

BROOKLYN

The First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

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Dear First U Members and Friends,

As we prepare to bid Rev. Ana farewell for her sabbatical, we also launch into another stewardship season, and it's a perfect time to reflect on the things we love about First Unitarian. Here are just a few things that your co-presidents love:

- A Growing, Thriving Community. We've grown by over 100 members since Rev. Ana began her ministry in 2012.
- Uplifting Multigenerational Worship. Our monthly jazz Sabbath Sundays delight children and inspire adults. Attendance at Second Sunday Jazz services is the highest of the month, sometimes attracting 300 or more people to our congregation.
- Improvements to our Beautiful Spiritual Home. We've revitalized the undercroft and bathrooms, remodeled our kitchen, created access to the bathrooms from the chapel, and made significant "green" improvements to the building. This spring we will be installing a new modern sound system in our Sanctuary.
- Raising Amazing Kids. Our youth travel the world together learning about our history, themselves, and what it means to be UU. Our young people go on to the Peace Corps, work in environmental and social justice, teach, volunteer their time for progressive causes, and much more.
- "Sharing our Plate." We've donated more than \$100,000 to organizations doing vital work in the world since the inception of the program.

This year, through our stewardship campaign, we want to "**Amplify What We Love.**" That is, we want to lay the financial groundwork to continue building on what makes First Unitarian so special and bring Unitarian Universalism, social justice work, and progressive spirituality to even more people during these trying times.

It's important to us to note two themes of our work in recent years that have gotten us to where we are today, and are worth amplifying:

- 1) **We're making bold choices:** installing a wheelchair lift on an almost 200-year-old building, making our eating practices sustainable, offering sanctuary to asylum seekers with 24-hour volunteer support, supporting four immigrants in the homes of First U members and friends.
- 2) **We're working smarter:** creating more efficient office practices that have saved us thousands of dollars, developing replicable processes for rentals that have allowed us to triple our rental income as well as provide space to justice and arts organizations, better preparing newcomers for congregational life through a shared path to membership.

When the 2020-21 church year commences and Rev. Ana returns, we have big plans to **Amplify What We Love** within and outside our walls. We believe that starts with three key goals:

- **Furthering Accessibility.** Everyone should be able to comfortably worship at First U. We've already begun work to make the undercroft accessible to people in wheelchairs by installing a lift from the chapel down to the Undercroft. We now need to create a space in the Sanctuary for congregants in wheelchairs to sit comfortably. Finally, we want to install grab bars and an ADA compliant toilet and sink in the all genders undercroft bathroom.
- **Expanding Opportunities and Modalities for Worship.** Worship is the lifeblood of everything we do at First U. It's the heartbeat of our social justice work, commitment to our values, opportunities for connection and friendship, and bravery to take bold action in a world that desperately needs it. To that end, we'd like to begin a midweek evening service, led by Ana and our amazing ministry team and made complete by Adam's beautiful music. This intimate service will meet the needs of congregants who crave a more pastoral-sized setting, with music, chanting, meditation, and voiced joys and sorrows. We expect this service to grow our membership even further, and provide our members and friends a deeper sense of connection and spiritual practice to guide them on their life's journey. We'd also like to strengthen our holiday worship by adding a jazz service to our Christmas Eve programming (in addition to our Candlelight Service and family services).
- **Staffing for growth to serve our thriving membership.** Our staff does exemplary, strategic work and should be compensated in the higher end of what the Unitarian Universalist Association recommends. We also need the financial flexibility to think strategically about staffing for our growing congregation.

Although we can't do everything at once, we can begin to financially lay the groundwork by raising an additional \$30,000, or \$150 per pledge (**\$12/month**). We understand that not everyone has the ability to increase their pledge by that amount, so if you're able to do more, please do!

This Sunday we will be sending Rev. Ana off on her Sabbatical with a post worship brunch. All are invited. This will also be a time to celebrate our many successes during her tenure and begin to prepare for our next seven years together. There is a pledge form enclosed. If you are ready to make your pledge, please bring your completed pledge form with you on Sunday. We want to kick off our campaign with a bang. You may also return your form in the enclosed envelope or scan and email it to Garnett Losak. If you prefer to meet with a member of our stewardship team to discuss your financial commitment, contact Garnett (garnett@fuub.org or 718-624-5466). She will be happy to set something up. All pledges are due by April 5th.

Please know that your gift, whatever the size, is received with gratitude. Your pledge should give you a joyous feeling of generosity, but never be a burden. We also want to take this time to thank you for gifts of time and talent that have helped us get to this auspicious time in our congregation's long history.

Let's amplify what we love!

Sam McKelvie & Dawn Elane Reed
Co-Presidents, Board of Trustees