



FIRST UNITARIAN  
CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY  
**BR**  **KLYN**  
A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

# **2014-2015 Annual Report**

## **Senior Minister - Ana Levy-Lyons**

This year at First U has been high energy and introspective at the same time. The congregation has continued to grow, both in our numbers and in the breath of our activities and ministries. A typical Sunday afternoon finds every room and every square inch full to bursting with Small Group Ministries, meetings, adult religious education classes, and social gatherings. There is a joyful hum in the air. At the same time as we've witnessed this diverse, multi-directional flowering, we have also been seeking greater focus as a congregation. Through the Forward First Brooklyn process we've been asking ourselves the big questions of who we want to be collectively, what we want to do, and how we can get there. (Please see the Forward report for more on this.)

This has all been against the backdrop of a quickly changing cultural and political landscape in the wider world. Concerns about the environment, the racial biases of our criminal justice system, and the civil rights of LGBT people have all dramatically entered the mainstream discourse in this country in the last couple years. The arc of these growing national concerns are now intersecting with Unitarian Universalists' longstanding concern for the poor and disenfranchised and for the balance of the interconnected web of life. This convergence offers us new responsibilities, new challenges, and new opportunities as we head into a more intentionally outward-looking and focused era in First U's history.

### **Worship and Music**

Our worship services have felt full, dynamic, and joyful this year, in no small part because of the work of Adam Podd, who joined our staff as Music Director in the fall. Adam has continued First U's tradition of musical excellence in several genres and has brought tremendous creativity to the program. He has brought the spirit of ministry to his work, helping to build a collaborative culture of warmth and acceptance that is growing the choir and attracting other talented musicians from within and outside the congregation.

Our **holiday services** were a great success this year with notable bumps in attendance on Easter Sunday (286 adults) and at the lovely, multigenerational Family Christmas Eve service (100 children and adults), led by Director of Education Ministries Meagan Henry and RE Council Chair Becky Huffman. The music at the holiday and special music services, including Jazz Sunday, has been stunning and diverse, with inspired programming that used the sanctuary space to great effect.

I offered a monthly sermon series this year exploring the **Parables of Jesus** from a Unitarian Universalist perspective. These explorations were deepened in Small Group ministries each

month as well as a Children's Chapel oriented around the same parables. With the remaining grant money from the Flatbush Fund, we were able to invite three **social justice guest preachers** this year: Rev. Susan Karlson, CERG Disaster Response Coordinator for the UU Metry NY District; Derrick Mitchel, UU Holdeen India Program Director; and Rev. Gilford Monrose, Director of Faith-Based and Clergy Initiatives at Brooklyn Borough Hall.

### **Adult Religious Education and Sabbath Sundays**

To help congregants become acquainted with the basics of Unitarian Universalist **history and theology**, Garnett Losak, Director of Congregational Life, and I offered a monthly Newcomer Orientation and I led a three-part UU Theology series, covering theologians from different eras. For those who wanted to go deeper in exploring Unitarian Universalist **values and ethics** in daily life, we had several offerings: Meagan Henry and I led a four-part "Spiritual Parenting" series, covering talking with children about God, screen time, gender, and the role of nature. I offered two discussion sessions on the UUA's "Common Read" for the year, *Reclaiming Prophetic Witness* by Paul Rasor. And I continued my monthly "Reflections with Rev. Ana" with the TNTs in which we discuss what it means to live a UU life through topics ranging from death and dying to romantic relationships.

Building on the congregation's curiosity about Sabbath practice from last year, we started a **Sabbath Sunday** initiative this fall. Led by Garnett Losak, this program was a way to give people experiential knowledge of what a Sabbath can feel like by providing an opportunity to step outside of daily life and concerns in a spiritual context. I hope to push further in exploring the countercultural potential of Sabbath practice with the congregation next year.

### **Pastoral Care**

The community has suffered some difficult losses this year, with the illnesses and deaths of several longtime, dearly beloved members of the congregation. The Pastoral Care Committee and I have sought to provide support and spiritual companionship throughout these transitions, sitting and talking, bringing meals, and providing practical help whenever possible. We have begun a new program called "Pastoral Care in the Peace Chapel" in which each Sunday a member of the Pastoral Care Committee is available in the Peace Chapel after the service. People are encouraged to come and relay a concern about themselves or someone else or volunteer to help out. The response has been overwhelming with congregants and visitors coming each week to sit and talk and sometimes cry. We will be continuing this program next year with ongoing training for the committee members.

### **Public Ministry**

In addition to the ongoing work of our social justice groups like Weaving the Fabric of Diversity, the congregation has participated in speaking out for justice and environmental stewardship. On

September 21, we moved our worship service to 9:30 to enable our community to participate in the **People's Climate March**. We shared an environmental-themed worship service and then 130 of us left from our front steps to join the Faith Contingent of the march. Added to this were 55 guests whom we had hosted overnight and served dinner, a joyful event led by Garnett Losak and members of Membership and Sustainability groups. Individual families (mine included) hosted still more out of town participants. In all, First U facilitated and supported at least 200 people in joining the march.

Members and clergy have also participated in marches as part of the "**Black Lives Matter**" movement. As Secretary of the Brooklyn Heights Clergy Association, I helped a small team explore how Brooklyn Heights religious communities can help heal police-community relations. We (First U) hosted a luncheon for local clergy with special guests Borough President Eric Adams, Detective Sal Ferrante of the 84th Precinct, and Pastor Gil Monroe. We talked about how our congregations can be allies to the work of reconciliation in our community.

On June 2, I will be delivering **invocation** for the New York City College of Technology (a CUNY School) Commencement at Barclays Center. Located in Brooklyn Heights, City Tech serves students, many of whom are the first in their families to graduate from college, most of whom are students of color and receive needs-based financial aid. Their graduating student roster is one inspiring success story after another and I am honored to be part of the celebration.

I have continued in my work as contributing editor of *Tikkun magazine* and published the following articles in my "Building the Religious Counterculture" column, based on my sermons at First U:

- "The Shadow Side of Freedom" (Summer 2014)
- "Confronting the Corporate Expediter" (Fall 2014)
- "A New Take on the First Commandment" (Winter 2015)
- "The Banality of Environmental Destruction" (Spring 2015)

## **Board of Trustees**

The true strength of a community is evident in how its members respond and behave in the best and the most challenging of times. Looking back, we can say 2014-2015 had a little of both and we have emerged a stronger congregation ready to move forward.

Faced with unexpected financial challenges this year, we, as a community, had difficult conversations and made difficult choices, but did so collectively with respect, reason, and fortitude. In the end, we all pulled together. The Board adopted fiscally prudent policies, members stepped forward with additional gifts, and the program committees of the church found alternative sources for their funding. In the end, the draw from the endowment will be significantly less, all expenses accounted for, and drafting and presentation of a balanced budget for next year.

As a Board, we adopted an internal covenant to listen to each other, ensure all voices are heard, be kind to each other, and come prepared to every meeting. We also adopted an external covenant to be transparent with the congregation and to be proud that members of the congregation had entrusted us with the responsibilities of governance. As we adopted and revised policies, we uploaded them to the members section of the church website. We also made every effort to maintain an ongoing dialogue with members of the church. While not perfect, we hope our efforts towards transparency were evident to the membership.

