


FIRST UNITARIAN  
CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY  
BROOKLYN  
A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

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## ANNUAL REPORT

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### Fiscal Year 2019-2020



This report covers two almost distinct periods in our congregation's history, before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, it became apparent that COVID-19 was headed for New York and that significant adjustments to congregational life would be needed in order to keep our members, friends, and staff safe. At the same time, our senior minister, Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons, was preparing to leave for a 5-month sabbatical and Rev. Michael J. Crumpler had been retained as Sabbatical Minister. Rev. Ana's Sabbatical began in March 1<sup>st</sup>. On March 8<sup>th</sup>, Rev. Crumpler preached his one and only Sanctuary sermon followed by a welcome reception with cake and ice cream in the Undercroft. On March 15<sup>th</sup>, the staff prepared an on-line worship service from the Frances White Room, and on March 23<sup>rd</sup> the worship staff began services on the Zoom platform from their homes. At the end of May with the pandemic still raging through the United States, the murder by the Minneapolis police of George Floyd, a black man, became the catalyst for worldwide protests against police brutality toward people of color. The upheaval, coupled with the pandemic, and the controversial presidency of Donald Trump, created a level of social unrest unseen in the United States since the 1960's. This report will reflect congregational activities from before and after the onset of the pandemic and is prepared as protests continue on the streets of our city, our country, and our world.



JUNE 14, 2020

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## 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.*

*Adopted by the Congregation, May 17, 2015*

### Section 1: Staff

Director of Education & Family Ministry

Meagan Henry

To say that writing my Annual Report during a global pandemic is surreal is the only way I know how to describe it. My friends, we are in strange and scary times. We are in the midst of a great unveiling of the structural inequities in all of our systems, from healthcare to education to the prison industrial complex. And yet, I am hopeful for the future of our world because of the incredible love and generosity spilling forth from this congregation and so many life-centered institutions and communities. As Arundhati Roy writes, “Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine the world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through it lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.” (<https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>)

I, for one, am ready to walk through the portal into the next world! I am ready, not only to imagine that world, but also to fight for it. I believe we can do this by living our Unitarian Universalist values every day, from our smallest interactions to our decisions about how we spend our money, what food we eat, what businesses we support, how we raise our children, and how we treat one another in our faith community. In this spirit, I will spend this summer planning for how to adapt our community of children, youth, and adult faith development and religious education to an online format that serves us as fully as possible for the upcoming congregational year.

Now, let's celebrate what we accomplished this year:

- We started off with a bang last Fall, offering monthly themed Second Sunday Jazz worship that was truly multigenerational. Our worship, religious education, and music teams worked hard to create fun, engaging, and spiritually meaningful all-ages worship experiences, and by all accounts we were quite successful. Our service themes were as follows: Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, Noah's Ark, Jonah and the Big Fish, the Story of Moses, and the annual Purim Spiel. Several of these special services included plays with both children and adult actors. We also pushed ourselves to think outside of

the traditional worship box by using light shows, puppets, ribbons and movement to bring these stories to life.

- We celebrated a fun Winter Holiday Pageant re-telling of A Charlie Brown Christmas, followed by our Annual Winter Festival, visited as usual by Santa Claus!
- Our children's choir, led by Children's Music Director Bert Eisenstadt, led the elementary school choir in some beautiful arrangements during worship.
- We added a second family service to our popular offerings on Christmas Eve. Both the 3 o'clock and 4 o'clock Carols and Lessons services in the Chapel were well attended.
- Family Retreat at Murray Grove in February with fun for all ages including yoga classes, nature walks, delicious homemade food, a firepit, s'mores, and a sing along!
- Family Sleep-Over in the Chapel, complete with a spooky behind the scenes tour of the building with Mr. Chris Johnson.
- Three Family Games Nights that helped us to keep the winter blues away!
- We held several children and youth programs: two sessions of Our Whole Lives - one for 4th graders and one for Jr. High, monthly multigenerational worship, themed workshop rotation for grades 2-5, Building Bridges for 6th grade, and High School Youth Group. Unfortunately, many of these classes and activities were cut short by the coronavirus global pandemic.
- Hindsight, Humor, and Hope: Who Me, an Elder? Meagan offered this Adult RE class on aging gracefully. The class was sponsored by the Women's Leadership Alliance and co-hosted by Langdon Holloway.
- Single Parent's Covenant Group started last Fall and meets monthly.

Although we halted all in person gatherings in mid-March, we moved as much as possible to online formats:

- The High School Youth Group never stopped meeting, but moved to zoom immediately on the first stay at home Sunday, and the group quickly adapted their plans in order to offer the Youth Worship Service on March 29th, only the third Sunday of online worship.
- Tuesday and Thursday evening story time for middle elementary
- 4th grade class check-in each Sunday
- 6th grade class check-in each Sunday
- 7th & 8th grade class, Jr High Youth Group check-in most Sundays
- The RE Council, spearheaded by Becky Huffman, sponsored a fun online Easter Party after the service that was especially fun for some of our younger elementary age kids.
- The number of children and youth in our Religious Education (RE) program continues to hold steady and our families are deepening their relationship to the congregation through fellowship and service.

Thanks to the continued and generous financial support from the Women's Leadership Alliance, Sara Gush, a Field Education Student from Union Theological Seminary, served as the Religious Education Assistant from August through late May. Ms. Gush's duties included coordinating and providing administrative support for our entire Religious Education program, including the Our Whole Lives programs we started but were unable to finish due to the covid-19 virus. Having Ms. Gush's administrative assistance and Sunday RE teacher support freed me up to do more pastoral care, check-ins, and relationship building with RE families, as well giving me the space

to be centered and present on Sunday mornings. Ms. Gush proved to be an incredibly valuable asset when it became necessary to move our programming online. Although her last day working with us was May 25th and we will miss her dearly, we are happy and proud that she has moved on to her calling as a hospital chaplain at Duke University Hospital.

The work we do is made possible by all the amazing RE Volunteer teachers and the members of the REC. This year's REC members are MariaSara Alcott, Michele Ascione, Sarah Ladner-Gomez, Clare Robinson-Henrie, Becky Huffman (Council Chair), Andrea Parkinson, Denise Wharton, and June Wohlhorn. Many thanks to our REC Board liaison, Dawn Elane Reed and my staff liaison to the Board, Sam McKelvie.

***Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn Religious Education 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.*

*Written with input from Becky Huffman - Chair, Religious Education Council*

Garnett Losak

Director of Congregational Life

The bulk of this year happened before the onset of the pandemic, but everything before March 15<sup>th</sup> seems like eons ago and it is hard to remember “time before COVID”. That said, most of the first part of this program year was productive and exciting.

**Our Future Together**

For me, the highlight of the year was the installation of our outdoor wheelchair lift. This project held a special place in my heart, the culmination of several years of hard work of fundraising, grant writing, cajoling, and (occasionally) foot stamping. On December 8, 2019, June Wohlhorn cut the ribbon on our new lift and she and Kathy Sonderman were the first to enter the Sanctuary while using wheelchairs. It was soon discovered that several adjustments to the lift hardware and programming would be needed and the lift was completely repaired by March 15<sup>th</sup>, just in time for the pandemic to force us out of the Sanctuary. On a happier note, we received a very generous \$15,000 grant to complete the accessibility project with a lift from the Chapel to the Undercroft which will make the all-genders/disability bathroom accessible. Chris Johnson has been completely the carpentry work necessary for the installation and it is anticipated that the lift will be ready for use when we are able to return to our building.

I continue to be saddened that so many of our members and friends did not live long enough to make use of the lift. I am especially thinking of John Pritchard and Larry Calia who died in the past year, both of whom made generous donations to the project.

Many thanks to everyone who made donations to the Our Future Together Campaign which partially funded the lift and especially to the Our Future Together Team: Tom Check, Liz Komar and Lee Pardee who created the fundraising program and applied for a \$10,000 grant from the Gardner Foundation (administered by Landmarks).

### **Capital Campaign – Building Our Future**

This winter, I began work with the Capital Campaign committee to develop a plan to raise \$500,000 for a restricted capital fund that will support the maintenance of our building for the next quarter century (see minutes of the 2019 annual meeting). With input from the committee, I created a Power Point deck that was shown to several long-time, top-level donors for their input. This stage of the campaign is on-going. Plans for a wider release of the presentation and the next stage of the campaign are not yet set. To date, the campaign has raised pledges of \$75,000.

### **Membership**

Many of our young adult members and families have chosen to move out of New York City. This is not a surprise. New York, and Brooklyn especially, has become too expensive for many people. Members have left Brooklyn to care for aging parents, attend graduate school, for new employment opportunities, and to find less expensive housing. For those people for whom our congregation was their first experience with Unitarian Universalism, I hope we have helped to build a denominational foundation and that they will find spiritual community in their new homes.

We welcomed 24 new members this year, 7 of whom were honored with an on-line ceremony as part of our June 7<sup>th</sup> worship service. Our current member total is 282. While our membership has remained relatively consistent over the past several years, there are other ways to measure the success of a congregation. These include Sunday service attendance, congregational generosity, and Sunday school enrollment. By all these measures, we continue to be a thriving (and growing) congregation.

Before the pandemic, the Membership Committee had embarked in a period of discernment, considering its goals for the future, and continuing to create a congregational environment that is welcoming to all people. While that work continues under different circumstances, the committee has not met this spring. It is my hope that committee work will resume over the summer and into the fall.

### **Stewardship**

The 2018-2019 fiscal year ended with a bang, raising \$331,000 in paid pledges, the most in recent history. So far, in the 2019-2020 fiscal year we have posted \$270,000 in paid pledges with \$83,000 yet to collect.

So far, for the year ending July 30, 2021, we have just over \$302,000 in pledges with a goal of \$370,000.

This is a challenging time. Many people have lost employment and others are fearful for their financial future. We hope that our members and friends can find a way to supporting their congregation to the best of their ability.

