



Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2020-2021



This report covers a full year of COVID Pandemic mitigation and restrictions. During this time the congregation's worship services were provided on-line via Zoom and live streamed to Facebook. All committee work was conducted on-line and for most of the year the administrative and program staff worked from home, coming to the office only when necessary.

At the time of publication, the pandemic appears to be receding, vaccinations are easily obtained, and Governor Cuomo has announced that schools, restaurants, theaters, museums, and other institutions are free to open fully by mid-May.

This has been a year like no other, but First Unitarian has survived other pandemics, significant financial hardship, even Civil War. The fiber of our community is strong and our faith in liberal religion will not be broken.



May 13, 2021

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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

Senior Minister

Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons

When we refer to this past year as “a year like no other,” we mean it, not with certainty about the future, but with a hope and a prayer that the worst of it is behind us. We pray that we’ve been through the deadliest of the pandemic and the most sinister of our national politics and that we are truly coming out the other side now. But if there’s anything we’ve learned this year, it’s the persistence of uncertainty. We just don’t know. And living with that uncertainty, seeking peace in the midst of it, has been a spiritual challenge for each and every one of us. I have been extraordinarily proud of our staff and the entire community this year for the compassion, the patience, the creativity, and the faith that we have practiced together in the face of that uncertainty.

We have needed to continually reimagine worship for the online platform, building on what the staff had created last spring. We sought to use the technology to connect people in ways that wouldn’t be available in the physical sanctuary, not just as a second best to in-person worship. Against all odds, our music program has continued to thrive under the leadership of our Music Director, Adam Podd. He has brought a diverse and creative repertoire, alternating live online solos with virtual choir videos, arranged, produced, and edited by Adam. And we have frequently tapped the creativity of our congregation to participate in worship through monologues, skits, and reflections. All of this has helped bring the community together in a shared worship life.

We have needed to deepen our pastoral ministry knowing that people were isolated and many were experiencing depression, anxiety, and spiritual languishing as the months of the pandemic dragged on. We have redoubled our efforts to reach out to those who might be alone. We provided varied opportunities for pastoral support, including Sunday afternoon appointments with Caring Team members, support groups, and covenant groups. Our religious education program, led by our Director of Education and Family Ministry, Meagan Henry, has been a lifeline for the children and youth of our community whose worlds have been turned upside

down by school closures and other losses. For them, First U's RE has provided a place of safety and stability.

With the leadership of Garnett Losak, our Director of Congregational Life, we welcomed 24 new members in the last year, some of whom have never stepped foot in our sanctuary. This speaks volumes about the very real ministry we are providing through our worship services, Garnett's intentional work connecting newcomers, and the hospitality and spiritual cohesion of our community. Our staff team for the last two years has also included our Intern Minister, Ethan Loewi. Ethan has preached, taught classes and workshops, and has guided our Caring Ministry. His leadership in our zoom rooms has always been kind and insightful, with a touch of humor, and he has become a beloved member of our community. We hope to have the privilege of ordaining Ethan to UU ministry in the fall.

While First U has been operating almost entirely online, Director of Facilities Chris Johnson and our custodian, Ian Hurt, kept our 176-year-old building clean, safe, and functional for our renters and took the opportunity to make improvements that would have been difficult with heavier use. Our Office Manager, Wendy Russell, has provided the organizational backbone of our operations, maintaining our virtual and physical offices with grace.

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

Promote spiritual exploration, development and practice.