Our previous Board President, Mark Holloway, noted the ongoing challenges of growth and predicted it would remain on the agenda of future Boards. He was right. A major part of our focus this year was supporting the work of the Forward Team members in their journey to help us understand what needs to change as we continue to grow. A new purpose statement, a reorganization plan, and the beginnings of change to governance responsibilities and structures are all, directly or indirectly, byproducts of those efforts. The groundwork has been laid and we look forward with optimism and trust.

In fellowship and on behalf of the Board of Trustees,

Michael C. Alcott, President

Tom Check, Elizabeth Davis, Devin Judge-Lord, Elaine Macken, Rachel Michael, Mary Most, Jeff Muller, Kurt Steele

## **Finance and Investment Committees- Mitch Major, Treasurer**

We ended the previous fiscal year with a cash shortage, which resulted in a delay in paying our bills in June. We took an endowment draw of \$28,500 at the beginning of July. In addition, we had to pay two large bills from previous years totaling almost \$72,000. The 4% prudent draw for fiscal year 2014-15 is \$135,000. Due to these financial issues the board requested, and the congregation approved, up to \$87,000 in potential additional draws above the 4% prudent draw. As of May 4<sup>th</sup>, we have taken the full \$135,000 draw from the endowment.

Thanks to tremendous support from the congregation, we will need to draw significantly less than the \$87,000 approved.

Approximately \$20,000 in a special fundraising effort was pledged to help reduce our deficit. In addition, there were many cost cutting efforts. Religious Education reduced their budget by over \$3,000. Weaving the Fabric of Diversity, Sustainability, TNT's, all reduced their budgets. In addition, approximately 15 members of the congregation worked late to clean up following Unifair, thus significantly reducing the cost of paying employees to do this work. I am sure there were many other similar efforts that have gone unnoticed. Thank you to all for getting us through our financial difficulties.

The endowment is invested with Walden Asset Management, which provide monthly statements of the value of our portfolio and more in depth analysis on a regular basis. Walden invests our portfolio based on the congregation's Investment Policy adopted at the 2012 annual meeting, which is requires socially responsible investing. Walden invests in both high quality, investment grade, equities and bonds of U. S. based companies. The value of the endowment increased from \$3,871,370 on April 1, 2014 to 3,900,077 on March 31, 2015, representing an increase of .74%. This year the board has established a policy that all bequests be invested in the endowment. This fiscal year, \$10,000 has been received and invested in the endowment. In addition, another \$25,000 is expected in the near future.

This fiscal year more detailed analysis of the various accounts was completed. In addition, the board has just hired CPA, Kim Speights, to do our bookkeeping and accounting. Kim will work in the office 8 hours per week. In addition to general accounting duties, she will transfer our books from ACS to QuickBooks. These changes will help First Unitarian have more accurate and timely financial information to help us keep track of and improve our finances.

We will face additional challenges in fiscal year 2015-16. The budget the board is submitting to the congregation is a balanced based on new policies that were developed by the board to standardize the estimates. Ideally, revenues should match expenditures for the next fiscal year and it is much less likely we will have large unexpected bills.

## **Director of Congregational Life – Garnett Losak (Previously Director of Membership and Communications)**

In April of this year, the Board of Trustees, with the approval of the congregation entrusted me with additional responsibilities that come with eight additional weekly hours and a permanent staff position. I will continue to manage the membership and communications functions and have added some supervisory and strategic planning functions. I am excited to dive in. It is my hope that I will be able to develop systems that allow for smoother functioning of the administration, enhance leadership and volunteer satisfaction and, ultimately, build a congregation that is able to move ahead with the goals and strategies of the Forward Team.

### **2014-2015 Activities, Initiatives and Facts**

#### **Membership (see more about membership activities in the Membership Committee report)**

Our congregation continues to grow. In February we reported 217 members to the UUA (up from 202 the previous year). Currently, our voting membership is 229 and we anticipate it will be approximately 235 after the June 7<sup>th</sup> new member Sunday.

As of this writing, since July 1, 2014, 211 visitors have made themselves known to us through the completion of welcome cards, registering their children for Religious Education or attending a newcomer's orientation.

In an effort to enhance summer membership activities, we instituted a mid-summer newcomer's orientation and two mid-week potlucks on the patio. Both were well attended and will be continued this year.

#### **Communications**

The weekly e-newsletter was redesigned this year. It now includes pictures, additional "easy read" information and more links to additional information. We are now at 897 subscribers.

The Facebook Page crossed the 900 "likes" mark this month. With the help of several lay-editors, the page is updated regularly with new posts at least twice a week.

I have made several enhancements to the Website including the addition of the following pages,

- Several more ceremonies pages which include pictures and booking information
- Policies and procedures. We will continue to post these as they are made available.
- Forward First Brooklyn
- Mother Theater Project

At the last Annual Meeting I delivered a state of the congregation Power Point presentation (available on the website) that was extremely well received. I have been asked to do this again and expect that this will be a regular part of the meeting.

### **Sabbath Sunday**

During the 2013-2104 program year, Rev. Ana preached a sermon series reinterpreting The Ten Commandments for a Unitarian Universalist audience. Her sermon on keeping the Sabbath holy was especially well-received inspiring a “clinic” on how a UU Sabbath might look, a Facebook page and several independent commitments to taking time “to appreciate the abundance of what we already have”.

In response to this I instituted a series of four Community Sabbath Sundays. The first three were held on October 12<sup>th</sup>, January 11<sup>th</sup> and March 8<sup>th</sup>. They agenda included afternoon activities and “passivities” such as meditation walks, hymn sings, small group programs, quiet reading and meditation, Yoga, baking and more. Each Sabbath ended with a shared freshly baked snack and a short closing worship led by Rev. Ana. The first Sunday had more than 50 attendees, the second two had between 35 and 40. The fourth Sabbath Sunday is scheduled for May 31<sup>st</sup> and is intended to be an all-congregation picnic. Planning is still underway.

### **Other Activities**

Stewardship – I continue to provide back office and communications support for the Stewardship Team (see more about stewardship elsewhere in this report)

Small Group Ministry – I led a group and supported the program’s administration

### **Acknowledgements**

I work with the best program and administrative staff anyone could wish for. Thanks to each of them for making my job even better than I could hope.

Committee chairs, Lee Pardee (Membership), Peter Norling and David Garvoille (Stewardship) and the membership and stewardship committee members are among the most dedicated I have ever worked with.

Thank you to everyone who took a turn leading a Sabbath Sunday activity. This program sets us apart as a congregation. We couldn’t do it without your dedication to making it happen.



## **Director of Music – Adam Podd**

I have thoroughly enjoyed my first year serving First Unitarian. Though I have no first-hand frame of reference from past years here, I have gotten the sense from many of the members that this has been an exciting year for this congregation - music program included, and I couldn't agree more!

### **THE CHOIR:**

The Choir is the heart and soul of the music program here at First U. I had a great first year with this group and look forward to many more. Choir attendance is up! We've had as many as ten new choir members singing with us throughout this program year. We've explored lots of new repertoire, stretching ourselves with new genres and styles. First U's choir sang all but one Sunday with anthems from Bach to Beatles, and even premiered a handful of my own brand new arrangements.

Besides the regular Sunday services, the group sang for the annual Palm Sunday Music Service, First U's beloved Christmas Eve Music Service, and a very special Jazz Sunday Service. Palm Sunday included major works from the classical canon, and was accompanied by strings and woodwinds in a combined group of professional instrumentalists and First U congregants. The Christmas Eve service featured a brass quartet throughout, playing along with the performed music as well as the congregational carol singing. Jazz Sunday featured The Rad Trads, an 8-piece NYC band. The music was thrilling, and the congregation's response was overwhelming! It seems our members love jazz, love church, and really love combining the two! I hope to bring The Rad Trads back soon for more inspiring worship.