Other donations of note (as of June 4, 2020)

- Julie McKinney Music Fund: \$14,100
- Year-End Appeal (for Sanctuary sound system upgrade) - \$16,232
- Minister's Discretionary Fund (special Pandemic appeal) - \$11,214
- Non-Pledge Donations: \$14,800

### **Bequests**

We received two generous bequests this year.

- From the estate of John Pritchard - \$106,000
- From the estate of Larry Calia – \$17,000

We are extremely grateful to both of these long-time and beloved members for their generosity. The funds have been deposited in our endowment as is required by congregational policy.

### **Fundraisers**

Once again, I served as the UniFair banker, working in the office for the day. I find that I'm quite happy in that role as it give me a unique perspective on the event. For more about UniFair, see the report of the Board of Trustees.

I worked closely with our auction chairs, Mary Huhn and Abby Grosslein to create a unique online auction experience. The event was far more successful than we hoped raising more than \$9,500 for the congregation (see more in the auction report).

### **Share the Plate**

Please see the committee report

### **Other Financial News**

- In April 2020, with the help of our office manager, Wendy Russell and Trustee, Andrew Bongiorno, I applied for and we received a paycheck protection program (PPP) loan from the federal government of \$108,000. The loan replaces two and half months of staff compensation costs and is 100% forgivable at the end of the term as long as we retain all of our employees at full salary.
- I have been working closely with Patrick Gunn, Carolyn Ellis and our Board Liaison, John Carroll, in preparation for negotiations with our primary tenant, Imagine Daycare, whose lease ends in August 2021. More information on the work of this task force will be made available at the annual meeting.
- Both of our residential apartments are rented through the end of the coming fiscal year.
- Our "other rental" business was curtailed this spring, but as of the end March, we had raised just over \$50,000 toward our operating budget. If the pandemic had not curtailed

building rentals, we undoubtedly would have overtaken the projected \$60,000 budget. I have been receiving calls and emails asking about potential rentals for the next year. It is too early to know when we will be able to accommodate events, but it is clear that our spaces continue to be desirable.

- For the first time we exceeded our \$10,000 ceremonies budget, raising over \$13,000 through March 2020. Three weddings planned for the spring have been rescheduled for this fall.

### **Communications**

Communicating with the members and friends of our congregation has become a more critical part of my responsibilities since the start of the pandemic. I have begun sending two regular e-blasts each week, one on Monday with a focus on the week's programming, and another on Saturday morning that includes detailed information about Sunday including the Order of Service. These email notifications are in addition to postings on social media, and occasional notifications from our Board co-presidents.

I have been fielding significantly more emails and phone calls than usual as people require more information about how to connect to worship or other programming, how to receive pastoral attention, and other general information.

Currently we are reaching the community through the following media

- E-News: 1,500+ subscribers
- Facebook: 1,800+ fans
- Google Business: 47 reviews/4.7 average rating (out of 5)
- Instagram: 266 followers
- Twitter: Still Evolving
- Website: No analytics available, website is updated at least one time per week.

### **Public Ministry**

I consider it my duty to our mission to support community activities through low-cost or pro bono building rentals. This year, we provided space to the following organizations:

- New Kings Democrats
- Democratic Socialists Electoral Group
- Youth Boxing for Change
- Arab American Family Center
- Sadhana Progressive Hindus
- Noel Pointer Foundation
- Lambda Independent Democrats
- New York Peace Institute
- Housing Rights New York
- Extinction Rebellion
- Youth Advocacy Corps
- Close the Camps
- 12-step programs

Currently, we have opened our chapel as a respite for protesters. Volunteers from our congregation and other organizations are staffing the space with requirements for social distancing. Visitors may use bathrooms, recharge phones, refill water bottles, rest and, thanks to the many generous folks in our congregation, get a snack.



For the second year, I hosted a community Thanksgiving dinner. Our resident Alcoholics Anonymous group paid for the turkeys which were roasted in the church kitchen. The rest of the meal was provided potluck style. About 40 people attended the event which was held mid-day in the Undercroft and included a post-repast time for board games. Thanks to the many people who came early to help with the preparations or stayed late to help with clean-up.

I have accepted an invitation to join the Unitarian Universalist Association of Membership Professionals (UUAMP) board of trustees. This is a 3-year term beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>. The election will coincide with the UUAMP annual meeting (held virtually) on June 24<sup>th</sup>.

This year, I will serve our congregation as a delegate to the 2020 General Assembly. GA was planned for Providence, Rhode Island, but will now be held virtually on Zoom.

### **Pastoral Care**

By mid-March, it became clear that pastoral attention would require an “all staff on deck” approach. As a member of the staff team, I have been heavily involved in developing programming for connection and pastoral care since the start of the pandemic. Early on we knew that members of our congregation would need opportunities to connect throughout the week. We instituted daily check-ins, events for families (see Meagan Henry’s report) and programs for socializing. In Mid-April, Ethan Loewi, intern minister, created a template for a weekly prayer service that will continue at least through the summer. I lead the following events:

- Thursday check-in (plus fill-in as needed)
- Wednesday evening community dinner
- Evening Prayers (monthly rotation)
- Newcomer Orientations (first Sundays)

Additionally, I have provided one on one pastoral attention as requested.

### **Worship**

A highlight of the pandemic period has been the quality of our worship services. Not knowing what to expect, the staff quickly went to work planning worship that would be accessible from home, would include music and spoken word, and would be as inspiring as our Sanctuary services.

Counting accurate attendance at our services is impossible, but it is clear that we are reaching at least as many people as we would if we were worshipping in the Sanctuary. Zoom logins reach approximately 150 or more each week, plus 50-100 live views on Facebook. Assuming 1.5 people per computer screen, we estimate at least 300 people viewing live each week, plus additional views on Facebook throughout the week.

My involvement, while as a support player, has been extremely rewarding. I continue to provide weekly announcements, but also have the honor of closing the “candle lighting” with a short prayer of my own that I write each week to complement the theme of the service. It is unusual for a Membership Director to be included in worship planning, let alone be given a speaking

part. I am eternally grateful to my generous colleagues for considering me to be an integral part of that process.

I worked closely this spring with the summer worship planning team led with great enthusiasm and amazing competence by Bridgette Raes. We decided, for the first time, to join the General Assembly worship this year. This will not only give our whole congregation a taste of GA and an opportunity to join with thousands of UU's all over the world, but give our staff a rest from worship planning. The rest of the schedule includes members and friends from all areas of our congregation including services planned by Immigrant Solidarity, The Women's Leadership Alliance, The Queer Caucus, and Weaving Social Justice.

### **Conclusion**

This year marks the end of my 7<sup>th</sup> year as a member of the paid staff. I realize that many of our current congregants have only known me to be a staff person even though the bulk of my association with this congregation has been as a volunteer member for almost 20 years before I was given the opportunity to serve professionally. My role, initially half time then three-quarter time Director of Membership and Communication, and now fulltime Director of Congregational Life, continues to evolve as the needs of the congregation change over time. As someone who embraces change, who loves a challenge, and whose primary skill is getting things done, I have relished these years and consider them to be the most fulfilling of my professional life. I thank every one of you for supporting me and giving me joy in my work.

Thank you especially for my administrative and building team for making my job so much easier: Wendy Russell (Office Manager), Christopher Johnson (Director of Facilities), Ian Hurt (Fulltime Custodian), Bobby Blackman (Part time custodian) and to my colleagues, Meagan Henry, Adam Podd, Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons, Rev. Michael J. Crumpler (Sabbatical Minister), Ethan Loewi (Intern Minister) and Sara Gush (Women's Leadership Alliance Seminarian) for challenging me and encouraging me every day.

### [Adam Podd](#)

Music Director

This program year (my 6th) began like every other year at First Unitarian that I can remember - in the fall with enthusiasm, a robust choir, and exciting worship. And, as the year went on, we upheld many of our beloved traditions.

- Our amazing choir helped lead worship at every single Sunday morning service from September to March.
- We kept our monthly jazz services with a full band, supported by your generous donations to the McKinney fund. This year, our Second Sunday series was new and improved for all ages, in collaboration with the RE program, and Ana's sermon series on Bible Migration stories.
- Our Candlelight Christmas Eve service was just as amazing as always, with a variety of music ranging from medieval carols to Joni Mitchell, and featuring our choir, section-

leaders, and a brass quartet. As has become the custom on Christmas Eve, the program contained staples from the repertoire as well as my brand-new arrangements for our singers, brought to life for the very first time that night.

- We raised over \$15,000 to make major improvements to the sanctuary sound-system, and even began some of the electrical work needed to get those new and updated elements installed. I'm hoping this will be an exciting thing to implement as part of our triumphal re-entry to the sanctuary whenever that occurs.

Since the COVID crisis, while so many aspects of life as we know it have come screeching to a halt, certainly First Unitarian and its music program have not!

I began a series of weekday live musical meditations on the First U Facebook page, which started the very first week we were out of the Sanctuary and have continued ever since for a total of 60 live videos.

Special thanks to Tyrone Davis Jr., Dan Emino, Sharisse Francisco, and our section leaders (Candice, Dennis, Brandon, and Kiena) for their contributions

As our worship services went virtual, my responsibilities changed drastically and like many others, I found myself in what felt like a new job. This has included recruiting guest musicians, and programming music for the new format of "virtual church". This came as a huge challenge, with the absence of two of our biggest assets for making music at First U: 1.) The sanctuary, with its beautiful acoustics and instruments, including the organ... and 2.) of course our amazing choir, who I miss dearly. To help lead worship, we have had a different guest musician each week since the Zoom services began, and the music and worship has been very well-received. We found lots of ways to fight back against the limitations and "impossibilities" these circumstances have put in our way as people who long not only to make music, but to make it with one another.

