Julie McKinney fund. This year, contributions are down by about a thousand dollars. Total contributions for 2017-18 were \$11,700. This program year we brought in just over \$10,600. Our hope when launching the monthly Jazz Sunday program was that it would inspire giving to the McKinney fund at a new higher level making it possible to sustain Jazz Sundays for years to come. If this is an element of worship at First Unitarian you value, and you have the means to do so, please help by contributing to the Julie McKinney Fund.

Our community of singers also took part in a few extra, and truly special, opportunities this year.

Over 20 singers represented First Unitarian in the Mile Long Opera - a citywide public engagement project, which brought together more than 1,000 singers from across New York for an immersive, musical experience on the High Line in Manhattan. This was a months-long process of

rehearsals, collaboration, and experimentation, eventually culminating in six consecutive performances, each over 3 hours in length. (more at [milelongopera.com](http://milelongopera.com))

Members of our choir joined with members from Grace Chorale (a neighboring community chorus) to sing in a concert backing up Broadway sensation Heather Headley in a performance at the newly renovated King's Theatre in Brooklyn.

Clinician and composer, Jason Shelton, (composer of *The Fire of Commitment*, *Standing on the Side of Love*, and others) joined us for a weekend choir workshop focusing on what "Singing Your Faith" means for UU's. After joining us for Sunday morning worship, Jason had high praise for our music program, (calling it "the best in the country").

Later this month, members of our choir will participate in a choral event at Carnegie Hall with *Distinguished Concerts International New York*. We will join other choirs from around the world to sing Alexander L'estrangé's *Zimbe*, a major work consisting of a collection of African folk music, arranged for full choir and 5-piece rhythm section. I will be in the rhythm section making my piano-playing debut at Carnegie Hall.

The music dept. also hosted two fundraisers to meet its required contribution to the general operating budget. In the fall we "Jazz and Pie" featuring Wendy Russell and her group *Those Girls*. In the Spring, our cabaret went in a new direction as an all-Beatles sing-along concert - "Fixing A Hole" - featuring members and friends of the community, backed by a house band of professional musicians. Collectively, the two events raised netted \$3,500. Special thanks to Laurel Lesio-Eisenstadt and Lee Pardee for co-chairing Jazz and Pie, and to Dawn Elane Reed for spearheading the Beatles singalong. These three volunteers each put dozens of hours into these events, (and managed many other volunteers who contributed to make them a success.)

And finally, this has been an especially memorable year for all the music-makers at First U, because of our first-ever Music Ministry Intern, Allie Lewis. Allie, who was a piano student of mine for over 10 years, has been with us since Ingathering, and helping in a myriad of ways. She has been attending staff meetings and worship services, managing projects (like Mile-Long-Opera) leading the choir, arranging music, singing solos, and acting as music librarian, among other tasks and duties I probably don't even realize she has picked up and taken off my plate since arriving. We're grateful for her presence and hard work this year, and she will be missed as she goes off to start her undergraduate studies in music. The rest of us take great comfort in knowing this is certainly not the last we'll hear of (or from) Allie Lewis. Thank you!!

## Director of Congregational Life

Garnett Losak

Over the past two years my role in the congregation has changed, some would say evolved, so that I have taken on responsibilities that would normally assigned to a church administrator or executive director. Beyond my dual role as membership and communications director, I also

handle all building rentals, management of office and volunteer staff, the church calendar, and I oversee most general administrative tasks.

**Goal #2 Cultivate a caring, welcoming community that models a just and loving world.**

### Membership

- I continue to lead monthly newcomer orientations. I generally expect between 5 and 10 people to attend to each month, but it is not unheard of to have as many as 20. Rev. Ana or our Intern Minister, Karen Madrone, will occasionally co-lead, but most months, I am on my own. These classes are not only useful as introductions to Unitarian Universalism, but provide me a valuable perspective on who our newcomers are, their needs and expectations, and how our congregation can support their spiritual journeys.
- With the membership committee, I co-taught three 6-hour Pathways sessions, one on two weekday evenings, one full day on Saturday, and one on two Sunday afternoons. 20 new members or perspective new members attended the classes.
- 27 people signed the membership book during the program year. 10 of those have taken the Pathways to Membership class. This is the first time in recent memory that we have over 300 members. That said, we are hearing the sad news that several members will be leaving Brooklyn. Additionally, receipt of pledge forms ahead of the annual meeting is lower than usual. It is quite possible that our membership number will drop below 300 by the end of the fiscal year.
- The membership committee overhauled our newly named fellowship hour, creating a more private space for newcomers, opening the room to be more welcoming, adding signage, recruiting Fellowship Ambassadors, and more. (Read about this program in the Membership Committee report.)
- We will recognize 3 longtime members at this year's Service of the Living Tradition on May 19th: Jeanie Wing (50 years), Nancy Wolf (50 years) and Barbara Kennedy (40 years). Additionally we will recognize several people who have reached the 10-year milestone: Patrick Gunn, Laura Kriska, David & Nancy Provost, Leif Meneke, Ted Hechtman, and Langdon Holloway.
- 152 visitors completed welcome cards so far this year. We continue to provide all newcomers with a subscription to the weekly e-news, a name tag, and an invitation to attend a newcomer's orientation. Additionally, where appropriate, newcomers are connected to the leaders or our various programs, affinity groups, or staff and clergy.
- This year, with the help of Trustee, Sam McKelvie, I initiated a comprehensive congregational survey with the goal of creating a more robust and complete database. The survey, which was sent to all members, asked for various demographic details and a history of service to the congregation, specifically administrative and governance committees. The survey could be completed on-line or on paper. We received 25 completed surveys. The information was input to our database by office volunteers. There is no deadline for receipt of the surveys. All members and friends of the congregation are welcome to complete a survey on-line at <https://tinyurl.com/y6f5agtx>.

- We initiated a birthday card ministry this year. Cards are signed by members of the staff and are mailed at the beginning of each month. (Note: If you've been a member of First U for more than 7 years and you did not complete your survey, your birthday may not be in our database!)
- Chris Johnson, Abby Grosslein, and I hosted a community potluck Thanksgiving feast in the Undercroft. Approximately 30 people attended. The (organic, free-range) turkeys were prepared in the church kitchen and donated through the generosity of the minister's discretionary fund. This was the first time in many years that the church sponsored a holiday meal. I hope to make it an annual event.
- I generally manage our monthly Sabbath Sunday meals. These community event attract 100 or more people and help to raise additional program funds for the sponsoring committee. This year the following committees sponsored lunches: Religion Education, Membership, Queer Caucus, Weaving the Fabric of Diversity, Immigrant Solidarity and Beloved Conversations. Thank you to all of the cooks and bottle washers!

**Goal #5 Develop and responsibly manage the resources needed to support the congregation's work and growth.**

**Communications**

- I continue to expand our reach through various social media. This year we have been more active on Google Business and Instagram as well as Patch, Facebook (1,554 followers) and Twitter. Our weekly e-news is now served to 1405 subscribers and we continue to print announcements in our weekly order of service. The Queer Caucus, Young Adults, Religious Education Families, Covenant of UU Pagans (CUUPs), and Social Justice groups support their own Facebook groups. I help to monitor these groups for inappropriate material as required by our communications policy.
- The Google Business page has been especially impactful. This year, we received 37 mostly 5-star reviews. Our current Google Business review average is 4.6. I respond to every review and invite the reviewer to contact me if they wish to share additional information (so far no one has taken me up on it).
- The Sunday worship live feed is watched regularly by our disabled and distant members as well as those who are unable to attend services for any number of reasons. Several hundred more watch all or part of the feed in the weeks following the service. Over time, we will want to expand this ministry through significantly upgraded feed systems and dedicated staff or volunteers.
- Our website seriously requires upgrading and re-designing. It is running on an outdated PowerPress format and I anticipate that at some point in the near future the software will no longer be supported. That said, I work hard to insure that the information is accurate and refreshed regularly. It is incumbent upon the groups/committees to check their pages regularly to insure that the information is up to date.

**Rental Income**

- I am proud to report that through the hard work of the office and building staff, we have over \$63,000 in building revenue so far this year with the likelihood of another \$10,000 before the end of the fiscal year. Assuming my estimate is correct, we will have increased non-apartment or daycare building revenue by \$7,000. This is an increase of 10% over the previous year (excluding the windfall we received from St. Ann’s School during their renovation).
- We have become a community center. This year the following community, and arts organizations have used our building.

Community, Social Justice, and Organizing Groups

New York Peace Institute	Extinction Rebellion
Sadhana, Coalition of Progressive Hindus	Sierra Club
New Kings Democrats	Common Cause
Democratic Socialists of America, Brooklyn	

Music and Arts

Le Poisson Rouge	Bella Voce Women’s Choir
Blank Forms	Voices in the Heights, Folk Music Series
Brooklyn Chamber Music Society	Blue Mountain Art Gallery
Repast Baroque Ensemble	Books are Magic
Issue Project Room	Noel Pointer Foundation
Rock Voices Community Choir	Child’s Play
American Guild of Organists	
Brooklyn Youth Chorus	

Other

Weekly Yoga class	Weddings, Baby Blessings, Memorials
12-step and support groups	Multiple local Coop Annual Meeting

- Space use fees for each organization are negotiated. Organizations that have a social justice focus are given space at reduced rates and occasionally pro bono. Pro bono groups are encouraged to “pass the hat”. We require a certificate of insurance for most rentals.