- **Holiday Services:** We adapted our holiday services to the zoom medium, aiming for mostly live (online) rituals. These included an asynchronous Water Ceremony where we mixed pre-recorded videos of people pouring their holy water with live pouring at home; a Hunger Communion; a Solstice service, both in-person and streamed; a Christmas Eve service with powerful music and a collectively created "word cloud;" our annual New Year's self-letter-writing done by email; a Good Friday service; a Passover gathering for sharing about the traditions including a Rinzel-family video storytelling; and Easter.
- **Greek Myths:** This year's multigenerational worship series was on Greek mythology. We shared the greatest hits, including Icarus, Persephone in Hades, Medusa, Orpheus, and Theseus and the Minotaur (in advance of which we mailed everyone a silver thread and prayer card to help us stay connected to our source). We brought the stories to life through the use of monologues, delivered brilliantly by a rotating cast of members (adult and children), many of whom also wrote the monologues for their characters. We explored the spiritual dimensions of these stories and sought to recognize the mythic archetypes in our own lives.
- **Spiritual Autobiography:** This new 5-session "guided retreat" supports congregants in going deeper and finding a narrative arc in their own spiritual journeys. I offered it three times this year.

- Walking and Talking with God: This was the second year of this thriving bi-monthly Bible study group. I lead discussions of passages from the Hebrew Bible; lay members lead discussions of the New Testament. We also share in depth check-ins about our spiritual journeys and pray together.

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

- Election Week: In anticipation of people’s anxiety over the election, we planned several online events including a drop in zoom session and a prayer service with spoken joys and sorrows. The Sunday after the election I preached “We Will Not Stop Singing” and we all shared by word cloud “What keeps you going? What keeps you singing?”
- Two Americas discussions: This three-session series was conceived by the COM and me as a response to the stress of election season. It was a forum for First U people to “caucus” among ourselves about our feelings and thoughts about the polarization of this country. Each was facilitated by one staff member and one COM member.
- Hope Johnson prayer circle: We gathered for shared support and prayer for our beloved former minister Rev. Hope before her death in November. She is buried in First U’s plot, known as Vista Hill, in Green-Wood Cemetery.
- Christmas Day gathering: in awareness that many people might be alone this year, we held an online gathering on Christmas morning.
- Prayer Circle After January 6 Storming of Capital: In the aftermath of a painful week, we hosted a prayer circle to lift up our deepest yearnings in community.
- Junebug Programming: In response to the frightening reality of COVID prompting greater awareness of our mortality, we created programming around our relationship to death. We began with my sermon “Junebug in July” and offered several workshops encouraging open exploration of death and dying. These included sessions on end-of-life medical decisions, memorial service and burial planning, green burials, as well as our new First U Legacy Society.
- Monday Discussion Group: This is a monthly discussion group for retired and non-traditional schedule people. We discuss a wide range of spiritual and emotional themes brought by the members of the group.

Equip people with the skill and confidence to become change makers

- Lay Worship Leader Program: This is a leadership development program for congregants to grow their skills and confidence for leadership at First U and beyond. The Lay Worship Leaders assist in worship each week and preach a homily (short sermon) once during the year. They receive coaching in sermon writing from me and presentation skills training with Jeff Levy-Lyons. This year’s class is: Jean Shepherd, Megan Munroe, Tyrone Davis, and Jaden Li Gunn.
- Sacred Studies: Sacred Studies is a new curriculum intended to cultivate a *wide-angle spiritual framework* and a *shared spiritual language* to engage the social forces of our

day. It consists of books and films on the intersections of ecological crisis, race, and poverty with discussions, led by me, other staff, and lay leaders, to lift up their spiritual dimensions. Selections this year have included *How to Be an Anti-Racist*, *The Fight* (documentary), *Nickle and Dimed*, *No Other Gods*, and more.

- UU The Vote: In the run up to the 2020 election First U, with the leadership of Justin Parkinson, sponsored phone banking events. I led kick-off prayers and Jeff Levy-Lyons provided trainings.
- RAPP press conference (April 13): As part of the Release Aging People in Prison campaign, I spoke at a multi-faith clergy advocacy event, describing the Universalist foundation for compassion for the incarcerated.