The choir also participated in an outside event as part of a theatrical production of *The Events*-taking the stage for an Off-Broadway performance at New York Theatre Workshop. This was a moving and memorable experience for everyone involved. It was a great production, critically-acclaimed, and the First U Choir did a terrific job representing this congregation to the greater NYC community.

### **SECTION-LEADERS:**

Our volunteer singers are supported every week by a professional quartet of section-leaders, who are also featured soloists throughout the year. The quartet put on an evening concert in February '*Songs of Love: For Better or Worse*' which was well attended and well received. The concert showcased the musical diversity of our quartet, with a wide range of repertoire and styles, all connecting to a theme of "Love". Sadly, our new baritone, Jon Dendy, moved away in March, and our beloved mezzo-soprano Melissa Paul-Perez has now stepped down from her section-leader position to focus on her upcoming role as a new mother! We all wish her well on her new journey.

**ADDITIONAL THANKS:**

Our services have been supported by a handful of other special guest instrumentalists and singers throughout the year who have made worship exciting, varied, and meaningful. Some professional, some volunteers - Some come from our own membership, and others from the outside community. I am thankful to everyone who has participated.

I would also like to thank the Worship and Music Committee for their support in logistics surrounding worship services, and our music fundraisers. This group worked *hard* to ensure everything ran so smoothly.

Lastly, The Julie McKinney Fund has, once again, been vital to the richness and breadth of music at First U. Members' generous contributions totaled \$6,655 which paid for all the extra hired musicians we saw and heard from this year. I am very grateful to all the contributors.

Looking forward to the years, services, and songs to come,

## **Director of Education Ministries – Meagan Henry**

We've had an exciting and active year here at First U, filled with new initiatives and many special RE programs. I am thrilled to be a part of this growing community of faith. Our children and youth Religious Education program continues to welcome new participants, and we are feeling the energy of these new families in our midst. It's been a pleasure to work with the Religious Education Council under the leadership of the Council Chair, Becky Huffman. I've enjoyed getting to know our new Music Director, Adam Podd, and I am grateful for all my hard-working colleagues. I appreciate our teamwork and ability to collaborate.

I'm happy to report that our new initiatives, such as the online RE registration form, Children's Chapel, and new ways of engaging the children and youth in worship have resulted in positive feedback and growth in our program. Our average Sunday RE attendance is up from 42 to 45 children and youth. We have 75 children and youth who participate in our program. I expect our numbers will continue to grow in the coming years, and I'm working with the RE Council to ensure we are prepared for additional participants. Some of these initiatives include enhanced teacher training and support, summer RE, a parenting group for new parents, and regular social justice projects.

We offered several special programs worth noting this year.

- Our Whole Lives (OWL) Kindergarten - 1st grade class with 14 children and 4 volunteer teachers.
- OWL class for 4th - 5th grades with 9 children and 4 volunteer teachers.
- Adult OWL 6-session class this spring with 12 participants and 3 volunteer teachers.
- Coming of Age class for 8th and 9th grades with 5 youth, 3 volunteer teachers, and 5 additional adult mentors.
- The High School Youth Group (10th - 12th grades) had 11 participants and 3 volunteer adult advisors. The Youth Group went on their Unitarian Universalist Pilgrimage to Boston for four days over Easter weekend. They visited the UUA Headquarters, attended Easter Service at Arlington St Church, toured Harvard Divinity School, visited Walden Pond, and at dinner and sang songs at the UU cooperative Lucy Stone House. I believe this experience gave them a wonderful opportunity to deeply engage with our faith and it is my goal for our community to have more opportunities like this in the future.

It's been a pleasure for me to participate in the Forward First team this year, and I look forward to engaging with the goals next year. I'm especially excited about creating an Adult RE team to begin creating our program for the future.

## **Auction**

This year's auction was held in the Chapel and Undercroft on May 10<sup>th</sup>. As in past years the evening included dinner with wine and beer and both silent and live auctions. It was a lovely evening, and we raised well-over \$8,000 for the church. Special thanks are due to Lee Pardee's small group ministry: Coco Wilde, Bruce Wilde, Robert Brackbill, Cara Haft, Mitch Major, and Laura Rizzo, for preparing a delicious dinner; to Peter Norling and Paul Eisemann for serving as our auctioneers; to Koren Manning, Liz Davis, Mark DeSolla Price, and Rod McFarlin, for keeping the books for the night; and to Vonda Brunsting and Gabriela Hoffman for setting up our silent auction. Congratulations to all our successful bidders and special thanks to all of our donors. We'll see you all again next year!

Sarah Morgan, Co-Chair  
Jaye Nelia, Co-Chair

## **Deacons**

The past year saw quite a bit of change for the deacons. At the 2014 annual meeting, Liz Davis was elected as a new deacon, filling the vacancy left when Alice Wong resigned to move out of state, closer to her daughter. Then, sadly, on May 31, 2015, long-time deacon Charlie King died. A memorial service was held on June 7th. The deacons have nominated Bruce Wilde to succeed Charlie.

This year the deacons selected the following members of First Unitarian to be honored as Members of the Month:

October	Nancy Welles
January	John Pritchard
March	David Garvoille
April	Jocelyn Smith

The deacons stand ready to assist clergy, trustees, committee chairs and any other congregants seeking counsel based on our many years at First Unitarian.

Deacons Nancy Wolf, Seth Faison, and Connie Newsom worked with the Worship and Music Committee to revise the communion booklet for the Good Friday worship service. The communion service is now available in an electronic version.

The deacons also arranged for a photographic portrait of Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons to be taken this year. The framed portrait will be displayed on the back sanctuary wall, along with all the rest of First Unitarian's senior ministers, in the fall.

Lee Pardee for the Deacons  
Seth Faison – Senior Deacon, Al Blanco, Tom Check, Elizabeth Davis, Olive Hoogenboom,  
Connie Newsom, Peter Norling, Nancy Wolf

## Facilities Management Committee

The Facilities Management Committee (F.M.C.) has been active throughout the year. This year, the F.M.C. has prioritized projects which concern the safety of our buildings, and has also worked on projects to enhance worship and our congregational life, and to respond to issues raised by our major tenant, the Imagine daycare center.