- Both of our apartments are rented. The tenant in the duplex apartment has renewed for two years with a \$200 rental increase and we have a new tenant in the simplex with a \$100 increase.
- We received a \$10,000 grant for our accessibility project from the Landmarks Commission via the Sacred Sites program. Grant writing requires hours of work. Thank you to the grant writing committee, Cara Haft, Matt and Clare Robinson-Henrie, Elizabeth Ellis, Rosemarie Stupel, and David Andrew. Tom Check provided us with invaluable leads that helped us to secure the grant.

### **Non-Member Ceremonies Income**

We will have hosted 5 weddings, 5 memorials (Sadly, there were three memorials for young adults in a short period over the winter) and 3 baby blessings by the end of this year. We have raised \$10,020 in ceremonies income. We anticipate another \$2-4,000 by the end of the fiscal year. Our ceremonies coordinator, Nicole Tuszczynski, receives a stipend for each ceremony. So far, she has been paid \$2,950. This is the first year since instituting this system that we have overtaken our budget. We have been helped by word of mouth and greater awareness of our glorious Sanctuary on social media.

### **Church Calendar**

Should anyone question how busy our congregation is, you can tell them that so far this year, there have been 151 requests for space from our committees and groups. I estimate that there have been at least another 20% that for various reasons have not come through the on-line system and several more groups are meeting regularly via our Zoom account.

So far, we have been able to accommodate most groups, most of the time, but the pressure on our building and on the building staff is significant. As we continue to grow, the wear and tear on our building and our staff will become more evident. In the short term, it is extremely important that our staff, groups, and committees continue to be flexible and remember the mandate of our right relations covenant, to “foster an environment of compassion, generosity, fellowship, and creativity. Smile and be welcoming. Share in the responsibilities of congregational life. Actively support the congregation's activities, and pledge financial support”.

### **Committee Support**

While I have specific responsibilities to several committees, virtually all committee/group work touches me in some way. This may be as basic as scheduling meeting space and helping to communicate events or it may be more significant: attending meetings and assistance with program creation. This year, I have worked especially closely with the Membership Committee, the Leadership Development Committee, the Stewardship Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Board of Trustees. Please see the reports of each of these committees for more information.



## **Denominational Representation**

For the third year in a row, I was able to attend the Unitarian Universalist Association of Membership Professionals (UUAMP) conference. This annual gathering is both rewarding and refreshing and is a source of great inspiration for membership programming. I serve the association as a member of the audit committee and as the UUAMP representative to the UUA pamphlet committee. I thank the congregation for providing me with an expense account that allows me to attend the conference with minimal out of pocket expense.

Through the UUAMP I will be organizing a workshop for local membership professionals and volunteers. This project is in its earliest stages, but I am excited to be using my expertise to encourage more congregations to consider paid membership staff.

## **Staff Management**

I am incredibly blessed to be working with our office manager/bookkeeper, Wendy Russell, and our fantastic building staff, Chris Johnson, Director of Facilities, Ian Hurt, custodian, and Bobby Blackman, weekend custodian. Without the support of these dedicated professionals, it would be impossible for me to manage the many aspects of my job. Behind the scenes, this hard-working staff has made significant improvements in financial control, building maintenance, and renter services. I am honored to be working with each of them.

Our new phones prompted the need for a volunteer training session. Wendy went over the basics of the new handsets, Rev. Ana touched on the need for confidentiality in the office, and I covered basic office etiquette. Our office volunteers are extremely important members of the staff team. They make name tags, do data entry, replace the votive candles in the Sanctuary, make copies, collate the orders for service, answer the phones and the door and more. Their service is invaluable and I thank them for their service.

We will be thanking our volunteers with a staff lunch on the patio in late May.

Office Volunteers: Marty Bernstein, Pat Bernstein, Sandy Foutz, Rita Pearl, Jackie Peters, Nancy Welles

I am completing my 6<sup>th</sup> year on staff at First Unitarian and my second as a fulltime employee. Every day brings a new challenge (some challenges are more challenging than others), a new joy, and a new opportunity to serve.

I am eternally grateful to the best staff I have ever worked with. Every person gives their best every day. We support each other, respect each other's gifts, and truly live our covenantal faith. I thank the congregation for continuing to support my position.

## Director of Facilities

Christopher Johnson

### Overview:

FY2018-19 saw a variety of improvements to many parts of the infrastructure as well as visible areas of the building. In addition to working as the congregation's contractor, much of my time was spent with managing the accessibilities project as well as numerous other administrative duties. Reports were written with regards to future capital improvements. I attended monthly board and facilities committee meetings. I maintained a good working relationship maintained with all of FUUB's tenants including attending several meetings with Imagine daycare with regard to security and repairs. Timely repairs were made to the 48 Monroe Place building apartments at tenant requests. An ongoing proactive approach to all safety/security issues was maintained and systems and equipment properly inspected and up to code.

The undercroft bead board wood work was finished. The nonfunctioning ductwork was dismantled and new bead board installed in its place. The undercroft floor was stripped and finished with polyurethane.

The woman's undercroft bathroom was completely remodeled and plumbed as needed. New lighting was installed. As part of my commitment to becoming a "green sanctuary", LED lighting was installed as two of the three fixtures and three new 1.28 gallon low flow toilets were installed. Thank you to the Woman's Alliance for a \$5,000 donation towards its completion.

Undercroft A/C - heater was bought but still needs to be properly installed and wired.

An anticipated large part of the facilities budget went for repair of the 50 Monroe Place steam boiler as well as other plumbing issues. This is an expected annual budgeted expense.

As part of my commitment to creating a safe environment for all, the Pierrepont Street rusted gas feed was replaced.

Parts of the patio door frame have been replaced, in addition to newly built steps due to rot. Whenever possible, I try to *repair* instead of *replace*. This is a cost saving method which allows many more years of functional service for a particular part of the building, without over taxing the annual facilities budget. I can also better estimate the time frame, when that particular capital improvement will be necessary. The patio door was installed in 1984. By doing some simple repair work, I have increase its life by several years.

I completed a number of plumbing repairs to the simplex apartment, to make it rentable to a new tenant.

The wheel chair accessibilities project at the time of this writing is expected to start construction in a week or so. There have been a number of unavoidable delays, but FUUB has a signed contract for construction and the Department of Buildings permit has been obtained.

A “State of the Buildings” document was written by me and submitted to the Board of Trustees, the Finance Committee, and the Facilities Committee, with a broad estimate for anticipated future repairs of about a Million dollars.

### **Budget/Cost Savings:**

This year’s budget will be on track due to the additional 5k from the woman’s alliance and the end of the year donations. The congregation has saved thousands in outside vender payments from my work as the congregational contractor.

## **GOVERNANCE & BY-LAW MANDATED COMMITTEES**

### **Board of Trustees**

It has been a busy and momentous year at First U. The Board of Trustees started our serious work at our annual retreat in September, where we considered how the Board could best promote our congregational mission and set goals and priorities for the year ahead. As that year now comes to a close, we are pleased to report some of the significant accomplishments and happenings we have seen during this term. In keeping with the practice of prior Board Presidents, we are framing our report according to the goals of our Forward First mission plan.

### **Promote collective and individual spiritual exploration, growth, and practice**

- We have been fortunate this year to have had three interns working closely alongside our dedicated clergy, helping them to minister to the needs of our congregation while helping members grow closer in community.
  - Our Ministerial Intern Karen Madrone has been a valuable member of the Caring Ministry Team, helped launch our Green Sanctuary efforts, and played a key role in helping our members to connect with each other through the Love Your Neighbor dinners program. She will be genuinely missed here at First Unitarian as she departs at the end of our program year. We thank her for all that she has contributed to our community and we wish her well in the next stage of her career.

- Our Women's Leadership Alliance Seminary Intern Sara Gush has brought her energy and organizational skills to help support Religious Education and Family Ministries at First U. We are grateful that she will remain with our congregation for another year.
- Our worship services have also benefitted from the involvement of our Music Intern, Allie Lewis, who has assisted Music Director Adam Podd and performed and led the choir. We will miss her talents when she moves on at the end of the church year.

**Cultivate a caring, welcoming community that models a just and loving world.**

- We continue to defy the trends of most other religious congregations by witnessing continued growth in our membership. This past year, our congregation's membership surpassed 300 for the first time in our history. We are attracting people of all ages and backgrounds through our beautiful worship services and music, our loving and engaging lifespan religious education, our community events and opportunities for involvement in social justice work, and our caring clergy, staff and members. The Board gratefully acknowledges the dynamic spiritual leadership of Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons, Meagan Henry, Director of Education and Family Ministry, and Adam Podd, as well as our Director of Congregational Life Garnett Losak, our Office Manager Wendy Russell, and our Director of Facilities Christopher Johnson and Custodian Ian Hurt.
- The Board continues its work examining issues of systemic racism and white supremacy both in our wider community and here at First U. We moved closer to having full Board participation in the Beloved Conversations curriculum, creating awareness of our own personal, institutional, and societal history with racism and the biases we may bring to the Board's decision-making processes. This training and ongoing practice helps us to be mindful of the impact our decisions may have on people of color and other underrepresented members in our community. We are committed to continuing this dialogue and encouraging further participation by congregational leaders in the years ahead.
- Our journey to make our buildings more accessible to all has been a long one, but within the past year we have finally begun to see real progress toward realizing that vision. The plan to install a lift to the front entrance of the church has been finalized, all necessary approvals obtained, parts have been manufactured and contracts are in place. In the fall we took the first concrete steps of relocating a few of the treasured and beautiful plants from our garden, the legacy Magnolia tree and the rhododendron plants, to clear space for the lift (and it is our hope that by the time you are reading this, installation of the lift has begun and will be completed by the end of 2019).