Become an environmentally responsible congregation

- Greening our Facilities: The Green Team in collaboration with the Capital Reserve Group have created a plan to install an energy-efficient heat pump system and solar panels in the coming years.
- Worship: We seek to weave an ecological consciousness throughout our worship life, as well as occasionally preaching directly about the environment. These sermons this year included “Holy Snow Day”, “Apocalypse When?” (by Ethan Loewi), and the Earth Day sermon “The Shoreline of Wonder,” which featured live and chat reflections on moments of awe.
- Sacred Studies – Two of our Sacred Studies selections focused specifically on ecological consciousness – *Laudato Si* (Pope Frances’ encyclical on the environment and global poverty) and *On Fire* by Naomi Klein.
- NYC UU’s Pray, Learn, and Act on Climate (May 25): I organized and emceed this special zoom hour of prayer, learning, music, and climate action. All the NYC UU ministers spoke as well as others, including Meagan Henry and Illia Kawash-Cooper, one of our youth. Adam played music for the event. Our time together culminated with a phone banking session in support of the Climate and Community Investment Act. 63 people from several congregations attended.

Develop and Responsibly Manage Resources

- Ministerial Internship program: Our ministerial internship program, now in its fifth year, has been a great success, an immense help to the ministry team, and a great pride and joy for the congregation to be a “teaching congregation.” Our current intern, Ethan Loewi, has become a beloved member of our community. I serve as the supervisor and mentor to the intern minister, including weekly meetings, sermon coaching, and helping with preparation for the final interview with the UU Ministerial Fellowship Committee. This program has been funded by generous anonymous donors, who have now agreed to fund it for two more years. But the congregation will need to take over funding the internship after that.

- Planned Giving Program: Sharon and Tom Kennedy have taken the lead on a planned giving program. They have experience doing this with another organization (Star Island) and they are eager to replicate their success at First U.
- Stewardship: Together in Spirit (Feb. 28): This stewardship kickoff service celebrated the ways First U has risen to the challenge of the pandemic and the upheavals of our time. I told the story of our congregation and how our history has led us to this moment – “we were made for times like these.”
- Exit Interviews: Garnett and I conduct exit interviews with all departing staff, including this year, Ian Hurt.
- Hybrid Worship: We are preparing for the probability of being able to return to live worship in the sanctuary in the fall and aiming to provide a robust hybrid experience for those who can’t or don’t wish to join us in person. We have convened a new Tech Team whose first mission is to plan for livestreaming services in a way that is sensitive and inclusive.

Life Cycle

Rosemary Talmadge Memorial Service (February 7): I helped plan and participated in this beautiful memorial zoom service for Rosemary.

Other Life Cycle Events

Deaths

- Michael Richardson (10/10/20)
- Marc Hollander, Husband of Lorna Hollander, father of Selena and Linda (03/18/21)

Births

- Nico Bero-Chatrath, child of Julie Bero & Rishi Chatrath, grandchild of Bob Bero & Kathy Ivans (9/30/2020)
- Mabel Lenz, child of Kirsten Defur & Mark Lenz (2/15/21)
- Apollo Quesenberry, child of Lauren Webb & Tom Quesenberry (01/21/21)

Director of Education & Family Ministry

Meagan Henry

First 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.*

Message from Meagan Henry, Director of Education and Family Ministry

This has been a year of online religious education, small group ministry, and worship. In some ways, it feels like my work with the congregation changed dramatically. I work from home now and have only visited the First Unitarian building in Brooklyn four times in the past year. Our staff met weekly online instead of in person. I see the children in tiny “Brady Bunch” squares on Sundays now instead of sitting in a meditation circle or playing games in the Chapel, singing, and doing art projects like we’ve done for so many years. We have online story time twice a week in the evenings and religious education classes on Sunday afternoons on Zoom. I’ve especially enjoyed sharing children’s books with illustrations, which is an opportunity afforded to us by having online worship. I lead two adult covenant groups that meet online once a month and I co-facilitated a sacred studies discussion. My biggest projects this year were leading the Coming of Age class and the High School Youth group.

An exciting development for our community this year was the hiring of our new Religious Education Assistant, Sophie Major. I’ve spent this first year with Sophie, teaching her our processes and getting her ready to be with us in person next year. She has been a fantastic addition to the staff team and a great asset to the Religious Education and Family Ministry program.