- 1) The F.M.C. worked on a project to stabilize and repair the spiral staircase leading from the Undercroft to the Vestibule level of the Sanctuary, and also two spiral staircases which lead from the Vestibule to the choir lofts and galleries. The F.M.C. believes that the completion of this project will enhance congregants' safety, as the spiral stairs are heavily used. The last phase of painting with a durable Epoxy floor coating involved the application of a coating of ground walnut shells on the edge of the stairs, to provide an anti-slip coating. We also replaced a section of a missing handrail on the west spiral stairs. F.M.C. Chair Elaine Macken managed the first phase of the project, which involved seeking bids from several contractors. The F.M.C. accepted a bid from a respected contractor, Thomas Simko Design and Restoration for \$8,107. F.M.C. Member David Thebus managed the second phase of the project in March and April, 2015.
- 2) The F.M.C. also worked on the restoration and repair of broken hymnal racks in the Sanctuary. The Welcoming Sanctuary Task Force (W.S.T.F.), chaired by Nancy Witherell, initiated the project. The F.M.C. continued to develop the project over the past year. The F.M.C. received a revised bid from Thomas Simko Design and Restoration, for repair of loose, broken or missing hymnal racks on the main level of the Sanctuary and also the repair of other Sanctuary woodwork including: the pulpit, a rear column, and a crest of a carved chair. The invoice for the revised project is \$4,490. David Thebus also managed this project in March and April, 2015.
- 3) F.M.C. members worked throughout the year with representatives of the Imagine Early Learning Center, our major tenant, and others on aspects of building-related issues associated with Imagine's lease-renewal, accreditation process, and to address several building-related violations. We are required under law and our lease agreement ("Shared Space Agreement") to maintain the spaces used by Imagine in a safe condition. During the late summer, 2014, in order to correct longstanding problems in the floor in the front 50 Monroe Place daycare center classroom, new vinyl composition tile was installed over newly-reinforced floor joists and a new sub-flooring, to provide a stable base for the tiles, at a cost of \$10,615.
- 4) Another F.M.C. project included the installation of a temporary repair to an area of the Chapel Floor following a partial collapse near the entryway. The F.M.C. is reviewing future options for the Chapel Floor.
- 5) The F.M.C. also co-sponsored two Sanctuary Clean-Up Days along with First Unitarian's NYC Sacred Sites tour planning group. The first day, held on Saturday, March 21, 2015 was a success. Volunteers worked to change light bulbs, and as a result, 26 out of 80 chandelier light bulbs were

replaced, as 32.5% of the light bulbs were inoperable. Other volunteers swept, vacuumed and mopped the chancel and aisles, the vestibule, and cleaned pews and woodwork. The F.M.C. is co-sponsoring a second Sanctuary Clean-up Day on Saturday, May 9, 2015 to continue to prepare the Sanctuary for the NY Landmarks Conservancy's Sacred Sites Open House weekend tour at First Unitarian on Saturday, May 16, 2015.

- 6) 2014-2015 fiscal year. F.M.C. projects for the remainder of the 2014-2015 fiscal year may include: repainting the Sanctuary Vestibule floor, repair of the two sliding fire doors between the Frances White Room and the Chapel, the first phase of repainting the exterior Sanctuary doors to prevent their continued deterioration; and repair of deep chips and scratches in the Sanctuary's newly-repaired front steps caused by improper ice removal.
- 7) 2015-2016 fiscal year. The F.M.C. plans to continue to work on projects which relate to the safety and preservation of our buildings during fiscal year 2015-2016. We seek to reduce future costs by preventing continued deterioration. The projects may include: structural analysis by a Professional Engineer (P.E.) or architect to assess the safety of the Sanctuary's galleries or balconies; short-term repairs to the Undercroft floor to address buckling; painting the Sanctuary's storm doors and wooden surround; painting the fence surrounding the Sanctuary; repair of "good" furniture in the Frances White Room; repair of the sidewalk around the church; repair of Old Furnace Room entryway and floor; and replacement of the Chapel vestibule Floor. Other projects may be beyond the scope of the F.M.C. budget, and await a future Capital Campaign.
- 8) The Facilities Management Committee meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Please contact Chair Elaine Macken for details. Please share any ideas or concerns about our historic buildings with any F.M.C. member.

Respectfully submitted,  
Liz Davis and Elaine Macken (Chair)

Sara Faison, Nancy Wolf, David Thebus, Gloria Furman,  
John Pritchard

## **Flatbush Fund Oversight Committee**

- 1) **Background:** The Flatbush Fund Oversight Committee was formed by the Board of Trustees in November, 2013 to provide oversight to the grants made from the Flatbush Fund. The Flatbush Unitarian Universalist Church was a small but thriving presence in central Brooklyn, located on Beverley Road and East 19<sup>th</sup> St., for over 100 years, until the early 1980's. For a number of reasons, the Flatbush UU Church's membership decreased until it could no longer maintain youth and adult programs, afford a part-time minister, or maintain its building. The Flatbush Congregation set aside a portion of the funds from the sale of their building to establish the Flatbush Fund, when it legally dissolved. According to those legal proceedings, our congregation,

First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn, was required to hold the principal of the Flatbush Fund in trust for twenty years, disbursing it only to “further Unitarian Universalist presence in Brooklyn” by establishing a new UU congregation in Brooklyn, if a group comes forward with a viable plan in accordance with UUA guidelines.

- 2) **Grants to Original Blessing UU Congregation:** During the past two fiscal years, our Board authorized grants from the principal of the Flatbush Fund to provide some funding for a new UU congregation, Original Blessing, in the Williamsburg and Greenpoint areas of Brooklyn. Following initial grants to the Original Blessing Congregation of \$12,000 to create a business plan and \$75,000 for general operations, First Unitarian Brooklyn's Board on April 9, 2014 authorized a two-part "challenge grant" to Original Blessing. The first part, which was met by Original Blessing, was a grant of \$50,000 which was made upon receipt of an "attestation" by Original Blessing that all members of Original Blessing had made financial pledges by June 30, 2014. The second part of the First Unitarian Brooklyn's Board's "challenge grant" to Original Blessing authorized that \$25,000 will be available from July 1, 2014 until June 30, 2015 "to match the cash received through pledge fulfillment and the Sunday offertory." As a part of the continuing grant oversight process, Flatbush Fund Oversight Committee Board Liaison Liz Davis has maintained contact with the Original Blessing Congregation during the 2014-2015 program year and has attended many of their worship services, and has also been invited to participate in discussions about the Original Blessing Congregation's future direction. First Unitarian Brooklyn Member Larry Calia, who was a member of the Flatbush UU Church and Elaine Macken (Board) have also each attended an Original Blessing worship service.
- 3) **Small Grants for Religious Education and Social Justice Initiatives:** In compensation for taking on the responsibility of managing the Flatbush Fund as a restricted fund within our endowment for twenty years, First Unitarian was permitted to use some of the interest earned by the Flatbush Fund, to enhance our religious education and social justice programs. On June 24, 2014, the Board authorized the award of small grants up to a total of \$2,000 from the Flatbush Fund, to groups that are working on social justice and religious education initiatives. The Flatbush Fund Oversight Committee worked on the grant application process and reviewed the grant proposals received. The Board approved the Flatbush Fund Oversight Committee's recommendation on August 19, 2014, that “small grants” from the Flatbush Fund be made to: 1) The Weaving the Fabric of Diversity Group (WFD) for \$600 to support WFD's three major events, the “Common Threads” Meal with the local Muslim community, the Haitian Friendship meal, the Juneteenth picnic, and other expenses, and 2) The R.E. Council, for \$500 to cover half of the cost of the Coming of Age (COA) program for eighth and ninth grade youth. On September 7, 2014, the Board also approved: 3) a small grant of \$900 per a grant request from Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons, to provide funding for three guest preachers to give sermons on topics related to social justice and religious education, during the 2014-2015 program year.

Flatbush Fund Oversight Committee Members:

Liz Davis (Board Liaison), Brian Dauth, Claire Sexton and Larry Calia.

## **Forward First Brooklyn Planning Team**

Late last year the Board of Trustees appointed the Forward Team and engaged a consultant, John Wimberly, to help First Unitarian Brooklyn plan for our future. Team members are Lee Pardee – Chair, Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons, Sean Fischer, Meagan Henry – Director of Education Ministries, Koren Manning, Rachel Michael (Trustee), Kurt Steele (Trustee), Coco Wilde, Nancy Witherell.