### **Equip people with the skills and confidence to become change makers for justice in their communities**

- In November 2017, our congregation voted overwhelmingly to stand in solidarity with immigrant families by adopting a sanctuary program that would make our facilities available to those at risk of deportation. In 2018, in response to the federal government's horrific policy of separating immigrant children from their families, the Immigrant Solidarity Committee requested an adjustment to the sanctuary program. The Board made a careful review and authorized expanding the Committee's activities to better meet the changing needs of the immigrant community. The Board is proud to support the Resolution presented to the congregation at its Annual Meeting this May to authorize the Immigrant Solidarity Committee to continue its important work. We are extremely grateful for their tireless dedication and the inspiring leadership that has allowed us an opportunity to see our values turned into action.
- In January of this year, the Board authorized the Leadership Development Committee to engage in fundraising activities to help send delegates from our congregation to the UUA General Assembly in June 2019. At the congregational meeting in February of this year, five members were elected to serve as delegates and will have the opportunity to attend the General Assembly in Spokane WA, where they will be able to learn, connect and make policy for the UUA through the democratic process.

### **Become an environmentally responsible congregation that serves as a powerful voice for sustainable living.**

- In February of this year, the Board authorized the creation of a Green Team to facilitate a path toward accreditation as a UUA Green Sanctuary, and to explore taking formal steps to inspire our congregants and community to better understand and act on environmental and climate justice issues. The Board is proud to support the Resolution presented to the congregation at its Annual Meeting this May to advance those goals. We are thankful for the Green Team's energy and enthusiasm helping this congregation better live its mission and the UU principles.

### **Develop and responsibly manage the resources needed to support the congregation's work and growth.**

- The year 2019 marks the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our historic church building. The Board helped organize the recognition of the occasion with a celebratory dinner and a re-consecration service over the weekend of May 4, and ongoing community events to honor the beauty and legacy of our building throughout the year. We are very appreciative of the hard work the Anniversary Celebration Committee put into planning and executing these festivities.

- The Board has taken steps to improve our congregation’s financial and governance systems. In September, the board appointed new members to the Finance Committee, and worked with that committee to explore options for better managing some of our biggest operational expenses, specifically in the areas of staff health insurance and assessing our rental arrangements. That work is ongoing.
- The Board put in place a liaison system to provide more direct channels of communication between the Board and the staff as well as the many active and vital committees working to advance the congregation’s mission. We have seen good results, allowing the Board to receive input and more quickly respond to the needs of our congregation and staff. We continue to explore ways to better implement this system, to clarify our operating procedures, and to improve communication throughout our growing congregation.
- The Board prioritized and spent time this year considering strategies to meet the ongoing financial demands of preserving and maintaining our church buildings. In order to responsibly plan for the needs of our buildings, we worked closely with the Finance and Facilities Committees to assess our building conditions, to prepare a list of anticipated capital projects over the next couple of decades and to forecast the capital expenses and funding needs for such projects. As a result of this analysis, the Board has prepared and is proposing a Resolution for the establishment of a Restricted Capital Fund to be presented to the congregation at its Annual Meeting this May. The goal of this restricted fund is to protect the operating budget and the general endowment from the burden of unplanned building expenses. With its implementation, our congregation should have the funds available to cover both the ongoing predictable building expenses and periodic unexpected expenses typical of large older buildings such as ours. This structure will require that we be strategic in the way we plan upcoming capital projects in the near and long-term.

As your Board Co-Presidents, we have been honored to serve this congregation and look forward to its continued expansion of spirituality, compassion, and activism to make all our lives, and our world, more whole.

Patrick Gunn and Cara Haft, For the Board of Trustees

Trustees:

Term Ending 2019

Patrick Gunn

Cara Haft

Waciuma Wanjohi

Term Ending 2020

Dale Ho

Laurel Lesio-Eisenstadt

Dawn Elane Reed

Term Ending 2021

## Deacons

The By-Laws provide for ten Deacons. The current Deacons are Senior Deacon Alfredo Blanco, Robert Bero, Thomas Check, Elizabeth Davis, Olive Hoogenboom, Edwin Lord, Constance Newsom, Emily Pardee, Bruce Wilde, and Nancy Wolf.

- Deacon Hoogenboom, our church historian, remains in a nursing home. Her book, The First Unitarian Church of Brooklyn, was indispensable in preparing events celebrating the 175th Anniversary of our sanctuary building.
- The Deacons meet every other month to discuss agenda items they contribute as well as non-agenda current issues. Minutes are taken at each meeting.
- Upon nomination by the Deacons, at the 2018 Annual Meeting Robert Bero was elected Deacon to fill the vacancy left by Peter Norling who moved out of state. This continued the tradition initiated by Deacon Hoogenboom that there be an equal number of male and female Deacons.
- The past year has seen the continuation of the Deacons' ushering program. Each Sunday morning a Deacon serves as head usher to lead ushers in a smooth process.
- By family invitation the Deacons stand ready to usher at members' memorial services. In December they ushered at the memorial of long-time member Ann Ware.
- Deacon Wolf, with graphics help from David Garvoille, completed her Sanctuary Guide to be placed in the vestibule of the Sanctuary. The illustrated Guide provides details about the Sanctuary and will assist in self-guided tours.
- The Deacons contributed significantly to the fund Deacon Wolf established to transplant church garden plants to other sites in the garden to make way for a chair lift.
- The Deacons voted to have Deacon Wolf investigate labels to identify photographs of past ministers.
- The Re-Consecration Worship Service celebrating the 175 Anniversary of the consecration of the sanctuary building, saw the Deacons process during the organ prelude. Rev. Levy-Lyons welcomed suggestions and assistance from the Deacons for this special service.

- Individually, the Deacons serve on church committees. These include the ad hoc 175th Anniversary Committee, the Facilities Committee, The Finance Committee, the Committee on Ministry, the Pastoral Care Committee, and the Stewardship Committee. Additionally, Deacons Bero, Davis, Pardee, Wilde, and Wolf sing in the choir.
- As directed by the congregation's By-Laws the Deacons assisted the minister in the conduct of the Good Friday Commemorative Communion Service April 19.

Constance Newsom, Deacon

## Facilities Committee

1) Facilities Committee (FC) members have discussed a range of topics during the 2018-2019 program year which relate to the preservation and maintenance of our historic church buildings. The Facilities Committee is one of three committees mandated by our By-laws. Per our By-laws, the Facilities Committee “shall support and assist the Board and the paid staff in preserving, maintaining, securing and enhancing the buildings and grounds owned by the Society. The Facilities Committee shall propose capital projects and maintenance activities for consideration by the Finance Committee in the annual budget. The Board may authorize the Facilities Committee to oversee or execute projects of capital improvement or facilities maintenance within the amount of the approved budget.”

2) In meeting these duties during the 2018-2019 program year, the Facilities Committee has held regular meetings with members, and with the Director of Facilities, during which minutes were taken. Facilities Committee members have made recommendations and suggestions to the Director of Facilities Chris Johnson about needed repairs, capital improvements, safety concerns and special projects. We made these recommendations through discussion at committee meetings, as well as during ongoing in-person and e-mail conversations. We have also shared the background and some of the “institutional history” of aspects of the upkeep and repair of our historic buildings, including contact information for contractors hired for past building-related projects. We discussed many of the building-related issues that Director of Facilities Chris Johnson has been addressing in his work throughout the church’s physical complex, including work in the Sanctuary, Undercroft, Chapel, the 48 Monroe Place and 50 Monroe Place buildings, as well as the gardens. Those issues include: electrical and plumbing issues; heating and 50 Monroe boiler issues; the gas system; security issues; repair of the fire alarm system and fire prevention measures; and assessment of the Chapel’s brownstone façade. We also discussed the renovation of the Undercroft Women’s restroom, which was made possible following a generous donation from the Women’s Leadership Alliance (W.L.A.). We discussed that water leaks in the wall of the Undercroft’s foundation were discovered,



during this renovation. We also discussed updates about the progress of the construction work for the Accessibility wheelchair lift project.

3) Additionally, members of the Facilities Committee provided input to Director of Facilities Chris Johnson, and to the Facilities Committee's Board Liaison, Cara Haft (co-Board President), during Facilities Committee Meetings held on February 3, 2019 and March 31, 2019, about building-related budget proposals for the proposed 2019-2020 fiscal year budget. Facilities Committee members also discussed and made recommendations about a variety of longer-range proposed building-related capital projects, most of which were later included in an appendix to the proposed "Restricted Capital Fund" policy, which is scheduled. Facilities Committee members also recommended that the leaded-glass windows in the Chapel doors, which lead to the Frances White Room, and the leaded-glass windows in the 50 Monroe door and the doors in the Sanctuary galleries, be restored in the near future, possibly as the 2019 year-end appeal project. Nancy Wolf also represented the newly-formed "Green Team" and reported to the Facilities Committee about the Green Team's plans, and gave an update about environmentally sustainable building-related improvements that are proposed by the "Green Team," including replacement of some of the 50 Monroe Place windows.