Message from Sophie Major, Religious Education Assistant

As the Religious Education Assistant at First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn, there are many tasks that go into helping the Religious Education program stay up and running. From administrative work to communication with First U families, my role is to help our program director in any way I can to create efficient lines of communication and resources. Each week there is a list of things that need to get done like the family e-news that goes out, correspondence with our RE teachers and regular postings on our Facebook page. Social media is a huge component of our communication to the members of our congregation, and I have a part in that each week by sharing information about upcoming events like our weekly Chapter Book Story Time and monthly game nights. I also post activities that correspond with monthly themes in the Soul Matters curriculum we use in Religious Education. This allows kids and families to continue their spiritual practice outside of the classroom. Creating flyers to advertise upcoming events has also been part of this job. I use a graphic tool called Canva to design flyers with information and graphics to attract attention to the events that the congregation provides for our members and families. I have met monthly with the Religious Education Council to stay up to date with what is going on in the Religious Education program. We stay organized and keep the RE families in the loop by creating calendars for each season. The family e-news is sent out to the RE families every Friday morning. I work on it throughout the week to ensure that all the correct information is included. Each month, I make a new banner for the e-news to renew its appearance and insure it’s pleasing to the eye.

Overview of Religious Education and Family Ministry

Events and Ongoing Programs

- We had a joyous online Halloween Costume Parade during a Sunday worship service.
- We couldn't have a traditional pageant, but we did take photos with Santa Claus on Zoom after he read the kids a bedtime story about Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer.
- Multi-Gen services focused on the theme of Greek Myths gave opportunities for some of our young thespians to shine! Notably Stanley as Hades, Lily as Icarus, Ramona as a Greek Chorus member, Julius as Zeus, Abigail as multiple roles, ...
- Several online Game Nights were led by June Wohlhorn, Ethan Loewi, and Lisa Pacenza
- Adult RE Classes were offered throughout the year, including two Soul Matters Covenant Groups (led by Mary Huhn and Meagan Henry), 5 Smooth Stones series (led by Garnett Losak), Unitarian Universalist History class (led by Ethan Loewi), and the Sacred Studies Series (led by Rev. Ana Levy-Lyone, Garnett Losak, Ethan Loewi, Samantha Waller, Judith Sedaitis, and Meagan Henry)
- Single Parent's Covenant Group meets monthly, led by Meagan Henry.
- Davol Bible Ceremony recipients: Arianna Astuto Negahbani, Roxy Egge, Liberty Ellis, Emmett Pinkley, Stanley Rinzel, Benja Sen.
- Children's Chorus Video for the end of the year celebration on June 13. This project is due to the hard work of Adam Podd who provided the resources and editing skills and Bert Eisenstadt's direction. Children's Chorus members: Cora Bierberdorf, Willa Bieberdorf, Livia Eddon, Willow Eddon, Roxy Egge, Jack Kennedy-Dickenson, Julius Rinzel, Stanley Rinzel, Dagan Rosenblatt, Ramona Shepherd, Abigail Weiss

Online Classes

- Tuesday and Thursday evening storytime for middle elementary, Sunday nights for younger folk. The older kids read Harry Potter and the Sorcerors' Stone and Sal and Gabi Break the Universe. Story readers are: Michele Ascione, Sophie Major, and June Wohlhorn.
- 4th/5th Grade class meets on RE Sundays at 4PM (attendance ranges from 3-8 children with 3 Teachers: Illia Kawash-Cooper, Amanda Rinzel, and June Wohlhorn)
- 6th Grade Building Bridges met on RE Sundays at 2PM (attendance ranges from 3-6 children with 3 Teachers: Liz Jones, Gate Pratt, and Sophie Major)
- Coming Of Age (COA) met Sundays at 5:30PM from September through May. This year, we had 6 COA Youth in the program: Molly Castle, David Jobin, Prairie Jones, Anna Vavagiakas, Emmett Wasik, Noah John Wolf Schwartz along with their Adult Mentors: Paul Frietag, David Garoille, Patricia Lawrence, Judith Sedaitis, Carolyn White, June Wohlhorn) Lead Teacher: Meagan Henry
- The High School Youth Group meets every Sunday at 2PM. The Youth Group offered the Annual Youth-Led Worship Service on March 14th and spent time planning and fundraising for their annual service trip to West Virginia. Youth Group Members: Illia