One of the exciting successes that has come as a result of this time of separation was the creation of a brand new arrangement of "How Can I Keep From Singing" for choir and orchestra by my brother Matt and me. This arrangement, which came into existence as a virtual choir video, featured over 100 singers (including the First Unitarian Choir) as well as a 40 piece orchestra. The video, edited by 's own Joe Gabriel, has been viewed over 100,000 times in the 3 weeks since its release, and the sheet music will soon be published by Hal Leonard for choirs everywhere to enjoy and sing together.

I'm grateful to have this congregation, this community, and the other leaders at First U at this time. Maintaining a sense of identity and creativity is a huge challenge for so many people right now. has remained an outlet for me to feel useful, do good, and continue expressing through music. I'm thankful for the continued support you've all been showing in so many ways, and especially by showing up to virtual events and services so we can stay together as much as possible through all of it.

## Christopher Johnson

Director of Facilities

As your Director of Facilities, I continue to effectively manage and perform daily and emergency situations with regard to timely inspections, tenant relations, vendors, and custodians, as well as building repairs and capital improvements.

Below are some of the projects either completed or ongoing for the fiscal year 2019-20.

- New areas created: Historical corner, newcomer's area, exterior chapel sitting area.
- Wheelchair lift completed. Also, work started for the interior wheelchair lift from the chapel to the undercroft. This was made possible by a member's generous contribution of 15k for this important project.
- Patio and Green room window repairs. This was a significant project.
- Chapel roof leaks repaired, stopping destruction of chapel plaster.
- State of the buildings document authored by me. This is a living document being used for capital improvement projects voted on by the congregation and funded through the capital reserve fund.
- Library plaster repairs completed.
- Vestibule plaster and painting, a major undertaking. Application of historically correct colors and procedures so as to maintain the original historical representation of the faux block.
- Heat and A/C installations in the undercroft.
- Updated electrical; sanctuary chancel.
- Cost saving; historical preservation:

The ongoing window repairs have not only helped maintain a more even temperature in the Green and Eastman rooms, but will now help to reduce the church's carbon footprint. The historical integrity of the leaded stained-glass windows has been saved from ruination. The water leaking into the walls has ceased as well, in those areas I have worked in, saving money in additional expensive future repairs.

The undercroft radiator, which was not needed and disconnected from the chapel, is now hooked up to the #48 hot water boiler and controlled by its own thermostat, utilizing an existing, active heating system. This is a cost-effective way to maintain a steady temperature with the elimination of multiple inefficiencies,

Performing repairs professionally is a fiscally responsible and "green" approach to properly maintaining building structures. Needed repairs which are not performed in a timely fashion cost much more in the long run, creating additional problems. It has been and will be my policy, whenever possible, to repair and maintain existing elements of the church campus instead of new installations.

## Section 2: Governance Committees

### Board of Trustees

It has been a challenging, yet momentous year at First Unitarian. COVID-19 has forced social isolation, however in many regards, the community is closer than ever.

The first item we'd like to address in our report is our gratitude for the First U staff members. Our entire staff team has been innovative in continuing to enhance worship/programs and to care for a congregation facing a global crisis.

We would also like to express our commitment to continuing to do the work to stand up for Black lives. Anti-racism and justice live at the core of our UU faith and our mission at First U. We will not stop singing. We will not stop marching. We will not stop praying.

As the program year now comes to a close, we would like 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**

- The Board voted in December of 2019 to hire the Reverend Michael J. Crumpler as our Sabbatical Minister. It's difficult to convey in words the gratitude that the Board feels to Rev. Michael for ministering to a congregation feeling frightened, angry, and heartbroken at times. He prompted our spiritual growth and development at a time when it would be easy to turn to hopelessness. Rev. Michael's words and actions held this congregation together in hope when we could not hold each other. He officiated over the burial of Deacon and Church Historian Olive Hoogenboom at Green-wood Cemetery and consoled the families of the members we lost this year.
- In August of 2019, our Director of Religion Education, Meagan Henry began her journey to become an ordained UU Minister at Meadville Lombard Theological School. One of the requirements for Fellowship as a Unitarian Universalist minister is sponsorship by a Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregation. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure familiarity on the part of our UU ministers with UU congregational life and encourage congregations to take a responsible role in the recruitment, preparation, and assessment of our future ministers. Sponsorship of a Candidate indicates confidence in the person's potential and suitability for UU ministry. The Board voted in February of 2020 for to officially sponsor Meagan and we congratulate her on finishing her first year - what a huge accomplishment in her professional development!
- This year, we welcomed Ethan Loewi, a first year Master of Divinity Student from Yale Divinity School. Ethan's sermons brought us to tears and had us in stitches. He's been a critical leader on our Caring Ministry team - organizing support for congregants during this COVID crisis and comforting our family during times of loss. The Board voted in

May to extend Ethan's employment through the summer so he can continue to serve our pastoral needs during this tumultuous time.

- Our Women's Leadership Alliance Seminary Intern, Sara Gush, brought her energy and organizational skills to help support Religious Education and Family Ministries. She was instrumental in our amazing multi-generational Services. Sara also served many of the congregation's, and especially families', pastoral needs during the pandemic. Sara was integral in creating and maintaining a database of families, their needs, and their plans should they become ill. Sara has completed her internship and has begun a chaplaincy fellowship at Duke University Hospital.
- We are thankful to be a "teaching congregation" that can support developing ministerial leaders. The Board offers sincere gratitude to both of these young leaders for their work. Ethan and Sara both texted with members and hosted virtual "check-ins" to keep people connected during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

- Thanks to the work of our Director of Congregational life, Garnett Losak, our ministerial staff, and the Membership Team our congregation continues to grow.
  - The process of welcoming newcomers and engaging them to become members has been made more effective and efficient over the last year and the Board appreciates Garnett's skill for developing strategic processes.
  - Our numbers during virtual worship are meeting or exceeding our worship in the sanctuary. Our ministerial staff have created such a joyous virtual community. On average we have about 150 logins from Zoom and 50 viewers on Facebook live each Sunday. If we conservatively estimate 1.5 people per login/view, that's 300 people watching live. A normal Sunday in the sanctuary averages 200-250 attendees. Additionally, it is a joy to witness congregants engaging and celebrating worship together on the "chat" in Zoom.
- Our journey to make our buildings more accessible to all has been a long one, but we have made significant strides this year.
  - In December of 2019, June Wohlhorn cut the ribbon on our wheelchair lift from the street to the sanctuary. Although we have experienced some setbacks with the lift throughout the year, it is working, and we are thrilled that more people will be able to use the lift when we return to the sanctuary. Our Director of Facilities, Chris Johnson, worked diligently to address malfunctions with the lift. He and the Facilities Committee also worked together to maintain the beauty of our "yard".
  - In November of 2019, the Board voted to begin Stage 2 of our accessibility project which is to install a lift between the chapel and the undercroft. This was made possible by an anonymous gift from a generous donor. Undercroft accessibility is important for our members and friends to enjoy social gatherings and fellowship. It also makes the space wheelchair accessible to renters. The Board voted in March this year to create a space for people in wheelchairs to sit

comfortably in the sanctuary. The Facilities Committee is developing a proposal for the best location of the seating area. This will be one of the first projects made possible by the Capital Reserve Fund.

- Solidarity with immigrant communities has been a keystone of our congregation-wide social justice efforts in recent years.
  - In September 2019, the Board approved signing on to an amicus brief submitted to the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of religious organizations from around the country to challenge the Trump Administration’s rescission of DACA.
  - In October 2019, the Board voted to offer financial resource support to Close the Camps. We agreed to maintain a monetary balance for Close the Camps NYC (CTC), to facilitate their fundraising and reimbursements/payments. (The exception to this will be court fines and other costs related to civil disobedience.) Put simply, they are a small organization, so we “hold” some of their funds and they submit receipts to get reimbursed for supplies such as art supplies, t-shirts, space rental for meetings, travel, etc.

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

- In November of 2019, the Board authorized the Leadership Development Committee to engage in fundraising activities to help delegates attend the UUA General Assembly (GA) in June 2020. 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 where they will be able to learn, connect and make policy for the UUA through the democratic process. This year GA will be held virtually.
- Through her family ministry, Meagan is creating the next generation of leaders. Illia Kawash-Cooper, high school youth member, participated in a Rise Against Hunger Project through her school a few years ago, and it was a dream of hers to bring it to First U. Illia brought a proposal to the Board and in September 2019, the Board authorized the project. With Illia’s leadership, we raised over \$3,000 and organized over 40 volunteers to pack over 10,000 meals!

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

- On September 20th, 2019, First Unitarian’s staff participated in the Global Climate Strike alongside clergy and activists from all over the world. UUA President Susan Frederick-Gray and our Sr. Minister, Ana Levy-Lyons, both had an opportunity to speak. Before the rally, the Board voted to support the staff striking in solidarity

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

Responsibility managing church resources and finances is the primary responsibility of the Board of Trustees. This program year the Board has work diligently to serve the financial, employment, and business needs of our congregation.