4) The Facilities Committee also participated in the Annual "Faith in Action Expo," which held on Sunday, September 16, 2018 in the Undercroft. Liz Davis, Gloria Furman, Connie Newsom and Nancy Wolf staffed the Facilities Committee's table, and spoke to interested congregants about the FC's work. We also displayed Connie Newsom's archival copies of well-known 19<sup>th</sup> century architect Minard Lafever's handwritten plans for our Sanctuary. We also commend Facilities Committee member Nancy Wolf for her leadership in working to raise about \$3,300 in donations, from members and friends of the congregation, to save and move some of the plants in the Monroe Place garden, including a magnolia tree and several rhododendrons, which had been growing in the location that is now planned for the Accessibility project's wheelchair lift. Facilities Committee members also donated to the project. On November 6, 2018, the magnolia tree was moved several feet to a nearby location in the Monroe Place garden, and the rhododendrons were moved to a spot in the Chapel garden, that had been occupied by a yew tree. Nancy worked with a professional arborist, from Urban Arborists, the Board, as well as Director of Facilities Chris Johnson, and Custodian Ian Hurt, to complete the project. The magnolia tree has begun to flower this spring, following its transplantation.

5) The Facilities Committee and the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee, which was formed to commemorate the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the consecration of our Sanctuary building in 1844, co-sponsored a Sanctuary Clean-Up Day on Saturday, April 6, 2019. Volunteers and staff worked to dust the Sanctuary's woodwork, including the high pulpit, pews and hymnal racks, and to remove candle-wax drippings from areas of the Sanctuary, including the windowsills located underneath our Tiffany stained-glass windows. Volunteers and staff also vacuumed the Sanctuary's galleries, and changed the light bulbs in the Sanctuary's

chandelier light fixtures. We enjoyed bagels and coffee in the kitchen, created a sense of community as we worked. We worked together to prepare our Congregation's much-used worship space for the various spring holidays, as well as for a special event, "Breakfast With Tiffanys" which will be held in the Sanctuary on Saturday, May 11, 2019, and which will feature a guided tour of our Tiffany stained-glass windows. Special thanks are owed to Director of Facilities Chris Johnson, and to Custodian Bobby Blackman, for their work during the event, and for their advance work in preparing the Sanctuary for the Clean-Up Day. Volunteers included: Gloria Furman, Karli Kelber, Liz Davis, David Garvoille and Pat Lawrence. Connie Newsom, who was unable to attend the Sanctuary Clean-Up Day, also provided technical and logistical support for the event.

6) The Facilities Committee is working with Director of Facilities Chris Johnson on a longer-term project, to organize, preserve and maintain records about the various repairs and improvements that have been made to our buildings over the years. The following congregational members have attended meetings during the 2018-2019 program year: Liz Davis (Chair), Gloria Furman, Nancy Wolf, Gaither Pratt (who is an architect), and Connie Newsom. Other congregational members have also attended FC meetings including: Cara Haft (co-Board President and Facilities Committee Board Liaison), Mitch Major, Bob Newsom, and Al Blanco. Director of Facilities Chris Johnson regularly attends FC Meetings. This year, the FC has continued to hold meetings on Sunday afternoons, following Fellowship hour, to accommodate members' and staff schedules. We generally meet in the church office, and have also met twice on the patio, during nicer weather. The Facilities Committee welcomes all those who are interested in preserving and maintaining our historic buildings. Please contact Chair Liz Davis at: [ead1142@yahoo.com](mailto:ead1142@yahoo.com) if you are interested in attending a Facilities Committee Meeting.

Liz Davis, Chair, Facilities Committee

## Finance Committee

The Committee welcomed two new members – Roger Cooper (recent past President of the Board of Trustees) and Liz Shaw. We said thank you and farewell to former member Samira Kawash.

This year the Committee:

- Reviewed monthly financial reports. The Committee has worked with Office Administrator Wendy Russell to develop a format that improved over the year to become clearer and more informative for the Committee and the Board of Trustees.
- Monitored timely completion of regular financial tasks by reviewing the financial control sheet developed last year with the Board and Staff.

- Worked with Office Administrator Wendy Russell to institute quarterly reviews of the congregation's books. At the time of the 2019 Annual Meeting, the Committee has conducted three reviews. These reviews have resulted in substantial clarification of how certain revenues and expenses should be accounted for in the congregation's bookkeeping system in order to best correspond to the budget. The quarterly reviews have also increased the confidence of the Committee and the Board regarding accuracy of the monthly financial reports.
- Proposed to the Board of Trustees that a restricted capital reserve fund be set up within the congregation's endowment. The Board accepted this recommendation and refined it into a proposal that is being presented to the congregation at the 2019 Annual Meeting.
- Developed, together with the Board of Trustees, an improved plan for accounting for the projects that Director of Facilities Chris Johnson completes outside of his regular work schedule.
- Investigated health care plans with the goal of identifying one that is less costly. This work continues.
- Identified a method for carrying restricted donations over from one fiscal year to the next for projects such as the youth trip for which funds raised in one fiscal year are spent in the next, i.e. the summertime when the youth go on their trip.
- Continues to look into ways to report the congregation's finances in a manner that is accurate, informative, and clear to congregants.
- Drafted, together with the Treasurer and the Board of Trustees, the budget for FY20.
- Continues to work with the Board of Trustees to identify ways to increase revenue and/or reduce expense to bring the congregation's annual budget and finances into balance as soon as possible.

Many thanks to this year's committee members.

If you are a member of the congregation who is interested in joining the Finance Committee, please contact Chair Lee Pardee, [leepar@earthlink.net](mailto:leepar@earthlink.net).

Lee Pardee, Chair

Members, Lake Wise (Treasurer), Mike Alcock, Roger Cooper, Elizabeth Shaw

## Leadership Development Committee

The duties of the Leadership Development Committee (LDC) are to “promote the development of leadership by evaluating the potential of individual Members, identifying needs and opportunities for leadership in the Society, identifying resources to aid in leadership development, encouraging Members to use such resources to develop their leadership ability, and recommending Members to the Board for appointment to Mandated Committees” (FUUB Bylaws, section 5.3(d)(i)).

For the 2018-19 year, the members of the LDC were: Sean Fischer (Chair), Enza Itri, Edwin Lord, Laura Manos-Hey, and Mary Most. Significant support was provided to the committee by Garnett Losak (Director of Congregational Life) and Laurel Lesio (Board Liaison).

Mary Most and Edwin Lord conclude their two-year terms in May 2019. In addition, Enza Itri resigned from her position in April 2019. The latter position has one year remaining in its two-year term.

### *Nominations*

**2018 General Assembly (GA) delegates** elected at the Congregational Meeting on February 24, 2019:

- Alison Derevensky
- Amit Mehta
- Lee Pardee
- David Reyes
- Parrish Turner

The tradition of the congregation has been to, whenever possible, nominate at least one youth from our Sunday school program as a delegate to General Assembly. Unfortunately, this year, there were no youths aged 16 or over (the age required for membership) enrolled in our program. An additional problem going forward are the scheduled GA dates which coincide with New York State Regents exams and high school graduations which generally prevent public school teenagers from attending, thus making it difficult to send youth delegates every year.

The committee, with significant logistical support from Garnett Losak and Meagan Henry (Director of Education and Family Ministry), co-hosted a fundraiser with the Women’s Leadership Alliance to provide financial support to our GA delegates. The fundraiser raised a net total of \$684 and consisted of a dinner and viewing of last year’s GA Ware Lecture.

## **Candidate slate for election at May 19, 2019 Annual Meeting**

### **Board of Trustees, Class of 2022 (replacing retiring Trustees Cara Haft, Patrick Gunn and Waciuma Wanjohi)**

- Andrew Bongiorno
- Amit Mehta
- Colleen Olson

**Clerk of the Congregation:** Bruce Wilde (third one-year term)

**Moderator:** Michael Alcott (second one-year term)

### **Leadership Development Committee (two-year terms replacing retiring committee members Mary Most and Edwin Lord)**

- Patrick Gunn
- June Wohlhorn

Bios and pictures of nominee slates have been announced on the congregation's website and on the bulletin board in the Undercroft.

In addition to the slate listed above, Sean Fischer and Laura Manos-Hey continue to serve on the LDC for the second year of their two-year terms. The LDC will address the process for filling the remaining vacancy on the committee at the Annual Meeting on May 19.

### ***Leadership Development***

Traditionally, the committee has exclusively focused on nominating members of the congregation for UUA General Assembly delegates, Board of Trustees, the Clerk, Moderator, and replacing its own members. In 2017, in association with the Forward First work, the adopted bylaw revisions renamed the committee from the Nominating Committee to the Leadership Development Committee. The new committee name, along with the responsibilities outlined in the bylaws, required that the LDC begin exploring ways in which it can support leadership development in the congregation.

This year, the LDC decided to focus on a pilot project related to strengthening our stewardship leadership with an emphasis on (1) understanding perceptions of the Stewardship Team's work to better inform their recruitment of new members, and (2) examining the roles that our congregation's leaders (e.g., the Board, committee chairs, longtime members) can play in more explicitly supporting our stewardship goals. This work is in its preliminary stages and is expected to continue next year, but we anticipate it will result in a report and set of recommendations delivered to the Board and/or Stewardship team. We will use this experience to inform future leadership development projects.