Over the past year the Forward Team has met with congregational leaders, held focus groups, presented at a congregational meeting and led a forum – all in order to discern our congregation's Purpose, develop goals that will enable us to fulfill our purpose and identify strategies that the congregation can use to achieve our goals. The purpose, goals and strategies have been endorsed by the Board and will be presented for congregational ratification at the May 17, 2015 annual meeting.

Proposed Purpose:

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

Goals:

1. Promote collective and individual spiritual exploration, growth, and practice
2. Cultivate a caring, welcoming community that models a just and loving world.
3. Equip people with the skills and confidence to become change makers for justice in their communities
4. Become an environmentally responsible congregation that serves as a powerful voice for sustainable living.
5. Develop and responsibly manage the resources needed to support the congregation's work and growth.

Lee Pardee  
Chair



# **Membership Council**

## **New Members – We Are Growing**

This year we have continued to welcome lots of newcomers every Sunday and new members throughout the year. (See the report of the Director of Membership for numbers.) Since the last annual meeting, we have held four New Member Sundays. Thanks to **Marty Bernstein** and **Lisa Kawamoto** for putting together the new member photos and biographies that are displayed on the Undercroft bulletin board and help us all get to know our newest members.

## **Newcomer Orientation**

Rev. Ana and Membership Director, Garnett Losak, continued our monthly Newcomer Orientation class, helping newcomers get started at First U Brooklyn.

## **Welcome and Fellowship**

Marty Bernstein, as chair of Welcome and Fellowship, has ensured that newcomers are greeted by friendly faces and useful information at the Welcome Table in the undercroft each Sunday. Among the most steadfast of those friendly faces are **Barbara Kennedy, Derek Pearl and Nancy Provost**. Membership Director **Garnett Losak** also staffs the table each Sunday. We thank them for helping our newcomers find their way.

## **Long-Time Members – Service of the Living Tradition**

On May 17 we are holding our fifth annual Service of the Living Tradition at which we recognize our long-term members. This year we recognize the following members for their years of dedication to First U Brooklyn:

### **10<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> anniversaries:**

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

Congratulations to all our honorees!

## Greeters and Ushers

Dawn Brekke was the coordinator for Greeters and Ushers for the 2014-2015 season. We launched an online sign up program with Signup Genius which had mild success recruiting. In general there was a favorable response to online sign up. There were 43 people who participated as usher/greeters including eight committed and caring Head Ushers: Michael Richardson, Marty Bernstein, Kurt Steele, Sean Fischer, Nancy Welles, Sara Morgan, Carolyn Haft and Ashleigh Wilkinson; and our wonderful Deacons: Al Blanco, Tom Check, Seth Faison, Olive Hoogenboom, Connie Newsom, and Peter Norling. Three congregants signed up for monthly Usher dates; Barbary Kennedy, Edwin Lord, Diana Lu.

An effort to coordinate the production team for the Sunday service was made. Head ushers were provided with the names of the Lay Leader (and vice versa), for special service directions, and the names of the Board responsible for the offertory.

We did experience a theft mid-way through the year and ushers were reminded to keep an eye out and to safe guard valuables. Goals for next year are to increase the number of monthly sign ups. Growing a sustainable weekend team will help to establish a knowledge base for dealing with issues and concerns for the welcoming team. Ideas for Usher/Greeters to consider are facilitating name tag wearing, assisting with visitors and greeting after service.

## Soup & Sandwiches

**Vonda Brunsting** with support from **Lila LoCurto** continued to organize our weekly Soup & Sandwiches this year, ensuring that all of us were able to get some food each Sunday before heading off to the next First U activity. Many thanks to Vonda for taking care of us all year and to all our congregation's cooks for their delicious soups.

## FUUDGE – First Unitarian Universalist Dinner Groups Extraordinaire

This year we continued FUUDGE – monthly gatherings of groups of newcomers and long-time members for food and fellowship, chaired by **Lee Pardee**. We had four groups this fall and seven more that met in the winter and spring. Over 60 congregants participated during the year.

Lee Pardee, Chair

Marty Bernstein – Chair of Welcome and Fellowship

Dawn Brekke – Greeter/Usher Coordinator

Rachel Michael – Trustee Liaison

Lisa Kawamoto

Eleanor Traubman

Ex officio members: Garnett Losak, Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons, Meagan Henry

## **The Mother Theater Project**

The Mother Theater Project of Brooklyn First Unitarian builds community through productions and workshops and explores the loss of the Divine Feminine in our secular culture with the goal of healing our loss and building a more just world.

### **PROGRAMING:**

#### **Group Outing**

During an organizational meeting in the spring of 2014 we determined that more group events to art shows and performances would be welcomed. In October we hosted and organized a group outing to see “Cipher” by Samita Sinha, a theatrical performance looking at notions of power while touching on themes of visibility and invisibility. The score ranges from structured to improvisational, melodic to atonal, embracing Sinha's diverse heritage and investigations: North Indian classical forms; American folk and blues; and pop and electronic music.

#### **Collaborative Project**

In December 2014 The Mother Theater Project joined with the Woman’s Alliance and the Twenties and Thirties groups to host a “Movie Night Out and Discussion Night In,” to see the film “She’s Beautiful When She’s Angry.” Over 50 people from the three groups, plus additional members of the congregation attended the film and/or the discussion night. The filmmaker, Mary Dore, joined the discussion at First U on December 9<sup>th</sup>. The evening was beautifully catered by the Woman’s Alliance. This was an amazing inter-generational exchange and the foundation on which to build further events, discussion and change. Key organizers included: **Dawn Brekke, Katie Trosselo, Kristin Schall, Rachael DeLano, Langdon Holloway, Kathie Ivans, Barbara Kennedy and Mariasara Alcott.**

#### **The Vagina Monologues**

This year we joined with V-Day, Eve Ensler’s organization, to end global violence against women and girls, to produce “The Vagina Monologues” by Eve Ensler. This collaboration brought wider awareness of our production and added cast members and audience from outside our congregation.

To enhance rehearsals for the play, we brought in Claire Sexton to do an abbreviated sex education workshop and Samita Sinha for a vocal workshop.

We were excited to have a diverse cast with an age range of 25 – 89. The cast included: **Judith Baldwin, Catalina Bertani, Madhavi Bhattaram, Dawn Marie Brekke, Vonda Brunsting, Rebecca Chin, Alexa Devin, Cindy Eisemann, Lisa Hanson, Tia Marie Hanson, Judy Gorman, Carol Henning, Barbara Kennedy, Christine Lloyd, Diana Lu, Rachel Michael, Mary Most, Jean Musacchio, Krystalla Pearce, Dawn Elane Reed, Kristin Schall, Ashley**

**Straw, Aria Walfrand, and Nara Williams.** In addition to the cast, our team included House Manager **Koren Manning** and several volunteers.

An initial reading of “The Vagina Monologues” was staged at the Theater of the New City in association with Tandava Arts and Fourth Universalist, our sister congregation in Manhattan. A small but enthusiastic audience helped us raise \$200 at the February 23<sup>rd</sup> performance.

Our audience at First Unitarian included over 200 people over the two night run (March 14th and 15th) including a sold-out performance on Friday night. We were surprised to find three separate high school groups in attendance on Friday night as part of various programs on woman’s rights and consent. The structure of the partnership with V-day required that we have a benefit partner. The Mother Theater Project worked for the Spiritual Alliance to Stop Intimate Violence (SAIV), and raised over \$2,000 for that organization. We were also able to donate \$1,000 to First U for use of the space.