- UniFair is a longstanding tradition at First U and the Board wanted to understand the congregants' opinions of and relationship with UniFair. In September, they conducted a paper and electronic survey during the Faith in Action Expo and during fellowship hour. The biggest take-aways were that although UniFair can be stressful, it is an important revenue source, a service to our community, and a good way to get to know people. Feedback suggested that planning for UniFair should begin earlier. This year's UniFair was chaired by Josette Trombetta, with nearly all of the Board volunteering in some capacity. We netted nearly \$8500.
- Our phenomenal staff enrich us spiritually, give us a joyous worship experience in a beautiful and accessible building, and are growing our community. Because of a critical need for the Board to support and understand the staff, the Board adopted the process of staff liaisons, beginning last year (FY18-19). We continued the program this year. Each full-time staff member, as well as our Director of Music, Adam Podd, have a Board liaison that they meet with regularly. This has provided an important feedback loop because the Board liaison and the staff member can converse about joys, concerns, issues, blockers, etc. in a confidential setting without feeling constricted by a tight Board agenda. The Board liaison can then bring any issues to the Board. It has allowed for transparency and clearer communication between the Board and the staff.
- The Board and Finance Committee (FC) spent a significant amount of time this fall working together to develop a new Budget Process. The process started earlier in January to allow for more time for a FC member, a staff member, and their Board liaison to confer on department budgets. This resulted in at least one Board member and at least one FC member having a deep understanding of the request and rationale of each staff member's budget area. Additionally, the Board and the FC worked closely together on eight iterations of the budget. Trustee, Amit Metha, created easy to digest visuals of the impact on the endowment under several different budget scenarios.
- Our lease with Imagine Daycare expires in August of 2021 and we are required to notify them by August of 2020. The long-term rental space currently accounts for 25% of our revenue and is thus an especially important part of our financial security. With an unexpected ~\$40,000 annual increase to our property taxes in FY17-18 due to Imagine Daycare being a for-profit business, it is important that we make every effort for future leases to cover that cost. In October of 2019, the Board authorized a contract with the real estate firm, [Denham Wolf](#). This firm specializes in non-profit real estate and came highly recommended by our sister congregation on the Upper West Side, Fourth Universalist. The initial contract included an assessment of the value of our rental space and concluded that the value of our rental space greatly exceeded the rental fee in our lease for Imagine. In June of 2020, the Board voted to sign another contract with Denham Wolf which will include securing our next tenant and negotiating the lease.
- In November 2019, the Board authorized a mid-winter appeal for a new sound system in the sanctuary. Adam's beautiful music is the lifeblood of our worship and we're thrilled to report that we raised over \$16,000. The sounds of beautiful worship will welcome us back to the sanctuary.



- Early in 2020 the Board, full-time staff members, and FC worked together to closely evaluate the staff health insurance plan. First U's benefits package currently includes the UUA health insurance plan. The premium for this plan is age-based, which the Board deemed to be inequitable (and expensive!). The Board did not end up changing plans due to competing priorities with COVID-19, but will likely make the change early next program year.
- The Board held two retreats this year, one in the summer to welcome new trustees and plan for the program year and another in January to discuss long-term vision and prioritizing.
- At last year's annual meeting, the congregation voted to create a Capital Reserve Fund. The Board approved two capital projects for FY20-21: 1) Pew removal to accommodate wheelchair seating and 2) repairs to the McKinney Chapel facade.

### **Covid-19 and Safety**

The COVID-19 crisis gave way to many difficult Board decisions. Equitable protocols around staffing and the health of our staff members and congregation were and are paramount.

- The Board made the difficult decision to close the sanctuary as of March 15th and to hold all services and programs virtually. The Board also agreed not to lay off or furlough any full-time or part-time employees or contractors (soloists, etc.). Our Director of Congregational Life, Garnett Losak was instrumental in making recommendations about safe and effective building staffing.
- The Standing committee voted to allow Imagine Daycare to defer 50% of their rent for April and May. (as of this writing Imagine has paid up its rent).
- In June 2020, the Board endorsed the creation of a task force to address continuing congregational needs regarding virtual worship and programming, as well as procedures for eventual return to in-person worship and programming.

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.



Sam McKelvie and Dawn Elane Reed, For the Board of Trustees

Trustees:

Term Ending 2020

Dale Ho

Laurel Lesio-Eisenstadt

Dawn Elane Reed

Term Ending 2021

Vonda Brunsting

John Carroll

Sam McKelvie

Term Ending 2022

Amit Mehta

Colleen Olson

Andrew Bongiorno

## Deacons

The Deacons sadly mourn the death of both Senior Deacon, Alfredo Blanco, who died 10 November 2019, and Olive Hoogenboom, who succeeded Al as Senior Deacon and who died 17 April 2020. Olive was the first woman to hold the position of Senior Deacon.

Al had been a member of our congregation for more than 50 years during which he served not only as a Deacon, but as a Board member, President of the Board, volunteer sexton for 12 years, and a vital member of the Facilities Committee. No breach in the fabric of our buildings went unnoticed by Al.

With the passing of Olive, First Unitarian has lost one of the most illustrious members in its history. From 1979 to 1981 she served as President of the Board. She was Church Historian who wrote the Church history. Olive clarified questions on all aspects of our Church history and saw to it our historical documents were safely stored.

The remaining Deacons are Robert Bero, Thomas Check, Elizabeth Davis, Edwin Lord, Emily Pardee, Constance Newsom, Bruce Wilde, and Nancy Wolf.

The By-laws of the Society stipulate 10 Deacons who shall hold office for life and “shall be available to assist the Ministers in conducting any communion service... and shall be available to advise and assist the Ministers in promoting the health of the Society.”

Traditionally, “communion” meant the Good Friday Commemorative Communion Service. More recently the meaning of “communion” has been extended to include the Passover Seder and the Flower Communion.

The 2020 Good Friday Commemorative Communion and the Seder were canceled due to the Corona virus pandemic. The Sanctuary Flower Communion has also been canceled. However, an on-line flower photo event is planned to replace it.

Upon a vacancy, as per the By-Laws, the remaining Deacons nominate and the Congregation elects a new Deacon. In a custom introduced by Olive Hoogenboom some years ago, there is an equal number of male and female Deacons. Currently there are two vacancies, one male and one female, left by the deaths of Al Blanco and Olive Hoogenboom.

Deacons meet the first Sunday of every other month starting in October. They follow an agenda to which each is invited to contribute. Minutes are taken at every meeting

Deacons serve as head ushers, each Deacon serving for one month. Deacon Lee Pardee heads the ushering program.

Individual Deacons also serve the congregation on standing and ad hoc committees: Facilities, Finance, Immigrant Solidarity, Ministry, Pastoral Care, Weaving Social Justice, and

Stewardship. Four Deacons sing in the choir. The Deacons are also active in congregational fundraising events such as UniFair and the Auction.

Deacon Wilde serves as Clerk of the Board.

**During the past year:**

As members of the 175th Anniversary Committee, three Deacons contributed to the events and fund raising celebrating the 175th anniversary of the Minard Lafever Sanctuary building.

The By-Laws say, “the Deacons shall be available to assist at the funeral or memorial service of a Member, if so requested by Members’ survivors.” During the past year Deacons ushered and arranged flowers for the memorial service of aspiring Olympics athlete, Jack Hatton, 22, an alumnus of our Sunday School. Since some 200 people attended the service, the family welcomed this assistance.

Deacons also ushered at the memorial for devoted member Larry Calia. Larry was a former member and served as President of the Flatbush Unitarian Church which no longer exists.

Several Deacons attended an inurnment Mass in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine where Al served for many years as a weekday greeter. In accordance with his wishes, Al’s ashes were committed to the Cathedral’s columbarium. Following the service, the family hosted a reception in a local Manhattan restaurant.

On February 22<sup>nd</sup> the Deacons sponsored a memorial service for Al conducted by Rev. Levy-Lyons in the Sanctuary. Following the service, a reception was hosted in the Chapel by the Deacons.



Constance Newsom, for the Deacons

## Facilities Committee

- 1) We note with deep sadness the passing of our Senior Deacon, Al Blanco, on November 10, 2019. Al was a founder and leading member of the Buildings and Grounds (B & G) Committee, the predecessor to the Facilities Committee. He devoted many decades of service to First Unitarian and to the upkeep of our historic buildings. We held a moment of silence at our November 2019 meeting in Al’s memory. We also observed with a moment of silence at our October 2019 meeting, the passing of John Pritchard, a former member and chair of the B & G Committee.
- 2) The Facilities Committee is one of three committees mandated by our Congregation’s 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.”

- 3) In meeting these duties during the 2019-2020 program year, Facilities Committee (FC) members worked on special events and discussed topics intended to preserve, maintain, secure and enhance our buildings, and to educate our membership, and others within our community, about their significance. The Facilities Committee held regular meetings of its members and guests, and with Director of Facilities, Chris Johnson. Facilities Committee members made recommendations to the Board, and to the Director of Facilities, about repairs, historic restorations, capital improvements, safety concerns, and shared the “institutional history” of our buildings. On March 12, 2020, Facilities Committee members Nancy Wolf and Gaither Pratt, an architect, presented the Facilities Committee’s recommendation to the Board, about the proposed location of a seating area for those using wheelchairs, to be created in the Sanctuary. Our recommendation was based upon motions approved at two Facilities Committee Meetings and included discussion with and input from congregational members Robert Levine, Kathy Sonderman, and June Wohlhorn. This project will involve the removal of one-half of two (2) pews, on both sides of the rear section of the center aisle, to create a seating area for those using wheelchairs, and will include the addition of removable “bespoke” chairs, which may be used when seating for those using wheelchairs is not required.
- 4) Facilities Committee members gave input and feedback to Director of Facilities Chris Johnson, at our January 26, 2020 meeting, following the January 2020 Board Meeting, about the building-related budget lines included within the proposed 2020-2021 fiscal year budget. Facilities Committee members continued to discuss, per our By-laws, the long-range building-related capital projects listed in “Appendix A” of the “Restricted Capital Fund” policy.
- The “Restricted Capital Fund” policy, which was approved by the Congregation at the May 19, 2019 Annual Meeting, is posted on the Congregation’s website at: <http://www.fuub.org/home/home/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Restricted-Capital-Fund-Policy.pdf>. We noted during meetings and follow-up e-mails, that some of the projects listed in “Appendix A” of that document are visible from the exterior or street view of our buildings, and will thus require the approval of the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission (L.P.C.), including: work to “Custom build/replicate the original Undercroft windows to a usable working window system”; the “Chapel Exterior Façade Brownstone repair”; and the “Iron fence repair and painting.” We also noted during meetings and via e-mail that other projects on the “Restricted Capital Fund” policy list will require the use of “historic painting consultants,” or other professional guidance, including the “Sanctuary interior plaster/ painting to repair water damaged area by the [T]iffany window, the vestibule, and vestibule stairwell.” We noted during meetings and via e-mail, that any interior Sanctuary painting must respect the original and unique painting,

which “simulates stone through the use of various shades of ochre delineated by lead pencil,” and that this “major undertaking” requires an “historic paint consultant.”