## PROGRAM COMMITTEES

### 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee

The 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Planning Committee was brought together to plan and execute events that celebrate and educate in honor of the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of First Unitarian's historic sanctuary. The Committee started meeting in January of 2019. Co-chaired by Pat Lawrence and Connie Newsom, it also included Liz Davis, Karen Geer, Cara Haft (acting as Board liaison), and Nancy Wolf.

A slate of celebratory events was planned, as well as an informational campaign to educate the congregation about the building: "Building Awareness," historical tidbits about the building, were placed in the Order of Service each week. These were compiled by Nancy Wolf. Nancy also undertook to have a new brochure printed that would serve as a self-guided tour of the building. Connie Newsome helped write the text and Cara Haft edited. Using his graphics skill, David Garvoille designed the brochure working with an outside printer, Mike Glenn of Fort Orange Press in Albany.

The events planned and executed by the Committee included:

The Annual Sanctuary Clean-up, headed by Liz Davis on April 6, 2019. 4-5 volunteers and Director of Facilities Chris Johnson and Saturday Custodian Bobby dusted and scrubbed the Sanctuary to prepare for Palm Sunday and Easter services, as well as a Spring full of events.

The Annual Dinner and Auction on May 4, 2019. Although a fundraiser included in the church's general budget, the theme for this year's auction was the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Building, so the Anniversary Committee took it upon themselves to help out with it. Pat Lawrence Co-Chaired with David Garvoille.

A Re-Consecration Service on May 5 to celebrate the building with the Congregation. Connie Newsom and Nancy Wolf took on helping to plan this in consultation with Reverend Ana Levy-Lyons and Music Director Adam Podd. It proved to be a thought provoking and meaningful service, celebrating both the history of the building as well as where the next 175 years might take us.

A "History Corner" to accompany both the Re-Consecration Service and the Tiffany windows event was organized by Connie Newsom. She compiled a display of historic windows, kneelers, photos and other memorabilia to give the congregation a more concrete glimpse at the building's history. Volunteers assisting Connie were: Al Blanco, Mary Foutz, Chris Johnson, and Robey Newsom.

A Curated Tour of the Tiffany windows scheduled for May 11, 2019, organized by Pat Lawrence. This would bring in Lindsay R, Parrot, Executive Director of The Neustadt

Collection of Tiffany Glass in Queens, to talk about the church's Tiffany windows and Mosaic.

A "Lafever Roundtable" about our architect, Minard Lafever, organized by Connie Newsom, scheduled for September 26, 2019.

The Committee staffed a table almost every Sunday at Fellowship Hour, imparting info about the activities above, as well as selling merchandise related to the building. This included: Olive Hoogenboom's history of the church (graciously put on the table by Rod McFarland); Tiffany window notecards which had been designed and created by Kay Corkett some years ago (from photos by Bob Newsom, Cooper Miller, and the Museum of Biblical Art) and graciously gifted for fundraising purposes; a bookmark underwritten by Connie Newsome featuring another Tiffany window; as well as free information pertaining to the 175<sup>th</sup> events that was designed by David Garvoille. Merchandise sales totalled \$512 as of April 29, 2019. These funds would be used towards celebratory events and any monies left over at the end of the year would be turned over to the church.

To also help fund the 175<sup>th</sup> Celebration Events, the Committee solicited Sponsors who paid \$175 to be numbered among "The Lafever Society." As of May 1, those Sponsors had contributed \$5,450. The Sponsors (as of May 1, 2019) were:

Victoria Antonini	Cara Haft
Steve Bergquist & Ken McCarthy	Arthur Hall
Marty and Pat Bernstein	Dale Ho
Robert Bero & Kathy Ivans	Liz Kennedy
Al Blanco	Sharon & Tom Kennedy
Tom Check & Nancy Witherell	Julie Lam
Elizabeth Davis	Pat & Jay Lawrence
Doug Eads	Edwin Lord
Bert Eisenstadt & Laurel Lesio Eisenstadt	Gregory Matoff & C. Bangs
Sara Faison	Samantha McKelvie
Gloria Furman	Monica Murphy & Bill Wasik
Karen Geer	Bob & Connie Newsom
Ludmilla Goldberg	Lee Pardee
Patrick Gunn & Laura Kriska	James Rohrbach & Lissy Desantis

Thomas Russell

Peggy Schubert

Kurt & Pat Steele

Kathy & Nick Titakis

Jeanie Wing

Nancy Welles

Nancy Wolf

Carlos & Brandi Yu

The Committee is grateful for The Lafever Society's financial support to assist in their mission of education about and celebration of our historic Sanctuary. Thanks also to Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons and Music Director Adam Podd for their help and advice. The Committee is also grateful for the support of the FUUB Board as well as Chris Johnson, Director of Facilities and custodians, Ian Hurt and Bobby Blackman . In the office Garnett Losak, Director of Congregational Life, and Wendy Russell, Bookkeeper, also provided invaluable support and guidance.

## Caring Ministry & Lay Chapel Ministers

Pastoral Care at First Unitarian is under two program areas, the Caring Ministry Team and the Lay Chapel Ministers. Karen Madrone, the 2018-2019 Intern Minister, coordinated the work of both of these groups. The work of these two groups fits under goal number two of the Strategic Plan: Cultivate a caring, welcoming community that models a just and loving world.

The Caring Ministry Team consists of two groups that meet on the same day, one group in the morning, one in the evening. Collectively, the groups learn about congregants who are in need of emotional or physical support, send cards, bring meals, and help with additional needs as they arise. This year the Caring Ministry Team participated in a workshop on listening skills conducted by Jeff Levy-Lyons. In addition, they sponsored a relationship skills workshop given to the congregation led by Carolyn McIntyre. In March, the Caring Ministry Team organized neighborhood dinners called "Love Your Neighbor" to build community among members and friends of First Unitarian in their own neighborhoods. Over 100 members of the First Unitarian community participated in the Love Your Neighbor dinners. Many new connections were made and friendships were strengthened.

The Caring Ministry Team consists of: Kay Corkett, Gloria Furman, Abby Grosslein, Lisa Kawamoto, Liz Komar, Edwin Lord, Laura Manos-Hey, Nancy Provost and Bryn Sumner

The Lay Chapel Ministers talk with worship service attendees about concerns on their heart about themselves or others. Two additional people joined the team this year.

The Lay Chapel Ministers are: Deborah Barbieri, Jen Dibiase, Edwin Lord, Carolyn McIntyre and Nancy Witherell.



## Craft Ministry

The First U Craft Ministry continued to meet regularly throughout the church year. Meeting in the Undercroft during Sabbath lunches helped create visibility for the group, and allowed us to connect with several new visitors who were themselves crafters. The craft ministry provided many shawls to the ministers at First U who distributed them to members dealing with health issues or loss, to long-time members moving away from the congregation, to seminarians and interns moving on from First U, and to our Bridging Youth. In addition, afghans, scarves, hats, and baby and home items were donated by the craft ministry to Unifair for sale at the handcrafts table.

Liz Shaw, Chair

## Green Team

In fall 2018, Karen Madrone, the Intern Minister for the 2018-2019 program year, began reaching out to several environmentally minded congregants about the possibility of creating a Green Team that would work towards receiving Green Sanctuary certification from the UUA. The group had its first meeting in January 2019 and discussed whether this was something they wanted to pursue and the steps that are required to receive this certification. The group decided that this was a positive undertaking for First Unitarian because it would streamline the efforts that are already taking place and give focus for additional areas to explore. The Green Sanctuary program requires congregations to create programming in these areas: sustainable living, religious education, worship, and environmental justice. The Green Team assigned roles within the group in order to begin exploring these areas and over the next few months began the steps towards becoming certified as a Green Sanctuary.

The first step towards certification was getting approval from the Board of Trustees to create the Green Team and to move forward with its work. Towards that end, the team prepared a presentation to the board which was given on February 14. The board approved the proposal with a unanimous vote. Then the Green Team, while continuing to gather ideas and implement plans in the four project areas, began to prepare to present their proposal to the congregation at the Annual Meeting on May 19. They presented the plan after the budget forum on May 5. They are using the feedback they received at that presentation to prepare for the May 19 Annual Meeting.

The Green Team has already begun work towards becoming a Food Scrap Drop Off point for the City of New York and has engaged in a letter writing campaign to legislators regarding climate justice legislation.

The work of the Green Team fits within Goal #4 of the Strategic Plan: Become an environmentally responsible congregation that serves as a powerful voice for sustainable living. One of the strategies, Energy Usage Plan and Implementation, directly applies to the work the Green Team is doing because it will assess the most recent energy audit, make improvements to the building as needed and resources are available, and will re-assess the building afterwards. This plan, if approved, is a multi-year effort and will give focus to First Unitarian's environmental efforts.

At the April 28 meeting of the Green Team, Mary Most was nominated and unanimously voted to become the chair which she graciously accepted. The Green Team consists of Mary Most, Lee Ilan, Isuru Seneviratne, Linnea Paton, Jayesh Sheath, Andrea Sheth, Anne Calder, and Abby Grosslein.