### **March Outing**

On March 27<sup>th</sup>, 20 members and friends of First U attended Fourth Universalist’s V-Day production of “Emotional Creature.” It was an exciting partnership building event and one we hope to build on for further collaboration.

### **Workshop**

The rehearsal workshop with Samita Sinha was a great success we are planning an open workshop with the congregation in June. We hope to include a wider group of people both women and men, who are interested in exploring their voices.

### **PLANNING:**

Programming ideas for next year include work on body image, collaboration on a work by one of our cast members, and another monologue project, “Mother Wove the Morning” with Fourth Universalist.

It was suggested that we aim for \$1,000 in fundraising for Brooklyn First Unitarian. Although our goal is community building through the arts, we thought this was an acceptable goal for our group.

The Key Group Leaders of this year’s Mother Theater Project (TMTP) were **Dawn Marie Brekke, Dawn Elane Reed** and **Alexa Devin**. Participation included over 40 members and friends of First U.

Dawn Marie Brekke

## **Pastoral Care Team**

The Pastoral Care Team is honored to be entrusted by our Senior Minister to serve as her assistants in the care of this congregation. Once a month, Larry Calia, Paul Eisemann, Gloria Furman, Edwin Lord, Diana Lu, Nancy Provost, and I meet with Ana to discuss and address the inevitable needs that arise as each of us goes through life's passages.

This year we have tried to increase our visibility and improve upon our communication with and response to the needs of the congregation. We have also requested and received more help from members and friends, who though not formally connected with the Pastoral Care Team, have stepped forward to help their fellow congregants with immediate needs, such as meal delivery, hospital visits, and errands. Although we most often find ourselves caring for those who are dealing with illness, mourning, or some other difficulty, we also offer help times of joy, such as the arrival of a child.

In April, the Pastoral Care Team began holding regular listening sessions in the Peace Chapel immediately after the Sunday Service. This initiative has been met with an extremely positive response. One member of the team simply waits after the service for anyone who feels a need to speak about a concern or to make an appointment to speak with us or with Ana at a later time. Because we recognize that we are not there as clerical, social service, legal, or health professionals, (although some of us have worked in these areas) we are seeking training from experts outside of the congregation. This training will help us to be the best listeners that we can be and to understand when and how to help someone in need.

We look forward to continuing our work, and welcome suggestions that will allow us to better serve the congregation.

The best way to reach the Pastoral Care Team is to call the church office, and ask for a call from one of us, or by e-mailing [cocowilde@msn.com](mailto:cocowilde@msn.com).

Respectfully submitted,  
Coco Wilde  
Chair

## Religious Education Council

What a beautiful year it has been! This year the Religious Education Council and the Director of Educational Ministries, Meagan Henry, continued building on a strong foundation rolling out some new programs and routines for the children, youth and adults of our growing RE family. Some of them, like our “Rainbow Archway” and the special transition song (composed by Rev. Ana and Adam Podd) as the children leave the Sanctuary have already become beloved traditions here at First U.

Our major goal for 2014-15 was to develop stronger connections between “upstairs” worship and the religious education classes we have “downstairs”. We feel that this goal was met and we’re very proud of the wonderful learning and spiritual development that our community experienced this year.

One way we did this was by instituting a monthly Children’s Chapel. The Chapel themes were developed alongside Reverend Ana’s sermon series on the Parables of Jesus. Each Chapel included the usual elements of formal worship such as prayer, an offering, and music, but was geared to the interests and needs of children. Some children played music for the offering, while others led candle lighting or helped with the collection. Children’s Chapel proved to be a valuable and enjoyable experience we plan to continue next year.

Our programs and events are varied and it would take far too long to describe in detail all we have had this year in addition to our regular classes. They include:

- Spiritual Parenting discussion groups
- Special skating outings
- Movie nights
- “Boys Night”
- Coming Of Age
- Our Whole Lives (Sexuality Education) for K-1, 4-5th grades and, for the first time, Adults
- Youth Group (including a fantastic pilgrimage to Boston!)
- The Davol Bible Centennial
- Three beautiful and fun seasonal celebrations:  
Halloween, Winter Festival & Family Christmas Eve Service  
Spring Festival

And we have more even more wonderful plans in the works... including our VERY FIRST Summer Program for Children! This summer all children, Pre-K to Teens, will be invited to participate in fun explorations of the 7th Principle: World of Wonder. We will have books, science projects, games and toys for all ages. The summer program will be taught by a paid teacher and be offered every Sunday this summer from 11AM-12:15.

We are so grateful to all of the staff, teachers, mentors and volunteers who have given their time and talents to our Religious Education Program this year. It does indeed take a village to raise a UU child, and we have an amazing village and amazing children! THANK YOU!

By the Numbers: We currently have 75 children and youth enrolled in our programs. The total cost of the Religious Education program for the coming year is projected at \$16,550. More than ½ of that amount is covered by fees, fundraising and donations. We have asked for \$6,750 from the 2015-16 Budget.

As always, the Religious Education Council welcomes your questions, comments and suggestions! Please contact us!

Thank you!

Becky Huffman, REC Chair

## **Shawl Ministry**

The Shawl Ministry continues to be an active and enthusiastic group of yarn hand crafters. We meet on the third Sunday of each month after worship service throughout the ten months of the congregational society's year. During those meetings, members create beautifully designed and skillfully executed shawls. At the same time, they enjoy the unique fellowship that sharing ideas and instructing each other provide. A number of new members have joined this year. We work closely with the Pastoral Care Committee to identify and give shawls to those in our congregation in need of the comfort that those tangible gifts provide. Every year the Shawl Ministry provides a shawl for each of our bridging youth.

Our knitters are: Elizabeth Shaw, Edwin Lord, Beth Evans, Dawn Brekke, Lee Pardee, Alison McCluer, Travis Eisenbise , Zach Foster, Mi Puchon, Hannah Mancini, Helen Fields, Jeanie Wing, Margaret von Muller, and Lindsay van Miller.

Diana Lu

## Share the Plate Committee

For many years, First Unitarian has shared a portion of its collection with non-profit organizations that work for justice in our local community and throughout the world. Since our Share the Plate program was initiated, we have given away approximately \$10,000 annually.

In an effort to create a more inclusive process for selecting STC beneficiaries and in the spirit of our mission to fulfill our responsibility to the larger society by promoting justice and peace, the Board of Trustees formed a Share the Plate Committee (SPC) which is charged with soliciting nominations from the congregation and selecting, from those nominations, an organization for the month. This new process has been in place for over a year now. While there has been some participation from the congregation, the Share the Plate Committee is thinking of more ways in which to solicit feedback and recommendations. This is an area of continued growth for the Committee.

Additionally, the Committee is eager to incorporate volunteer/community work into the financial contributions. While it is wonderful that the congregation is so supportive of local and global social justice efforts, the next step is to have this work lived out amongst community members.

The SPC is excited to work together and appreciates everyone's contribution to this effort.

### Gifts since the 2014 Annual Report

May 2014	New York Abortion Access Fund	\$1,235
Summer 2014	Hand in Hand	\$885
September 2014	Ministers Discretionary Fund	\$1,437
October 2014	Ali Forney Center	\$1,040
November 2014	Doctors of the World	\$1,270
December 2014	UUSC	\$2,226
January 2015	Neighbors Together	\$1,253
February 2015	CHIPS	\$1,111
March 2015	Spiritual Alliance to Stop Intimate Violence	\$1,585
April 2015	First Universalist Church of Southold	\$663
	Holdeen India Program	\$330
	Ministers Discretionary Fund	\$578
TOTAL		\$13,613

Olivia Nunez for the Share the Place Committee  
Jocelyn Smith, Robert Patterson, Alexandra Gecker



## Stewardship Team

Our current 2014-15 fiscal year ends on June 30<sup>th</sup>. We not only met our pledge goal of \$275,000, but we exceeded it by \$1000. These numbers reflect a 4.5% increase in funds raised over last year's \$264,000 and an 11% increase in pledge units (172 vs. 155 in 2013-14). As of this writing there are still almost two months remaining in the fiscal year. During this time, we will send out pledge statement and reminders to those who have not yet completed their pledges. We thank all of our voting members and our pledging non-members for their generosity.