- 5) On Saturday, October 26, 2019, all members of Facilities Committee participated in the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee’s “Minard Lafever Roundtable Symposium,” which was well attended. Connie Newsom and Pat Lawrence served as co-chairs of the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee, which was formed to commemorate the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the dedication of our Sanctuary. This celebration, which spanned the 2018-2019 and the 2019-2020 program years, incorporated the theme, “Building Awareness.” Connie organized the Lafever Roundtable Symposium, and Gaither Pratt, an architect, served as its moderator. The featured speakers included architects and historians, and represented nearly all of the seven buildings designed by Minard Lafever, a well-known 19<sup>th</sup> century architect: Sailors’ Snug Harbor, Staten Island; Old Whalers’ Church, Sag Harbor; St. Ann and the Holy Trinity, Brooklyn Heights; Packer Collegiate Institute, Brooklyn Heights; First Unitarian Church (dedicated as Church of the Saviour in 1844), Brooklyn Heights; Church of the Holy Apostles, Manhattan; and Strong Place Baptist Church, in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn, which is now a condominium. The Facilities Committee later endorsed a recommendation, along with the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee, that the historic paint of the Sanctuary’s front doors be restored, including a final coat of paint incorporating a “faux finish” resembling oak, per Minard Lafever’s specifications, and that the funds raised as a part of the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, be applied to this project. As Connie Newsom wrote in a report to the Board, the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee, and the Facilities Committee:
  - “Our Sanctuary building is a landmark in the truest sense, as it has marked its land in fact and memory for 175 years and many of our members and neighborhood residents measure their lives by it,” and the Roundtable, “under the auspices of First Unitarian, can serve not only for Lafever’s buildings to speak to each other and show how they have adapted to modern uses. It can also show how vibrant and responsible a religious community we are.”

6) The Facilities Committee began the 2019-2020 program year by presenting a letter to Nancy Wolf at the Service of the Living Tradition, on May 19, 2019, to honor her 50 years of membership, and her decades-long stewardship of and advocacy for our buildings and grounds. The Facilities Committee sponsored a Sanctuary Clean-Up Day on Saturday, August 24, 2019 to prepare the Sanctuary for Ingathering Sunday. We thank Director of Facilities Chris Johnson and Custodian Bobby Blackman for their work that day and thank Director of Congregational Life Garnett Losak for supplying bagels that morning. Volunteers included: Lee Pardee, Andrew Bongiorno, Maxine Schulof, Bob Schulof and Liz Davis. Connie Newsom, who was unable to attend, provided technical and logistical support. The Facilities Committee participated in the “Faith in Action Expo” on September 15, 2019. Liz Davis, Gloria Furman and Nancy Wolf staffed the Facilities Committee’s table, and spoke to interested congregants about the Facilities Committee’s work. We displayed Connie Newsom’s archival copies of Minard Lafever’s handwritten plans for our Sanctuary.

- 7) Nancy Wolf has continued to serve as a liaison between the “Green Team” and the Facilities Committee and has provided regular updates about the environmentally sustainable and energy-efficient building-related improvements that the Green Team has suggested. This year, Facilities Committee members reviewed digital copies of the NYSERDA [New York State Energy Research and Development Authority] documents, Small Commercial Energy Efficiency Program Energy Assessments, for 48 Monroe Place & 50 Monroe Place. The Facilities Committee has incorporated energy-efficiency considerations when discussing building-related projects. The Facilities Committee looks forward to continuing these discussions, and meeting with Green Team representatives, and the Board, when we can safely resume in-person meetings in our buildings, following the State of New York’s mandated closure, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 8) The following members have attended Facilities Committee meetings during the 2019-2020 program year: Liz Davis (Chair), Gloria Furman, Nancy Wolf, Gaither Pratt, and Connie Newsom. Other congregational members who attended Facilities Committee meetings included: John Carroll (Facilities Committee Board Liaison), Allen Kone, Mitch Major, Bob Newsom, Robert Levine, and Al Blanco. Director of Facilities Chris Johnson regularly attends Facilities Committee Meetings. The Facilities Committee generally meets on Sunday afternoons, in the church office, following Fellowship hour, to accommodate members’ and staff schedules. We also met in the Frances White Room to provide access to guests who use wheelchairs. The Facilities Committee welcomes all 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, for the Facilities Committee

## Finance Committee

The Committee welcomed new member Pat Steele and Board Liaison Dawn Elane Reed and said thank you and farewell to former member Roger Cooper.

For most of this year the committee continued its regular work and also started a couple of new projects. All of this changed in March when the COVID-19 crisis hit NYC. Since then the committee has worked together with the board of trustees and staff to assess our current and future financial situation. Overall, the congregation is in very good shape. Our endowment has shrunk but is still able to provide needed funds to support our operating budget. Our membership continues to pledge generously so that the congregation can continue its work. Our rental income will be reduced for the end of FY20 and at least the beginning of FY21, but thanks to our board, office staff and treasurer, we secured a federal PPP loan that will make up the revenue loss for several months. The congregation had the additional good fortune of receiving bequests totaling \$141,170, most of which came from two of our longtime and beloved members, Larry Calia and John Pritchard. We mourn their loss, but are grateful that their love for First Unitarian continued beyond their deaths.

Prior to March the Committee:

- In accordance with the congregation's vote at the May 2019 annual meeting, created a separate budget for the congregation's capital projects and set up a capital reserve fund within the congregation's endowment. The capital reserve will be funded in FY21 by \$400,000 from the endowment, 10% of the congregation's prior-year rental income (approximately \$30,000) and member contributions to a capital campaign to be kicked off in the fall of 2020.
- With the board and staff, developed a new budget process and timetable that starts earlier and allows for better understanding of board priorities and more discussion among the committee, staff and board.
- Reviewed monthly financial reports and continued to work with Office Administrator, Wendy Russell, to refine these so they are clear and informative for the committee and the board of trustees. The committee believes that the congregation needs to retain the services of a CPA to assist with improving bookkeeping processes and with reviewing our books. It is not clear whether the FY21 budget will be able to include this.
- Monitored timely completion of regular financial tasks by reviewing the financial control sheet developed last year with the Board and Staff.
- Completed reviews of the congregation's books for all four quarters of FY19 and for the first and second quarters of FY20. These reviews continue to be useful in ensuring accuracy in the congregation's financial reports and well as providing assurance that the congregation's funds are being used as intended. The FY20 third quarter review has been delayed due to the COVID-19 crisis.
- Completed a final draft of the FY19 financial report.
- Drafted, together with the treasurer and the board of trustees, the budget for FY21.
- With the board and staff, investigated health insurance plans with the goal of identifying one that is less costly for the congregation and provides good health insurance to our staff. A decision will be made after Rev. Ana returns from her sabbatical.
- Continues to look into ways to report the congregation's finances in a manner that is accurate, informative, and clear to congregants.
- 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, leepardee54@gmail.com.



Lee Pardee, For the Finance Committee

Members: Lake Wise (Treasurer), Dawn Elane Reed (Board Liaison), Mike Alcott, Elizabeth Shaw, Pat Steele

### 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” (First Unitarian Bylaws, section 5.3(d)(i)).

For the 2019-20 year, the members of the LDC were: Catalina Bertani, June Wohlhorn (Co-Chairs) Sean Fischer, Patrick Gunn, and Laura Manos-Hey. Significant support was provided to the committee by Garnett Losak (Director of Congregational Life) and Laurel Lesio (Board Liaison). Sean Fischer will conclude his term in Summer 2020. Catalina Bertani fulfilled the term vacated by Enza Itri who resigned in April 2019. Catalina will be starting her own term.

### **Nominations**

Nominations for the 2020 General Assembly (GA) delegates elected at the Congregational Meeting on February 16, 2020:

- Tom Check
- Abby Grosslein
- Garnett Losak
- Laura Manos-Hey
- Lee Pardee

Because of the Pandemic, GA will be held virtually in 2020.

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, the scheduled GA dates coincide with New York State Regents exams and high school graduations which generally prevent public school teenagers from attending, thus making it difficult for youth delegates to attend.

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 consisted



of a dinner and viewing of last year's GA Ware Lecture by Richard Blanco. Low turnout meant that the fundraiser essentially broke even. Because of the amount of time and effort that is devoted to this annual event and the relatively low return, the LDC has determined that our limited resources could be used in other ways to better support First Unitarian going forward.

Candidate slate for election at the Annual Meeting (June 14, 2020)

Board of Trustees, Class of 2023 (replacing retiring Trustees Dale Ho, Laurel Lesio and Dawn Elane Reed)

- Megan Munroe
- Andrea Parkinson
- Matt Robinson

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

Moderator: Michael Alcott (third one-year term)

Leadership Development Committee (two-year terms replacing retiring committee members Sean Fischer)

- Laurel Lesio
- Catalina Bertani (after fulfilling a term vacated by a former LDC member, will be starting her own first term)

Bios and pictures of nominee slates have been posted on the congregation's website. In addition to the slate listed above, Patrick Gunn and June Wohlhorn continue to serve on the LDC for the second year of their two-year terms. Laura Manos-Hey will start her second term. Sean Fischer has agreed to consult.

### **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, replacing its own members and raising funds for the GA delegates. And this work again took up the majority of the time of the committee, but we began working on the ways we can support leadership development in the congregation.

We started our discussions by looking at what leadership is as it relates to First U and what aspects of it the LDC can/should be responsible for and where we can be most useful to the congregation. Some of the areas we are exploring are how to promote leadership best practices, how to identify future leaders, and how to support chairs in their current work.