Karen Madrone, For the Green Team

## Immigrant Solidarity

At its Annual Meeting in May 2017, drawing on UU Principles, the Congregation authorized the Board of Trustees to form the Immigrant Solidarity Committee, initially for a two-year term, to:

- Stand in solidarity with immigrants and refugees and their families, and encourage the Congregation's members and friends to volunteer in support and advocacy on their behalf
- Lead the Congregation in a period of discernment of whether to commit to a program of offering sanctuary to immigrants and refugees.

In the fall of 2017, the Congregation completed its discernment and in a Congregational Meeting in November 2017, adopted a program of sanctuary up to 3 days on the church premises. Since April 2018, Congregants have volunteered to be on-call 24x7 to open the church for people in need of sanctuary, and to accompany them while they are in sanctuary in the church.

In July 2018, the Board of Directors authorized expanding the Committee's activities to include providing transitional housing and support on the church premises for up to 7 days to an individual or family applying for asylum, whose status with Homeland Security allowed them to go out into the community.

- From July 28 to August 5, 2018, over 45 members and friends of the Congregation hosted at the church a Honduran mother and son, whom Homeland Security had been holding in separate detention for 51 days, in Texas and Arizona respectively, and now released to re-unite and relocate to Brooklyn as they apply for asylum in the US. At August 5, they relocated to the home of friends of the Congregation, and members of the Committee continue to offer them social, emotional and financial support.
- Since November 7, 2018, members of the Congregation have been hosting a Cuban refugee in their home, after Homeland Security released her from detention in Texas to relocate to Brooklyn to pursue her asylum application.

- Since December 30, 2018, members of the Congregation have been hosting a Nicaraguan refugee in the same situation. With help from the Committee and others, she tried to get Homeland Security to release her partner from detention in Georgia, so she and he could pursue their asylum applications together in Brooklyn, but Homeland Security denied his asylum application on April 29, 2019.
- From January 2 to 4, members of the Congregation hosted in their home a Guatemalan father and son whom Homeland Security had released from detention, to relocate to Brooklyn to pursue their asylum application. From January 4 to 13, over 40 members and friends of the Congregation hosted them at the church while the Committee looked for longer-term housing. On January 13, they relocated to the home of friends of the Congregation, and members of the Committee continue to provide social, emotional and financial support.
- Members of the Committee and the Queer Caucus are now exploring whether any members or friends of the Congregation could host an LGBTQI asylum-seeker. If so, they will contact existing channels to find an LGBTQI refugee who could especially benefit from a supportive host environment.
- In January, the Committee launched a Go Fund Me site to raise funds for direct support of our guests. Over \$10,000 has been raised so far through the Go Fund Me site and through direct contributions to the Committee's account at First Unitarian. The Committee has used these funds to cover guest's expenses such as some legal fees, MetroCards, cell phone service, etc.
- Since February, the Committee has been reaching out to other UU Congregations in New York City, congregations of other faiths in Brooklyn, and other grass-roots immigrant support groups to build a stronger network of collaboration in support of immigrants and refugees. Some of these groups may join in supporting our guests.
- On April 27, the Committee hosted Songs for Solidarity, a concert to bring together First Unitarian and other congregations and groups supporting refugees, and to raise funds for direct support of our guests. Judy Gorman from First Unitarian and three of her fellow musicians performed without fee to make this possible. Over 100 people, about half of them from beyond our Congregation, attended the concert, got to know each other, and raised over \$2,000.
- The Committee co-sponsored the Sanctuary Neighborhoods conference April 27-29. The conference brought together grass roots groups from across New York City who provide housing and other support to immigrants and refugees, to learn from each other's experience and build collaboration. The April 27 session was held at First Unitarian.

While the Committee has not yet found undocumented Brooklynites who need to take sanctuary in the church building to avoid imminent detention or deportation, as anticipated in 2017, the Committee has found that many refugees who are pursuing legal applications for asylum need a healthy place to live during the long asylum process, as opposed to remaining in federal detention facilities, and find the immigration courts and people in New York City more receptive than in other locations. Asylum seekers sometimes arrive in Brooklyn with no place to live, and several days of transitional housing on the church premises can be essential before they move into the community. The asylum process is long, and for the first 6 to 12 months applicants are generally not

authorized to work. The Committee is glad to mobilize social, emotional, and financial support for our guests throughout this process.

The Committee greatly appreciates the support the Board, clergy, staff, and whole Congregation have provided for the immigrant solidarity program since its inception.

**Proposal to the Congregational Meeting, May 19, 2019:**

As the Congregation initially authorized the Immigrant Solidarity Committee for a two-year term beginning May 2017, the Committee proposes for the Congregation at the Annual Meeting on May 19 to re-authorize the Committee with the following parameters:

- The purpose of the Committee will be to mobilize activity of the Congregation in support of immigrants and refugees who wish to establish or maintain residence in the United States under the law.
- The Board of Trustees will appoint the Chair or Co-Chairs of the Committee.
- Each year the Committee will submit a report of its activities to the Board.
- The Board will retain authority to continue the Committee, such as by recording the Committee's revenues and expenses in the Congregational budget and accounts, or to discontinue the Committee.
- The Board will have authority to expand or restrict the activities of the Committee, consistent with the purpose of the Committee as stated above.
- As of May 19, 2019, the activities of the Committee include:
  1. Providing sanctuary on the church premises for up to 72 hours as originally authorized by the Congregation in May 2017.
  2. Providing housing and support on the church premises for up to 7 days to an individual or family applying for asylum, as authorized by the Board of Trustees in July 2018.
  3. Coordinating ongoing housing and support outside the church premises to individuals and families applying for asylum, as a continuation of #2.
  4. Support and advocacy for immigrants and refugees in the community at large, together with other religious and community groups.
  5. Fundraising in support of the above, as authorized by the Board of Trustees in January 2018.

The Board of Directors has endorsed this proposal at its meeting on April 24, 2019.

**Members:**

The current members of the Committee are:

Tom Check, Co-Chair

Marisa Lastres, Past Chair

Charlie Austin, Co-Chair

Lee Pardee

Vonda Brunsting, Board Liaison

Anita Shepherd

Adrian Gonzalez

Natalie Thielen Helper

Becky Huffman

To learn more or to volunteer, please contact any of us or email [immigrantsolidarity@fuub.org](mailto:immigrantsolidarity@fuub.org). Or donate to our guests at <https://www.go-fund-me.com/support-asylum-seekers-in-brooklyn>.

## Membership Council

The Membership Council continued offering its core programming and created new initiatives to deepen newcomers', friends', and members' spiritual connection to First Unitarian and Unitarian Universalism. The congregation grew from 289 members to 304 this church year, highlighting the need to provide continuity in our current programming and to create new approaches to engage newcomers and continue attracting new members.

The Council continued offering the “Pathways” class for people interested in becoming more engaged in First Unitarian and exploring membership. The Council members developed and facilitated this day long curriculum that provides a view into Unitarian Universalist history and First Unitarian’s culture and community, and offers participants an opportunity to share their personal religious histories and visions for their spiritual development. 20 people took one of the three sessions offered this church year. The Council began planning development of a second curriculum for graduates of Pathways who have joined the congregation and may want to continue their spiritual development.

The Council welcomed 27 people as new members of the congregation, hosting 3 breakfasts where they could get to know fellow new members, the minister, and church staff. In January, the Council took its turn hosting a Sabbath Lunch, raising funds for gifts to members presented during the Service of the Living Tradition and other committee operations.

Recognizing a need and opportunity to increase connections between people attending Fellowship Hour after services, the Council created the Fellowship Forward initiative. As part of this endeavor, the Council recruited “Fellowship Ambassadors,” volunteers who are charged with connecting members and friends to one another during Fellowship Hour. These Ambassadors are introduced during each service and can be recognized by the stoles they wear as they greet people and facilitate community building. The Council also restructured the arrangement of the undercroft for Fellowship Hour to more easily facilitate conversation, created signage to catch the eye of newcomers who may not have attended Fellowship Hour yet, and created the Newcomers Lounge, an area where people participating in Fellowship Hour for the first time can gather to speak with church staff and learn more about the congregation on any Sunday. To launch the initiative, the Council created “First UU Challenge Cards,” mimicking coffee shop punch cards, with more than a dozen ways to put your “Faith in Action” in the congregation ranging from volunteering to usher, to singing in the choir, to engaging in a social justice action, to talking to someone new after service.

For many years the council has sponsored the annual Service of the Living Tradition which honors our long-term members. As in past year's the service will take place on the day of the Annual Meeting (May 19<sup>th</sup>). See Garnett Losak's report for more details.

The Council ended the church year by engaging in a re-envisioning process for how to connect with people who walk through the congregation doors, how to engage newcomers in the First Unitarian community, how to deepen faith opportunities for current members, and how to attract those who have not yet crossed our building threshold. The Council is considering how, in its role of welcoming potential members and deepening the experience of current members, it can diversify the languages spoken, increase intergenerational connections, offer clear and consistent pathways for adult spiritual development, support pastoral care, and build leadership capacity of congregants. The Council plans to develop strategies for First Unitarian to explore these new directions in line with the Forward First plan in the coming year and hopes to collaborate with church Committees, staff, and the board.

Thank you to the Fellowship Ambassadors including Vicki Antonini, Salette Gressett, Julie Lam, Laurel Lesio, Lee Pardee, Jackie Peters, Rachel Stark, Eleanor Traubman, Michele Weisman, and Winnie Zwick. Membership Council members include Marty Bernstein, Paige Carlson, Megan Monroe, Melissa Quirk, and David Reyes. Garnett Losak serves as staff liaison.