If congregational giving is a sign of member satisfaction, we are doing well. As of this printing, our fiscal year 15-16 pledges are already up 8.5% pledge-for--pledge over the current year. The 2015-16 campaign has so far raised \$256,000 with 143 pledging households reporting. We are at a healthy 88% of our goal of \$290,000 which we anticipate we will surpass before during the 2016 program year.

We would like to draw attention to the financial participation of our younger members and friends. First U is thriving because as our older members step off the stage, we have younger members to step up to take their place. Meena Dietrich's TnT (twenties & thirties) cocktail party was a tremendous success, with over 20 TnT's in attendance. We received 6 first time pledges and several more increased pledges. The event was an opportunity young adults to learn the importance of stewardship and how our church finances are handled. Our hope is that every year the TnT's can host a signature event that rallies this important demographic to pledge financial support.

Another signature event was our Family Stewardship Party, geared towards families with young children. This year's party, in the Chapel, was hosted by Dawn Elane Reed and Marie Johnson. About 40 adults and children attended. A craft and game table was set up to keep children entertained while adults discussed church finances and why giving matters to them. The lunch raised \$8,600, an increase of 20% over last year.

Our other stewardship events included cocktail parties, dinners and a brunch. With the exception of a couple of events, attendance was a bit soft this year. The stewardship team will consider some adjustments to the process in order to freshen up the campaign for the next fiscal year.

Thanks to the very hardworking stewardship team which includes Marie Johnson, Diana Lu, Koren Manning, Sarah Morgan, Lee Pardee, Nancy Welles and Bruce Wilde. Director of Congregational life, Garnett Losak was our staff liaison. Party hosts for this year were, Tom Check and Nancy Witherell, Meena Dieterich, Carolyn Ellis and Lake Wise, Seth and Sarah Faison, Marie Johnson, Diana Lu, Dawn Reed, Kurt and Pat Steele and Amanda White.

Respectfully Submitted,  
David Garvoille and Peter Norling, Co-Chairs

## Stewardship Statistics by Fiscal Year

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16 AS OF 5/6/15
<b>Number of Pledges</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>145</b>
Average Pledge	\$1702	\$1604	\$1732
Median Pledge	\$1000	\$995	\$1020
Mode (most common)	\$1200	\$1200	\$600
Goal	\$260,000	\$275,000	\$290,00
<b>Pledge Total</b>	<b>\$263,810</b>	<b>\$275,959</b>	<b>\$258,007</b>

## Sustainability Work Group

The Sustainability Work Group together with many dedicated members of our congregation has been meeting once a month to discuss various projects that we have been working on for the benefit of the congregation. I would like to extend special thanks to: David Meadows, Nancy Wolf, Connie Newsom, Mary Most, Anne Calder, Bert Rosenblatt, Laura Boldo, and anyone not specifically mentioned here who attended our meetings and inspired us or gave us feedback on the work that we're doing.

Nancy Wolf and David Meadows studied the feasibility of getting a free energy audit for our congregation's buildings. David Meadows has contacted the Energy Audit Contractor for NYSERDA and is now working with Rob Petrillo, our Director of Congregational Services to compile the information necessary to submit an application for an Energy Audit.

We studied the feasibility of initiating a rooftop Photovoltaic project on our congregation's buildings. 48 Monroe's roof proved to be the ideal location to experiment with solar panels because it receives practically constant sun throughout the day and it has its own boiler and also has a separate electrical system.

We contacted "Solarize Brooklyn" aka "Here Comes Solar". They were receptive to working with the church and other organizations to install panels on the mixed use portions of our buildings such as 48 and 50 Monroe. "Here Comes Solar" is a program in New York City that links other properties together to form larger solar energy projects.

We also identified a Solar panel kit that's "Plug and Play" meaning that it plugs into an outdoor outlet, is UL rated, and will disconnect if there is a system power outage. Each panel produces 100kW and can be linked with others for a total of five. Electrical current from the panels feeds directly into building electric service. Each costs ~\$1000.00. With a "Plug and Play" Photovoltaic system FUUB could begin using solar while not having to invest large amounts of resources. This would allow us to learn how to operate a Photovoltaic system.

Pending the results of the NYSERDA energy audit the SWG will submit a proposal for this and other Buildings' Sustainability Improvement projects to the Facilities Management Committee for review and approval.

We also discussed Energy Conservation Self Help which includes, training the congregation to turn off lights when not in use, and creating signage to communicate the need to turn off lights and close windows in the winter time. SWG needs volunteers to clean storm windows that don't work well because they're dirty. The possibility of using Magnetic window washers will also be explored.

In the coming year we need volunteers to study the possibility of applying to the UUA's Green Sanctuary Program, to work on getting a Heating Efficiency Survey for our congregation's buildings from National Grid, to work on getting a Water Efficiency Audit, and to coordinate the Sustainability Work Group's Activities with other faith based sustainability organizations in the local community that were identified by Anne Calder.

David Paul Thebus RA,  
Chair

## **Twenties and Thirties**

The Twenties & Thirties (TNT) group continues to grow and be a welcoming place for young adults to enter the FUUB community. Among other gatherings, we meet regularly for brunch and an evening of thoughtful reflection on what it means to be a religious young adult with Reverend Ana. We have co-sponsored events with The Women's Alliance, Weaving the Fabric of Diversity and the Mother Theater Project. TNT's are active in the FUUB community, filling usher roles, organizing small group ministry, teaching religious education and advising the youth group. This year we grew to 299 members! Every week we welcome more young adults and develop connection based in the UU faith.

Katie Trossello

## **UniFair**

The congregation ushered in the holiday spirit last December by making Unifair a day to remember. The annual extravaganza brought in \$10,276 beating the budget of \$9,500.

This year's marketing strategy focused on Unifair as a sustainability event, emphasizing "reduce, reuse and recycle" as our theme.

Fashionistas from the five boroughs crowded into the undercroft and the Frances White Room. The result was a combined profit of \$3,884 from the boutique, adult clothing and jewelry departments. The single highest sales, on the other hand, were tallied by the bake table, which had been supplied by a baker's dozen of cooks, to produce profits of \$2,193.

This year we moved the children's clothing department to the chapel from the Unifair closet off the undercroft where it is easier to peruse the multitude of tiny baby things available. The sellers reported that this was a much better location, not only for shopping but for staffing.

Above and beyond the money Unifair brought in, however, the event fostered and enhanced community spirit. More than one hundred members and friends of the congregation donated their time and energy. Master chefs Mariasara Alcott and Devin Judge-Lord (along with their helpers) chopped, sliced and diced the food for a gourmet lunch. Musicians Bob Bero and Bert Eisenstadt performed on the piano and guitar, respectively, while a heavenly host of enthusiastic singers provided the vocals.

When all was said and done, a clean-up crew of a dozen or so volunteers dismantled the whole works in preparation for the worship service the next day. Unheralded and unthanked, they also served.