This work is still in its preliminary stages and is expected to continue next year. We will use this experience to inform future leadership development projects and recommendations to the Board and/or Stewardship team.



June Wohlhorn for the Leadership Development Committee

## Section 3 - Program and Social Justice Committees

### Auction

April Showers turned into Zoom Power!

The annual spring auction dinner was cancelled due to COVID19. We had difficulty imagining that we could raise anywhere near the original goal of \$12,000. However, with some inspiration from the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Falmouth, where Abby's grandparents are members, we opted for a virtual silent auction through [Auctria.com](https://www.auctria.com) and a live Zoom auction on May 30, 2020. To make it super fun, music director Adam Podd, and the auction committee mashed up the planned Beatles singalong with the live auction and added a recipe for a signature "Long and Winding Road" cocktail.

What a success it was! Pat and Jay Lawrence returned to emcee; there was a larger than expected turnout, great Beatles tunes, and wonderful donations from members, the event raised \$9,579.20—including \$7,843 from the live auction, \$1,763.20 for raffle tickets, and \$1,305 for the annual youth service trip to Appalachia. With very few expenses (Auctria cost \$159.95), that's a net of \$9,416.25!

Many thanks to Adam Podd and all of our volunteer performers, Jay & Pat Lawrence for emceeing the event, everyone who donated items, parties, and services, and Garnett Losak, Director of Congregational Life for her support throughout.



Mary Huhn and Abby Grosslein – Co-Chairs

### Green Team

The Green Team was established last year and, by congregational vote at the 2019 Annual Meeting, tasked with working towards UUA certification of our congregation as a Green Sanctuary, in keeping with the 7th Principle: "Respect for the Interconnected Web of which we are a part."

To be certified, congregations are required to complete projects in 4 areas: sustainable living, religious education, worship, and environmental justice. Our congregation has already been doing this work for many years. In compiling our application, we are showcasing the earth-centered events and activities of other committees -- such as public actions, film screenings, and forums that raise awareness about environmental justice and climate change.

Some activities of the past year:

- The Climate Action Google Group, started in Jan 2019, currently has 90 subscribers who share information and actions.

- After reviewing the most recent energy audit, we are now incorporating many of the suggested improvements to our buildings into our capital budget planning. We are also looking at how we can support community solar alternatives.
- We started a DSNY Food Scrap Drop-Off for our congregants, staffed weekly by a rotating schedule of volunteers, and were just a week away from getting on the Citywide map and opening this up to the greater Brooklyn community when we were put on PAUSE due to COVID-19 this spring.
- We encourage attendance at rallies and actions that build awareness of climate change and the need to reduce our carbon footprint. We organized a letter-writing event at the September 2019 Faith in Action luncheon where Congregants encouraged our State Senators to take action to address the climate crisis.
- January 10, 2020, in conjunction with Weaving Social Justice, the film presentation of “The Human Element” followed by panel discussion was attended by 80 people, many from outside our congregation.  
Facebook event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/413506799539118/>
- Jan Thompson, David Garvoille, and our Senior Minister, Ana Levy-Lyons, helped organize XR’s (Extinction Rebellion) staging of “Extinct Homo Sapiens Diorama” at the American Museum of Natural History in Feb 2020. Our Sabbatical Minister, David Crumpler, edited this 3 minute YouTube video of this action:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-dFb5Z05Jg&feature=youtu.be>
- The Green Team worked with Rev. David Crumpler, RE Director Meagan Henry, and Music Director Adam Podd to present an Earth Day themed worship service, remotely via Zoom, on April 19, 2020.  
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=219794545785436> (Service starts at 2:00:00)
- We promote our congregation’s many earth-honoring celebrations for the solstice and equinox.
- We have compiled a long list of projects we’re planning to do with you, and can’t wait to continue.

A heartfelt thank you to all of you, for everything you do, every day, to make this world a better place.



Mary Most, chair for the Green Team

Team Members: Anne Calder, Abby Grosslein, Lee Ilan, Linnea Paton, Isuru Seneviratne, Jayesh Sheath, Andrea Sheth, Jan Thompson, Nancy Wolf

## Immigrant Solidarity

*First Unitarian's Immigrant Solidarity Committee has a mission to stand in solidarity with immigrants and refugees and their families, and to encourage the Congregation's members and friends to volunteer in support and advocacy on their behalf.*

### **History**

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. In November 2017, the Congregation adopted a program of sanctuary up to 3 days on the church premises. 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.

On May 19, 2019, the Congregation resolved to continue the Immigrant Solidarity Committee as proposed to the Board of Trustees on April 25, 2019. The Committee was re-authorized under these 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.

## **Report on Activities July 1, 2019 - May 31, 2020**

- In July 2019, the Committee and members of the congregation said goodbye to a Nicaraguan refugee guest who decided to return to her home country after her partner was deported there. The Committee hosted a goodbye dinner and provided her with some funds to help her and her partner re-settle in Nicaragua.
- The Committee continues to support a Cuban asylum-seeker who first came to us in Fall 2018 and has been living with members of the congregation since then. In 2019 she received her work permit, and she is now awaiting her green card. She is taking English classes, paid for by Committee fundraising, so that she can pursue a medical degree in the U.S.
- The Committee continues to support a Guatemalan parent and child who stayed at the church for approximately two weeks in January 2019, and who have since been living with friends of the congregation. The child was enrolled in public school and has received positive feedback from his teachers. Members and friends of the congregation have helped to provide childcare for him when needed. The family works with a legal team paid for by Committee fundraising. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) rejected two attempts to submit their asylum application, once due to a technicality and once based on their false claim that the application had not included photographs. However, in March 2020, the legal team was able to submit the asylum application. It is now under review with USCIS.
- In October 2019, the Committee hosted a Sabbath Lunch at the church, raising \$396 for our immigrant guests.
- In November 2019, after several months of preparing to host an LGBTQ asylum-seeker, the Committee partnered with the nonprofit Queer Detainee Empowerment Project (QDEP) to welcome a trans woman asylum-seeker. She is now living with members of the congregation. The Committee provides funds for her rent and groceries, while QDEP oversees her asylum application and health care needs. Her asylum application was submitted in June 2019 and she applied for her work permit in December 2019. She is still waiting to hear back about both applications.
- In December 2019, the Committee partnered with the nonprofit Aural Compass to host a “Songs Without Borders” concert fundraiser at the church. The event raised a total of \$360, split evenly between the Committee and Aural Compass.
- In January 2020, the Committee hosted a presentation at the church by the Democratic Socialists of America’s Isidore Popper Sponsorship Collective. The Popper Collective explained to members of the congregation how they could sponsor asylum-seekers to help them to get released from immigrant detention camps. A “pass the hat” to collect cash donations raised \$109 that was split evenly between the Committee and the Popper Collective.

- In March 2020, the Committee partnered with First Unitarian’s Weaving Social Justice group to screen “The Hand that Feeds,” a documentary about Manhattan food service workers, many of them immigrants, forming a union. Following the screening, the Committee and Weaving Social Justice facilitated a Q&A that included a speaker from National Mobilization Against Sweatshops, which supports home care workers (many of them immigrant women) to organize for better wages and workers’ rights. A “pass the hat” to collect cash donations raised \$64 that was split evenly between the Committee and Weaving Social Justice.
- The Committee had scheduled our second annual Songs for Solidarity fundraiser concert for May 2, 2020. We have had to postpone this event to a to-be-determined date in Fall 2020. In the meantime, musicians Ana Egge and Judy Gorman, who were slated to perform at the May concert, each “donated” videos of them performing a song for the Committee to share online as a fundraising method.
- Over the past year, the Committee has built a partnership with activist group Close the Camps (CTC). Kelly Schaffer, a member of the congregation, is a CTC organizer and joined the Committee in that capacity. The Committee has encouraged volunteers and congregants to support CTC by making donations, attending Nonviolent Direct-Action trainings hosted at the church, and participating in direct actions. Committee members have participated in CTC direct actions targeting ICE collaborators, including a peaceful protest in September 2019 at which three Committee members were among 76 arrestees. Committee members also participated in CTC actions in August 2019, October 2019, and February 2020. During the pandemic, CTC has shifted to organizing autonomous actions that allow for social distancing, and the Committee continues to promote those efforts.
- Over the past year, the Committee has continued to build bonds with faith and community partners whose calls to action, volunteer opportunities, and initiatives we have shared with our volunteer network. These partners include Action Potluck, Brandworkers, Brooklyn Defender Services, Brooklyn Defense Committee, Congregation Beth Elohim, Cosecha, the Democratic Socialists of America, Faith in New York, Fourth Unitarian, Kolot Chayeinu, Never Again Action, Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, the Queer Detainee Empowerment Project, Sanctuary Neighborhoods, and the Unitarian Church of All Souls.
- In November 2019, the Committee launched a GoFundMe to raise money for our guests’ direct expenses including legal fees, rent, transportation, and English classes. As of June 1, 2020, this fundraiser has brought in \$8,985. The Committee had previously raised \$8,442 through an older GoFundMe launched in January 2018 and opted to create the second one to reflect major updates in our work and guests.
- In May 2020, the Committee successfully submitted an application to lead a Summer Service on July 26, 2020 and began to prepare the content of that service.

The Committee is proud to maintain First Unitarian as a Sanctuary congregation, support asylum-seekers during the long application process, and encourage activism for immigrant

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

### **Membership**

The current members of the Committee are:

- Vonda Brunsting, Board Liaison
- Tom Check, Past Chair
- Natalie Thielen Helper, Chair
- Becky Huffman
- Marisa Lastres, Past Chair
- Lee Pardee
- Kelly Schaffer, Close the Camps liaison

To learn more or to volunteer, please contact any member or email us at [immigrantsolidarity@fuub.org](mailto:immigrantsolidarity@fuub.org).