Melissa Quirk, Chair

## Queer Caucus

In our third year Queer Caucus has continued to expand our events and programs. We use our table at coffee hour, and our Facebook group (now at 92 members), email list and monthly newsletter to connect with newcomers and communicate with the group. In addition we share events via the First U bulletin and Order of Service. We continue to hold monthly meetings and break into teams that lead the execution of a particular program. This was our first year with a budget (\$500) and we anticipated that it would be used to fund Brooklyn Pride activities and our annual fundraiser (this year our Latin Dance Night.) Since the last annual meeting, our programs have included:

- Brooklyn Pride 2018, were we led the FUUB contingent to march in Pride Parade. In addition we hosted our first booth at the Brooklyn Pride Festival on behalf of First U. We hosted crafts for all and handed out information about both QC and First U as a whole. We also provided free rainbow stickers, beads and candy, which helped to attract visitors. There were a couple of new members in 2018-2019 who found First U via the Festival.
- Coordinating the first ever Pride Sunday Service, with reflections from QC members plus music chosen and provided by group members Bryn Sumner, Kayla Reiman, Crystal Huyett, and Sam Yost. Edwin Lord and Haley Weaver also helped to lead the service.

- In response to the changing Unitarian Universalist Association standards to be an official Welcoming Congregation we've encouraged the honoring of LGBTQ days of observance (ex: Trans Day of Remembrance) at First U services.
- Partnering with the Young Adult Ministry group to co-host two of the Pastoral Pints.
- Continuing the Queer Faith Discussion Group, where we discuss a topic or readings around the theme of queer life and faith chosen by a facilitator.
- Hosting a "SAGE table" dinner at First U. Coordinator: Jake Powell
- First U staff Karen Madrone, Ana Levy Lyons and member Parrish Turner participated in a Trans Day of Remembrance service co-hosted by several NYC UU congregations.
- Baking cookies and making cards to send to a group of LGBT teens in group homes as a holiday gift. Coordinator: Maria Petulla
- Hosting the first Latin Dance Night, fundraising for Trinity Place Shelter. There was an initial salsa lesson and then open time to dance, socialize and share refreshments. We raised \$660 from ticket sales and donations. In addition that month First U's "share the plate" funds were raised for TPS. Coordinators: David Reyes, Laura Manos-Hey
- Jennifer Joy hosted "Q Improv Fun" for the congregation.
- Hosting one of the Sabbath Lunches. Coordinator: Parrish Turner

We are currently planning the second Pride Sunday service at FUUB for June 30, 2019. Planning team: Karen Madrone, Laura Manos-Hey, Sean Sellers, Leif Meneke.

We are also preparing for our second table at the Brooklyn Pride Festival in addition to marching in the Parade. We're partnering with Meagan Henry and the RE community to encourage families and non-LGBT members and friends to attend, as last year we didn't do much outreach there. We also would like to invite people to buy and wear the official First U t-shirt to the march.

Laura Manos-Hey for the Queer Caucus

## Religious Education Council

### RE Mission Statement

*Offer opportunities for children, youth, and adults to grow their souls, develop their Unitarian Universalist identities, and deepen their understanding of our diverse world.*

*Create joyful experiences that will support families in becoming healthier and more connected, and to build a community together that nurtures and supports all children and youth in their spiritual and personal development.*

*Teach children, youth, and adults how to develop a strong and resilient faith and help them develop spiritual practices that will sustain and support them all their lives.*

The theme of this year is GROWTH! We have so many new families- our classes for babies, toddlers and school age children were full to bursting! It is thrilling to have new children and families in our community, but our growth has prompted us to make a few important changes to our Religious Education program. Starting in the Fall we will offer

our older school age children a choice of workshops centered around a monthly story, which will be deeply connected to the yearly sermon series. So, on Sunday mornings, instead of a traditional class, 2nd-5th graders will choose to participate in either an art project, a building experience or a theater group. The children will then be able to showcase their productions at our month Sabbath Lunches. We are really excited about this new way of fostering our children's spiritual development. Our K-1 class will continue as usual - having fun making music with Bert and enjoying a story, snack and activity with their teachers.

### **Building Bridges Class**

This year our 6th and 7th graders participated in a class designed to teach them about multiple faith traditions. In addition to learning about and discussing the basic tenets of Buddhism, Hinduism, Zen, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity the students visited other houses of worship on field trips! Thank you to our wonderful teachers who put so much effort into creating and leading this class.

### **Children's Chapel**

This year, the Children's Chapels mirrored the sermon series theme: "Spirituality and Technology" We used the lens of our shared UU principles to focus our work. Each month, the children explored their use of technology, the positive and the negatives.

Next year Children's Chapel will be replaced with all ages Multi-generational worship on Jazz Sundays! We are very excited for this new opportunity to explore faith and worship together.

### **Children's Choir**

The choir practiced with a wonderful focus and energy this year, and their beautiful singing enhanced our worship experience in both the winter and spring. Thank you to Bert Eisenstadt for his patience and dedication to our children's music!

### **Our Whole Lives (O.W.L.)**

This year we have two large classes of school age children studying OWL. Our 4th and 5th grade met in the Fall, and our K-1 class met in the Winter-Spring. Both classes were large and well attended. Clearly, this program is fundamental to our RE curriculum and to our families. Next year we will be extending the OWL experience. In addition to our year-long Junior High program we will have another round of school age programming. In order to ensure that each child is able to have a rich, in depth class we need to keep our attendance below 12. Instead of alternating OWL programs year to year, we will offer most programs every year! We will need to train a few more teachers to have enough leadership, but we are excited to grow this vital program.

This year we also offered an Adult OWL program and a mini workshop for our teens.



## Seasonal Celebrations

Our Halloween party was a Monstrous hit, as usual! This year we reprised the Nativity Pageant with its theme of immigration and refuge. Santa visited our annual holiday celebration and gave out small gifts to all children. This year we changed our Easter Sunday to a multi-generational worship service, which worked wonderfully. Our end of the congregational year Birthday party is sure to be another smash!

Thank you to everyone who helped make these celebrations so fun for our children and youth!

## Youth Group

Our amazing teens have spent another year supporting each other and growing up together. They led a wonderful worship service this spring. This summer, they will return to West Virginia to learn and serve.

The REC council was wonderfully filled by staff, Meagan Henry and Sara Gush, and by volunteers MariaSara Alcott, Michele Ascione, Andrea Parkinson, Denise Wharton, and June Wohlhorn. Thank you to our Board liaison Dawn Elane Reed for her support and wisdom.

We look forward to another year of supporting children, youth and families at First Unitarian!

Becky Huffman, REC Chair, [becky7676@gmail.com](mailto:becky7676@gmail.com)

## Share the Plate

In alignment with the community's aim to work for social justice and stewardship of the earth, First Unitarian is proud to share a portion of its collections with deserving organizations both local to Brooklyn and around the world. Since our Share the Plate program was established in 2008, we have given away more than \$10,000 annually. This year, we are happy to announce that the program has directed \$15,794 to causes ranging from climate justice and police reform to sheltering homeless LGBTQIA youth and young adults.

The Share the Plate Committee is charged with soliciting nominations from the congregation and selecting, from those nominations, qualified organizations to receive a portion of the collection each month. To that end, we continue to maintain the online nomination form for submitting community recommendations, which is currently available at <https://goo.gl/pBQPmW>. We also draw suggestions directly from the many active committees within the congregation.

Participation from the congregation continues to be strong, with new submissions being made regularly. However, the Share the Plate Committee remains committed to

establishing better avenues for feedback and recommendations and gladly welcomes all suggestions.

We would like to thank Hillary Scott and Takako Kono who have moved on after three years of fabulous service to the Share the Plate Committee. We would also like to welcome Eva Pinkley, who joined the committee in April. Now in its fifth year, the committee consists of Joe Gabriel, Gloria Howard, James Mills, and Eva Pinkley.

### **Gifts since the 2018 Annual Report**

May 2018	Sadhana, Coalition of Progressive Hindus	\$1,106.15
June 2018	Beloved Conversations	\$989.74
Summer 2018	RAICES	\$828.57
September 2018	People's Climate Movement	\$1,441.67
October 2018	Minister's Discretionary Fund	\$1,379.05
November 2018	World Food Program USA	\$1,473.48
December 2018	Unitarian Universalist Service Committee	\$2,746.00
January 2019	350 Brooklyn	\$1,373.51
February 2019	Trinity Place Shelter	\$1,491.58
March 2019	Communities United for Police Reform	\$1,392.13
April 2019	Youth Group & Big Creek People in Action	\$1,572.71

## **Stewardship Team**

The stewardship team is charged with soliciting pledge donations from all members of the congregation. Our by-laws require that all voting members complete a pledge form every year in order to retain voting membership. In addition, the stewardship team solicits and accepts pledge commitments from non-members of the congregation who wish to support our mission and purpose or who benefit from our programs.

As the 2018-2019 fiscal year comes to an end, we are proud to announce that we have overtaken our \$330,000 pledge goal by \$9,000.

For the fiscal year that begins on July 1, 2019, the team duplicated the program of the previous year, which included direct appeal letters to all members and friends of the congregation from our Board Co-Presidents and our Senior Minister. On the day of the kick-off, Rev. Ana preached, "Jazz, Coffee & Purpose", which highlighted and inspired generous support of the congregational mission and purpose.