The only sour note—mentioned here as a precaution for the future—was the startling volume of thefts, especially from the linens department. Forewarned is forearmed.

## **Weaving the Fabric of Diversity**

WFD works on living our principles in action by looking inwards and outwards to work for justice and equality within our congregation and in the general community. We form relationships outside our congregational walls, create informational forums, and take part in actions of witness.

### **DINNERS**

**Common Threads Dinner (Saturday, 11/8/14):** These dinners began in 2001 as a response to the violence shown against the Muslim community after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. Every year we become better acquainted with our guests and the event becomes warmer.

**Haiti A Celebration – Dinner With Entertainment (Saturday, 4/21/15):** Our relationship with Haitian grassroots 501(c)(3) organization FEDADSE (Federation des Associations pour le

Developpment du Sud Est) continues to grow in warmth and scope. This year we jointly organized a fundraising dinner with entertainment. Funds raised will be used for reforestation projects in Haiti.

**Juneteenth Service and Lunch (Sunday, 6/21/15) :** 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. This year's service will look at a history of struggle for freedom from Selma to Stonewall to Ferguson.

#### **FORUMS:**

**Meeting on the Selling of Public Assets (Friday, 10/18/14).** Since Feb. 2013, Citizens Defending Libraries (CDL) has been working to prevent the sell-off of NYC public libraries. Schools, hospitals, parks and public housing are also affected. This meeting of stakeholders discussed the commonality of the loss of public benefit and what can be done about it.

**Forum on Ferguson "Causes, Events, What Now?" Saturday 1/25/15.** An open public forum Speakers included Rev. Clinton Miller, Anita Neal (mother of a woman who died in police custody), and activists arrested in Ferguson.

**Discussion: Haiti: "How We Can Help in a Real Way" Sunday 1/1/15,** Discussion between First U members and members of FEDADSE about hands-on work in Haiti.

**Discussion on Homelessness and Supportive Housing Sunday 2/15/15.** Hosted Rita Zimmer, chair of Housing Works, with an aim towards developing volunteers within our congregation who would like to extend guidance and emotional support to families at risk.

#### **ANTI-RACISM WORKSHOPS**

**Sunday March 15** - Open to members and friends of our congregation

**Sunday May 3** - For the coming of age youth and their mentors

#### **ACTIONS OF IMMEDIATE WITNESS**

**Kyam Livingston Events: Monthly on the 21<sup>st</sup>.** Since August 2013 we have helped organize and taken part in monthly rallies or speakouts to protest the death of Kyam Livingston who was ill in a holding cell at Brooklyn Central Bookings and was denied medical help. She had been arrested on a minor matter and was never charged with a crime.

**Night Court Visit and Karaoke Friday 10/10/14** – A new idea to have some fun while we witnessed part of the criminal justice system in action followed by karaoke.

**YEARLY RETREAT – Saturday 6/6/15** - 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.

**ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Films and discussions with Jewish Voice for Peace. February – Film “Voices Across the Divide”, April – Forum on Mizrahi Jews

**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 especially like to thank Bob Bero for musical expertise for the Juneteenth Service, and David Garvoille for hosting the Haitian dinner.

**FUNDING** – Our funding this past year was from the congregational program budget (\$765) and a grant from the Flatbush Fund (\$600). We expect to have a shortfall and will have to fundraise an estimated \$600. All money has gone towards food and decorations for the dinners and Juneteenth lunch, as well as custodial and child care costs.

## **Women’s Alliance**

The Women’s Alliance and the Mother Wove Group cosponsored a successful dinner discussion on December 9<sup>th</sup> following the viewing of the movie *She's Beautiful When She's Angry*. This was an inter-generational exchange building on the Continuum of Faith luncheon we held last spring. Mary Dore, the filmmaker, joined us to listen to responses and hear feedback. We had 30 members of First U attend the film as a group and at least another 10 attended independently.

We continued our own movie series in the spring with three documentaries concerning women, two of which highlighted discrimination against women jazz instrumentalists and back-up vocalists in the music industry.

The Women’s Alliance plans to inaugurate a leadership grant program for women. Two grants per year for up to \$300 each will be awarded to allow women to pursue educational opportunities to enhance knowledge and skills.

Our Annual meeting on April 26<sup>th</sup> featured a Ritual of Celebration of women who have influenced our lives. Our guest speaker was Rev. Maureen Dean, a student at Union Theological Seminary who led a moving discussion and ceremony.

Kathleen Ivans  
President

## **Worship and Music**

This year has been an exciting and successful one for the Worship and Music Committee. The congregation welcomed our talented and resourceful new Music Director, Adam Podd, and we worked hard to support his and Rev. Ana's vision for worship services in significant ways.

As a committee, we are tasked with many behind-the-scenes responsibilities to make weekly Sunday services, as well as the special holiday services, run smoothly and meaningfully. This year, we took an active role in service planning for Good Friday, the Community Seder, and the Flower Communion. During the summer months, we develop, coordinate and assist all of the lay-led services held in the Chapel from June 21<sup>st</sup> through September 6<sup>th</sup>.

In addition to this ongoing work to enhance the congregation's spiritual life, we have sponsored three very successful and enjoyable musical events this past year: the "Love – for Better or Worse" concert produced by Adam and our choir's four outstanding section leaders, just in time for Valentine's Day; the "Bring in the Spring Cabaret," featuring performances by dozens of congregants and directed by Bob Bero; and a special organ recital by the esteemed Walter Klauss to celebrate the 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the restoration of our church's historic instrument. We received rave reviews from attendees of these community events, and we're glad to have added to the vitality of our congregational life.

Proceeds from these fundraisers exceeded our goal for the year, and we're happy to report that we brought in \$2,680 for First Unitarian. In addition, the organ concert allowed us to raise \$837 for new sheet music so that Adam, our musicians and singers will be able to expand the repertoire for our services throughout the year.

In my first year as Chair of this committee, I've been honored to serve with my predecessor, Bob Bero (who plans to "retire" from the committee at the end of this church year); Bob Patterson, who recently stepped down after 13 years; Robert Brackbill, Emily Mathieu, Drew Peterson-Roach, Claire Sexton, and Bruce Wilde.

Cara Haft  
Chair

FIRST UNITARIAN  
CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY  
**BR****KLYN**  
A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

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**Rev. Ana Levy Lyons – Senior Minister**

**Meagan Henry – Director, Education Ministries**

**Robert Petrillo – Director, Congregational Services**

**Adam Podd – Director of Music**

**Garnett Losak – Director of Congregational Life**

**Dr. Donald W. McKinney – Minister Emeritus**

**Rev. Dr. Orlanda Brugnola – Chaplain Emerita**

**William Peek – Music Director Emeritus**

**Bert Eisenstadt – Director, Children’s Music**

**Paul Eisemann – Interim Sexton**

**Carl Davis – Custodian**

**Elizabeth Deterville – Nursery Caregiver**

**Michael Alcott – President, Board of Trustees**

**Trustees: Tom Check, Liz Davis, Devin Judge-Lord, Elaine Macken,**

**Rachel Michael, Mary Most, Jeff Muller, Kurt Steel**

**Clerk – Christine Lloyd    Treasurer – Mitch Major**

**Seth Faison – Senior Deacon**

**Deacons – Alfred Blanco, Tom Check, Liz Davis, Olive Hoogenboom,**

**Constance Newsom, Peter Norling, Lee Pardee, Nancy Wolf**