Donations to our guests may be made by writing a check to the church with “Immigrant Solidarity” in the memo line, or online at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-asylumseekers-at-first-unitarian-in-brooklyn>.



Natalie Thielen Helper for the Immigrant Solidarity Committee

### [Share the Plate Committee](#)

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. Since the program was established in 2008, we have given away more than \$10,000 annually.

In general, participation in the nomination process has slowed in the past year. And whereas the committee tends to hear mainly from an enthusiastic few, it is the aim of the committee to increase the number and diversity of views represented. So, we are excited to look for new ways to engage the First Unitarian community and hope to improve upon this greatly in the year ahead.

Something that needs no improvement is the generosity of the congregation, which remains impressive and inspiring. This year, Share the Plate has directed over \$20,000 to the worthy causes listed at the end of this report. People seem to be as excited as ever not just to participate financially in the doing of great social justice work but in the helping of their friends and neighbors in times of great need. The congregation ought to be proud of the very real impact its having on local communities and the wider world, so it is another aim of the committee to start bringing back some of this news, e.g. in reading some of the many thank you letters during our services.

In other exciting news, the end of the year brings with it a whole new team. As of this June, all incumbent members have rolled off and we are happy to announce that Julie Elting, Dirk Elting, Said Ibrahim, Robert Harper, and Bridgette Raes have rolled on. Thanks for your work so far and we wish you well in the years ahead! And special thanks to the continuing help from our Board liaison Andrew Bongiorno!

**Gifts since the 2019 Annual Report**

July/August	Immigrant Solidarity Committee	\$765.74
September	Global Giving Bahama Hurricane Relief	\$522.80
September	Minister's Discretionary Fund	\$1,014.66
October	The LES Ecology Center	\$1,395.81
November	Rise Against Hunger	\$1,544.65
December	UUSC	\$2,725.02
January	Weeksville Heritage Center	\$1,641.80
February	Worthy Now Prison Ministry	\$1,886.81
March	Minister's Discretionary Fund	\$2,559.20
April	Minister's Discretionary Fund	\$3,282.00
May	the Food Bank for New York City	\$354.00 (will continue June 2020)
May	FUUB Youth Group	(ongoing)



James Alfred Mills for the Share the Plate Committee

Weaving Social Justice

**Introduction:** During our June Retreat in 2019 we decided to change our name from Weaving the Fabric of Diversity to Weaving Social Justice (WSJ). We felt this better reflected that to which we aspire as a team within the FUUB community. We acknowledge that Weaving the Fabric of Diversity not only came from the name of a UUA curriculum designed to foster racial reconciliation but very much represented the group’s extraordinary work over nearly 25 years under the leadership of Bob Patterson who had recently passed away. We continue to be hopeful that the name change is not merely nominal but represents the ongoing struggle to understand the intersectionality of social justice work and that this group can play a part in “weaving” across different groups within and outside of the congregation. To that end we successfully sought collaboration with the Green Team and Immigration Solidarity Committee to co-sponsor screening the documentaries, respectively, *The Human Element* and *The Hand that Feeds*. Also new, we collaborated with Aural Compass to bring the *Lift Every Voice and Sing* concert to our beloved sanctuary. We continued to sponsor the Children of Abraham Dinner (in its 17th year!) with an eye toward ensuring more cross-community seating and fellowship (which we did!). While we were not able to bring plans to fruition due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, we also had plans to once again partner with FEDASE to not only host the Haitian Dinner (what would have been its 9th year) but to turn it into a dinner-dance complete with kompa lessons and, as always,



live music. Our monthly meetings averaged 8 participants with some newer participants joining us. We are looking forward to sponsoring the 23rd Annual Juneteenth Service. We also facilitated four discussions on the 1619 Project after Sunday services. We used selected articles to examine our own conflicts, those within our congregation and those in society at large. A closing question that was part of every discussion was, “What are you doing about it?” WSJ 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.

**Funding:** Our funding this past year was \$1350 from the congregational program budget. We wish to thank the Board for funding this important work and for the funding increase to \$1400 for the 2020-2021 program year.

**Members:** Meeting with us regularly this year were: Robert Harper, Enza Itri, Derek Pearl, Rita Pearl, Michael White, Nancy Wolfe, Vicki Antonini, Maggie Cancar, Jay Touger, Bob Schulof, and Mary Huhn.

**Thanks:** We would like to thank those in the congregation who attended our monthly meetings, worked with us in the kitchen during the dinner/Sabbath lunch, and participated in our 1619 Discussion series. We would not be able to get anything off the ground without the help of Chris Johnson, Ian Hurt and Bobby Blackman in facilities; thank you all. We would like to thank Isuru Seneviratne of the FUUB Green Team and Natalie Thielen-Helper of the First Unitarian Immigration Solidarity Committee for their work in collaborating with WSJ on the film series. Many thanks to Garnett Losak with scheduling (and everything else) and Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons for ongoing spiritual guidance and particularly her MLK, Jr. sermon that connected to our 1619 discussion. Last but not least, we would like to express our gratitude to our board liaison Laurel Lesio-Eisenstadt, Director of Education and Family Ministry Meagan Henry, and Sabbatical Minister, Reverend Michael Crumpler for specific logistical and pastoral support.

### ***2019-2020 Meeting and Event Schedule***

#### ***Meeting Schedule***

**Meetings Occur– Second Tuesdays 7:00 PM in the Library**

**Added dates (as of 5/18/2020): Tuesday, April 28th, Wednesday, May 20th (5pm) to prepare for Juneteenth services.**

#### ***Event Schedule***

- **Sat Oct 5 – Children of Abraham Dinner – 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Interfaith Friendship Dinner with Muslim Community Network/Dawood Mosque 7:00 PM**
  - Cost: \$903.67
  - Participants between 50 and 60.

- **Sun Dec 1** – Discussion on “1619 Project” 1:00 PM “The Idea of America” Nikole Hannah-Jones
  - Participants: 13
- **Fri Jan 10** - Film Showing with Green Team " The Human Element” 6:30 PM
  - Participants: 56
  - Members of the Green Team and Weaving Social Justice provided refreshments.
- **Sun Jan 19** – Discussion on “1619 Project” 12:45 PM “Capitalism” by Matthew Desmond (followed an MLK, Jr. Service)
  - Reverend Ana Levy-Lyons joined us.
  - Participants: 30
- **Fri Feb 7** – Aural Compass Concert with the Sanctuary Group 7:30 PM
  - Proceeds:
    - Pre-concert ticket sales: \$220
    - Front of house ticket sales: \$230
    - Total: **\$450 (Split between Aural Compass and WSJ) = \$225**
- **Sun Feb 9** – Discussion on “1619 Project” 1:00 PM “Mass Incarceration” by Bryan Stevenson
  - Participants: 17
- **Mon Mar 2** – Film Showing “The Hand That Feeds” documentary with Immigration Solidarity Committee 7:00 PM
  - Past the hat proceeds to ISC.
  - Participants: 18
- **Sun Mar 8** – Jazz Sunday Sabbath Lunch
  - Black bean tacos, rice and various toppings.
  - Proceeds: \$288
- **Sun Mar 8** – Discussion on “1619 Project” 1:00 PM
  - “Undemocratic Democracy” by Jamelle Bouie and talk with Bill Wasik, Member and Deputy Editor, NYT Magazine
  - Participants: 16
- **Sun Mar 15** – Forum on Reforestation in Haiti – CANCELLED
- **Sat Mar 28**– Haitian Dinner – Annual dinner to fundraise for reforestation in Haiti (presented jointly with Federation Pour Le Developement Du Sud-Est 501-C3) 6:30 PM - CANCELLED
- **Sat June 6** – WSJ Retreat POSTPONED until we can gather together. Possibly over the summer at Promenade or Brooklyn Bridge Park
- **Sun June 14** – Juneteenth Service and Street Picnic SUMMER SERVICE only via Zoom.

**Black Lives Matter Flag** - One Black Lives Matter flag was stolen after being left on the fence. We have petitioned the board to replace it with funds from the congregation. We would like to thank the Deacons and Ushers for putting the flag out before service.



Victoria Antonini for Weaving Social Justice

## Women's Leadership Alliance

What a strange year this has been! The Women's Leadership Alliance began the year with plans for a full slate of programming from October to May. The fall started with a well-attended Fall Lunch, giving us the chance to preview our upcoming plans for the year. In October we held a panel discussion on the \*MeToo movement, with a representative from the city, a lawyer, and a clinical psychologist. In January we sponsored a session on Reproductive Rights, led by the Reverend Darcy Roark of New Orleans. In February we held a multi-part workshop on aging, titled Hindsight, Humor and Hope. Ironically, it ended with encouragement to bring our wills and living wills up to date, just a few days before New York City shut down for the coronavirus. Our plans for the spring came to an abrupt end with the cancellation of our popular April film series, our Annual Meeting, and our Prospect Park event. All will be rescheduled for next year! We were able to sponsor the April 26<sup>th</sup> Zoom service, featuring Meagan Henry, Jennifer Joy and our own Abby Grosslein. All three were terrific! Our ongoing activities include the Book Club, which has been sponsored by the WLA since the 1980's. We read a variety of

fiction and non-fiction books and have recently been successful in holding our Book Club meetings on-line through Zoom. We also continue to host In the Company of Women, a multigenerational discussion group open to anyone who identifies as a woman. This group too has migrated to Zoom and is enthusiastically continuing. The WLA provides financial support to church seminarians Meagan Henry and Sara Gush. We also support a number of charitable institutions, including the Minister's Discretionary Fund, Immigrant Solidarity, the Homeless Girl Scout Troop, Planned Parenthood, and the NY Abortion Access Committee. We provide leadership support to members attending General Assembly and others with interesting projects. And we provide relief for those with health-related crises through the Miriam Campobasso Fund. 2019 was a sad year for us, as we lost both Ann Ware and Larry Calia, long-time members, and friends. Our losses have continued this year, with the recent loss of both Olive Hoogenboom and Kathy Sonderman.