The committee followed up the direct appeal for six weeks during fellowship hour. Canvassers wearing “funny hats” and carrying clipboards made themselves available to anyone who was ready to make a pledge.

By the end of the general appeal in mid-March, we had raised just over \$264,000 in pledges. Since that time, the stewardship team has focused on following up with our members who have not yet turned in pledge forms. Follow ups have included e-mails, phone calls and, most recently, a letter reminding our members that participation in the Annual Meeting requires a pledge form. As of this writing on May 8<sup>th</sup>, we have raised just over \$309,000. At last year’s Annual Meeting we had raised \$315,000. It is the team’s hope that we will have at least that much committed by May 19<sup>th</sup>.

We understand that many of our members stretched their budgets last year and we are not surprised that we are not experiencing significant increases again this year. However, if we are to fund our programs adequately it is important that every member and friend of the congregation give as generously as they can.

If you have not yet turned in your pledge form for the 2019-2020 fiscal year, please contact any member of the stewardship team or Garnett Losak.

We welcome anyone who wishes to serve the congregation in this important function. If you are interested in learning more about stewardship, contact our Board Liaison, Sam McKelvie ([mckelvie.sam@gmail.com](mailto:mckelvie.sam@gmail.com)) or our Director of Congregational Life, Garnett Losak ([garnett@fuub.org](mailto:garnett@fuub.org))

Every gift to the congregation, not matter the size is received with gratitude.

Garnett Losak, for the Stewardship Team

Marty Bernstein

Sam McKelvie – Board Liaison

James Mills

Mary Most

Lee Pardee

Kurt Steele

Bruce Wilde

## Ushers & Greeters

Welcoming is an important ministry at First U Brooklyn. Every Sunday a team of 4-6 people greet members, visitors and newcomers. Lead by our deacon head ushers, they help people get situated for the worship service by handing out orders of service, storing strollers, connecting families with our religious education program and helping people up

the steps. They also collect congregants' weekly contributions to our Share the Plate program along with many people's pledge checks.

Our Greeters and Ushers are coordinated by Deacon Lee Pardee. Other Deacons serving on the teams are Bob Bero, Al Blanco, Tom Check, Liz Davis, Edwin Lord, Connie Newsom, Bruce Wilde, and Nancy Wolf. Over 50 other congregants help greet and usher – some once a year, others every month. The only qualifications for being a greeter/usher are showing up early on Sundays and having a warm smile for everyone coming to First U Brooklyn. Please consider joining the team.

Lee Pardee, Usher & Greeter Coordinator

## Weaving the Fabric of Diversity

WFD continues to work on living our principles in action and supporting our congregational mission by looking inwards and outwards to work for justice and equality within our congregation and in the general community. We focus mainly on racism, but also work on sexism, classism, LGBTQ issues, and environmental justice. We form relationships outside our congregational walls, create informational forums, and take part in actions of witness.

### DINNERS

- **Children of Abraham / Muslim Dinner (Saturday, 11/10/18):** These dinners began in 2001 as a response to the violence shown against the Muslim community after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. These dinners are more important than ever based on recent world and national events.
- **Haiti A Celebration – Dinner With Entertainment (Saturday, 3/24/18):** Our relationship with Haitian grassroots 501(c)(3) organization FEDADSE (Federation des Associations pour le Developpement du Sud Est) continues to grow in warmth and scope. This is a jointly organized event with WFD and FEDADSE each supplying an emcee, food, and entertainment for the dinner. Funds raised will be used for all-volunteer reforestation projects in Haiti.
- **Sabbath Sunday Community Lunch – Sunday 3/10/19**
- **Juneteenth Service and Lunch (Sunday, 6/16/19)** This annual event includes the first Sunday summer service, followed by a picnic outdoors on Monroe Place. This is a celebration of the day when the last American slaves found out they were freed. Juneteenth has become a popular event for our congregation. This year's service will honor Faith-Based social justice.

### FORUMS , DISCUSSIONS and WORKSHOPS:

- **WFD Meet and Greet (9/30/18) – Open house to introduce our work.**

- **The Right to Vote for All Discussion (10/7/18)** Discussion focused on working to enfranchise current prisoners as is done in Vermont, Maine, and most industrial nations. New York State has recently enfranchised parolees
- **Forum on Gun Violence (10/27/18)** - Panelists from Sandy Hook Promise, The Borough President's Office, and our local schools discussed the continuing struggle to eradicate from different viewpoints.
- **Reforestation in Haiti and Greening of the Earth Discussion (4/7/19)**, Our Haitian friends gave us details of their reforestation project and how they are trying to widen the effort by holding a yearly conference in Haiti for other organizations. We saw a photo album of their work and their conference.
- **YEARLY RETREAT – Saturday 6/1/19** 9:30-3:00 on the Terrace at First U. We extend an open invitation to First Unitarian members and friends to join us and lend ideas to help continue this social justice work in the coming church year.

**FUNDING** – Our funding this past year was \$1350 from the congregational program budget. We wish to thank the Board for funding this important work.

**MEMBERS** - Meeting with us regularly this year were: Robert Harper, Enza Itri, Derek Pearl, Rita Pearl, Michael White. Nancy Wolfe, Vicki Antonini, and Maggie Cancar.

**THANKS** - We would like to thank those in the congregation who attended our monthly meetings and worked with us in the kitchen during the dinners. We would like to thank Bob Bero for musical expertise for the Juneteenth Service, and Bruce Wilde for his sound system expertise for the Haitian Dinner.

Rita Pearl for Weaving the Fabric of Diversity

## Women's Leadership Alliance

The Women's Leadership Alliance (WLA) is one of the oldest groups in the church. It was founded as the Female Samaritan Society in 1838 and was, at the time, the congregation's main service organization. It was active during the Civil War, helped Brooklyn's immigrant community, and later supported the Red Cross and the Suffragette movement. At the same time, the group provided physical housekeeping for the church, visited the sick, ran the church fair, and offered financial support for church activities.

During the World Wars, the group was active in its support of service members and their families. By 1973, the renamed Women's Alliance no longer cleaned the church or ran the fair, but formed a monthly Book Group, which still exists today.

The group was very active in the movement for the Equal Rights Amendment. As women became seminarians and ministers, the group provided financial support, including sponsorship of Rev. Orlanda Brugnola, a longtime minister at First U.

Over many years our group, renamed the Women's Leadership Alliance (WLA), has built up a substantial endowment, which we use prudently to encourage leadership and growth in women and to serve the congregation and the community. This year this organization has offered financial support for Sara Gush, our Religious Education Intern. The WLA has offered Leadership Grants for study or attendance at General Assembly to Karen Madrone, Meagan Henry, Lee Pardee and Alison Derevensky. We help members who are in crisis through the Miriam Campobasso Fund. This year we kickstarted the renovation of the women's bathroom with a \$5,000 donation. We provide financial support for social justice efforts, both in the church and in the community at large. This year we have donated to:

- The Eleanor Roosevelt Fund
- The Immigrant Solidarity initiative
- Girl Scout Troop 6000 for homeless girls in NYC
- CHIPS, a women's shelter in Cobble Hill
- The Reproductive Health Access Project
- CareCen, an immigrant rights group on Long Island
- Planned Parenthood of NYC

On March 24, we sponsored the service, in honor of Women's History Month, providing flowers, ushers and a Transforming Lives statement. We run a book club, a women's discussion group, and our popular film series. Many thanks to Kathy Ivans, who organized this year's recently completed film series.

We team up with other groups to plan programs and are currently planning a #MeToo forum for next year in conjunction with the First Unitarian Queer Caucus as well as a series on Aging. Our group of 37 active members welcomes men and women to join. We have recently recognized Anne Ware, Olive Hoogenboom, Gloria Furman, Barbara Kennedy, Connie Newsom and Larry Calia for their longtime service to the WLA and to First Unitarian.

Pat Steele, President

Kathy Ivans, Vice President

Langdon Holloway, Secretary

Nancy Witherell, Member at Large

## Young Adult Ministry

YAM continues to hold monthly brunches and Reflections with Rev Ana. Our brunches provide a great avenue for young adults to get involved in our congregation. Attendance averages around 14 people each month. We do use our budget to get bagels for the group once or twice a year when the restaurant is not a viable option and at our end of year picnic. Lindsey, Abby, and I share responsibility for organizing and herding the group

each month. Reflections assists with the spiritual development of our members. Bryn has done a great job organizing this year's Reflections, focusing on technology and spirituality.

Parrish Turner, for the Young Adult Ministry

FIRST UNITARIAN  
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A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

**Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons**, Senior Minister

**Meagan Henry**, Director of Education & Family Ministry

**Adam Podd**, Director of Music

**Garnett Losak**, Director of Congregational Life

**Chris Johnson**, Director of Facilities

**Wendy Russell**, Office Manager/Bookkeeper

**Ian Hurt**, Custodian

**Bobby Blackman**, Weekend Custodian

**Karen Madrone**, Intern Minister

**Sara Gush**, WLA Seminarian

**Nicole Tsuzynski**, Ceremonies Coordinator

**Elizabeth Deterville**, Nursery Caregiver

Church Office: 48 Monroe Place, Brooklyn, New York 11201

[www.fuub.org](http://www.fuub.org) 718-624-5466 [office@fuub.org](mailto:office@fuub.org)

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