It is our sincere hope that we will eagerly resume our programs along with the rest of the congregation in September. We are scheduling the Fall Lunch with optimism.



Pat Steele, President Women's Leadership Alliance

## Section 4: Addenda

### Life Cycle Events

#### **Deaths of Members**

Alfredo (Al) Blanco  
Lawrence (Larry) Calia  
Sally Ellis  
James Gunning  
Olive Hoogenboom  
Roderick (Rod) McFarlin  
Kathy Sonderman

#### **Deaths of Loved Ones**

Earline Shabki, mother of Eva Van Dok Pinkley  
James Gunn, father of Patrick Gunn  
Nancy Bennett, grandmother of Megan Munroe  
Lionel Traubman, father of Eleanor Traubman  
Ann Loeb, cousin of Eleanor Traubman  
Julee Merrill Csuri, mother of Merrill Csuri  
Dorothy Seiberling, aunt of Mary Huhn

Jimmy McConnell, brother of Pat Lawrence  
John Callahan, brother of Sharon Kennedy

#### **Weddings**

Lauren Webb and Thomas Quesenberry  
Elizabeth Ellis and James Ellis  
Kevin & Francisco Podd

#### **Births**

Eleanor Dickenson Kennedy, child of Liz Kennedy and David Dickenson  
Margaret Michael, child of Rachel Michael  
Leon Sterginopoulou, child of Amanda and George Sterginopoulou

#### **Blessings**

Vincent Rogers, child of Kyron Rogers and Candice Helfand-Rogers  
Jack and Eleanor Dickenson, children of David Dickenson and Elizabeth Kennedy

### Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons' Sabbatical Letter to the Congregation

December 6, 2019

Dear friends,

Believe it or not, this is my eighth year as your minister at First Unitarian. It has been an amazing first chapter of my ministry here, full of growth for me and the congregation, challenges, losses, and *lots of joy* set against the backdrop of the deep social and ecological turmoil of our time. In the custom of ministers who have served for seven years or more, I will be taking a sabbatical this spring, starting in March, and going through the summer break. I'll be back in the pulpit for our Ingathering service on September 13, 2020.

Periodic sabbaticals are known to be a "best practice" of ministry, allowing clergy time to work on different creative projects and return with new inspiration *or* like healthy soil, lie fallow and regenerate energy, focusing inward for a time. I hope to do some of each. A sabbatical is also an opportunity for the minister to hit a "reset button" on the ministry. One minister told me that the two sabbaticals that he took over the course of his career represented the start of two brand new chapters of his ministry.

To cover my primary responsibilities for the time I am away, I am working with the Committee on Ministry and the Board to engage a sabbatical minister. This person will lead worship services, preach, and provide pastoral care to the congregation. They will participate in weekly staff meetings and work closely with our program staff to ensure consistency in liturgy and programming. A member of our congregation is generously funding the sabbatical minister position as an extra financial gift, so there is little impact to our budget. I am so grateful to them for doing this and grateful to you, the congregation, for this rare opportunity.

Blessings,

Rev. Ana

[Rev. Michael J. Crumpler's Introductory Letter to the Congregation](#)

January 3, 2020

Dear Members and Friends of First Unitarian,

It is with great humility and deep gratitude that I will be joining you as Sabbatical Minister starting in March through June 2020. I am so excited to be following the graceful feet of Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons when she departs for a well-deserved sabbatical. I look forward to serving you all in Ana's absence, as well as sharing in the joy and love that fuels your community.

### **A little bit about me...**

I live in Harlem with my wonderful partner Robert...and our three feline bosses Ernie, Frances, and Clyde. Originally a Southerner, I was born in North Carolina, but moved to Bergen County, New Jersey at age 13, so I'm a bit of an Urban-Country hybrid. My background is also reflected in my religious heritage. I was raised Missionary Baptist, then dabbled in Evangelicalism in my twenties, but moved on to Congregationalism (UCC) after coming out. I was ordained as a UCC minister in 2017 and I was later hired by the Unitarian Universalist Association where I serve as LGBTQ and Multicultural Programs Director. Since joining the UUA, I proudly consider myself a Christian Unitarian Universalist.

Alongside my journey toward vocational ministry are 12 years of honorable military service in the United States Air Force, including service as a Chaplain Candidate. I served out of a deep love for our country and an even deeper commitment to pursuing social justice and equity in all aspects of American life.

My role as LGBTQ and Multicultural Programs Director at the UUA captures the fullness of my calling as a black, queer, ordained minister. Every day I am amazed at the

opportunity to uplift the intersections of queerness, multiculturalism, and faith in a society that more and more seems to value neither. Every day I am thrilled at the opportunity to uplift the intersections of queerness, multiculturalism, and liberal faith in a society that has consistently devalued all three. Overseeing the nearly 800 Unitarian Universalist Welcoming Congregations that are striving to fully affirm and include LGBTQ+ congregants amazes me. The opportunity to lead our Unitarian Universalist faith toward dismantling white supremacy in all its forms amazes me. Greater still, is the amazing opportunity to share Unitarian Universalism with vulnerable populations in need of a spiritual home that embraces and uplifts all of who they are.

From what I've heard and know, you all have been that spiritual home for many, across generations. I look forward to joining each of you in this work, as together we share First Unitarian's loving and welcoming community with New York City and beyond.

Thank you all for trusting me with this sacred calling.

Love,

Rev. Michael J. Crumpler

[Letter from the Board Providing information on Coronavirus](#)

March 13, 2020

To Our First U Family,

The Board of Trustees, staff, and ministry leaders, including Rev. Ana, have been developing a plan to keep everyone as safe and healthy as possible, while still allowing the togetherness we need in times of crisis. **To that end we have decided to suspend all in-person church-related meetings, events, and worship including religious education classes at First U until at least April 6th.** We will make a decision later this month regarding when to resume in person programming.

Although we can't physically congregate, it's critical that we're still present for one another.

Our incredible ministry team will offer an online service that will include many of our familiar elements: chalice lighting, music, meditation, prayer, and sermons. Nothing can replace our sanctuary worship, but we know we can provide a spiritually nourishing experience that will bring us together, even if we are not in the same room. Worship services will be provided via Zoom and Facebook Live with innovative opportunities to interact. Zoom is an online meeting platform that you can join either by video on your computer or smartphone, or by audio from your cell phone or landline. Zoom is easy to use, we have included all the information you need to join, including a link to a tutorial.

Bill McKibbin said in the [New Yorker](#), “The strangest thing about the Coronavirus is that we can’t help one another through it. We can’t lay on hands; we can only wash them.” Even though we cannot physically lay on hands, we can unquestionably help one another through this crisis. Social Distancing is not about trusting individuals - it’s a community mindset - it’s about making sure we are all taking care of each other.

We ask that groups, such as small group ministries and committees keep meeting via Zoom. Please contact [Garnett](#) or [Wendy](#) to get information about hosting your own meetings. The staff and volunteers will be creating more opportunities for connection through regular Zoom “Hang-outs”, Zoom bedtime stories, and more. Please watch for another email early next week that will include a complete schedule. In an effort to care for one another, we have created a [Caring for One Another Survey](#), it lets us know how you want to be supported and how you’re able to support others.

These are uncertain times and feeling scared and stressed is normal. We are not always our best selves under emotional duress, so please be gentle with yourself and others.

Who knew it would take being distanced from one another to show how close we truly are? Let us be in the present with courage and care, look toward the future with optimism, and cherish the moment we are reunited in person.

We are here for you. Please feel free to reach out to either of us for anything.

Holding you in love,

Sam & Dawn Elane

[Committee on Ministries Appreciation of Rev. Michael Crumpler](#)

I’m Tom Check, a member of the Committee on Ministries, and I use he/him/his pronouns.

Rev. Michael, on behalf of the Committee on Ministries and the whole Congregation, I want to express our deepest appreciation for all you have shared with us, and mobilized within us, as our Sabbatical Minister since March 1. We are glad that you will continue to offer Pastoral Care through the end of June, but today we mark the last worship service that you will lead and preach as our Sabbatical Minister.

When the Committee on Ministries and Rev. Ana recommended you to our Board of Trustees several months ago, we encouraged you to share your whole self with us as our Sabbatical Minister – your lived experience, your passions, who you are as a person. You have done that for the past 3-1/2 months, and it has helped us understand and face the unprecedented times we live in – in the impact of COVID-19 on ourselves, in how our society exacerbates the impact of the coronavirus on black and brown communities, and in police violence against black people and their allies. Your presence has strengthened us as a community of faith, deepened our compassion for the larger community beyond our walls, and inspired us to engage. I recall a

theme of your second sermon with us, celebrating Purim and the story of Esther, in which you quoted, “Perhaps you were made for such a time as this”. Your fellowship with us has been so healing and so empowering, it’s clear that “you were made [our minister] for such a time as this”.

We admire how you have collaborated seamlessly with the First Unitarian staff. As the whole team invented how to support the Congregation at a time of urgent need without in-person contact, you joined as if you had been with them for years. And you used electronic media not just to imitate an in-person service, but to connect deeply and viscerally, in many dimensions, with an immediacy beyond what an in-person service allows.

And the core of this was your openness to share yourself fully with us. Your compassion, and your calling us to greater good, are grounded in your own self and your own life experience, which you brought to us so generously and freely.

Thank you for going “all in” with us in this momentous time. We appreciate it deeply, we are better, and we do better because of it, and we want to maintain our connection with you as our future unfolds.

Rev. Michael, thank you, and God be with you.

Amen, Ashay, and Blessed Be.

Tom Check for the Committee on Ministries

The following committees did not provide reports.

- Membership Committee (incorporated into the Director of Congregational Life Report)
- Queer Caucus
- Religious Education Council (Incorporated into the Director of Education & Family Ministry Report)
- UniFair (see Board Report)
- Young Adult Ministry