Kawash-Cooper, Niss Francis, Willamina Garrelts, Declan Gunn, Jaden Gunn, Lio Otter, and Maxwell Weiss. Adult Advisors: Merrill Csuri, Winnie Zwick and Meagan Henry

- Classes for students in K-3 were offered for Fall and Winter, but did not seem to meet the needs of our youngest children. We decided to pause online classes and encourage families to get outside! Teachers: Peter Engel, Becky Huffman, and Eva Rogals-Weiss.

Thank you!

The work we do is made possible by all the amazing RE Volunteer teachers and the members of the REC. This year's RE teachers were: Illia Kawash-Cooper, Amanda Rinzel, Liz Jones, Gate Pratt, June Wohlhorn, Peter Engel, Becky Huffman, Eva Rogals-Weiss, Merrill Csuri, Winnie Zwick and COA mentors: Paul Freitag, Patricia Lawrence, David Garvoille, June Wohlhorn, Judith Sedaitis, and Carolyn White. This year's REC members are MariaSara Alcock, Michele Ascione, Clare Robinson-Henrie, Becky Huffman (Council Chair), Andrea Parkinson (Board Liaison), and June Wohlhorn. Many thanks to RE staff liaison to the Board, Sam McKelvie.

Garnett Losak

Director of Congregational Life

Fiscal Year 2020-2021 began with the shocking realization that the pandemic we thought would last about 6-8 weeks when we hunkered down in early March, was going to last at least through the summer. Of course, it soon became evident that we were in it for the long-haul and we all settled in for what became and is still as of this writing, a new normal.

Worship

It became clear by late spring that our summer lay-led worship program was moving online via Zoom. Fortunately, I was working with a great team led by Bridgette Raes (see the Summer Worship Team report.) There was a blend of first timers and seasoned old-timers, adults of all ages, and fabulous music led by Allie Lewis. At the request of First U parents, we added a Wisdom Story to every service. This is an element that has not historically been included in the summer. I led a required 9:00AM Sunday rehearsal and created a standard order of service and slide system that was based on what we had developed during the program year. I also continued to participate in summer worship as a welcomer, led at least one wisdom story, and volunteered to be on the sermon editor rotation (with Bridgette, Ethan Loewi, and Judith Sedaitis). As it turned out, this may have been one of the strongest summer programs in recent memory.

When Rev. Ana returned from her sabbatical in August, I continued to provide the worship team with regular slide and script google documents, welcomed the congregation to worship, added "pre-worship slides" that included congregation news and information about upcoming programming, and hosted the fellowship break-out rooms following worship.

On the evening of December 21st, with the help of the First Unitarian Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans (CUUPS), I organized a winter Solstice service held outside in the chapel garden. We burned bay leaves as a mid-winter offering, Rev. Ana led us in prayer, Meagan

Henry participated with a reading and I eulogized longtime CUUPs member Michael Richardson. Elissa Myers, Damaris Lliso, and Lee Ian (who led the music) were instrumental in putting the service together. I cut sprigs from the church garden holly tree which made a lovely centerpiece for our altar and a small offering to the 20 or so attendees. It was wonderful to be able to worship together, albeit with masks and social distancing, for the first time in many months.

I am eternally grateful to Rev. Ana for giving me the opportunity to participate in worship. It is unusual for Membership Directors to have that level of visibility in the congregation. The job of the Membership Director should be “front of the house”. Newcomers are likely to respond to someone who is seen as a leader, who is a visible presence, and who clearly has the trust and respect of the senior minister.

Average worship attendance (all services on Zoom and streamed to Facebook) 9/20-5/21

- Zoom: 133
- Facebook: 31

Note: attendance figures represent log-ins. More than one person may be participating in worship in each at each screen. Facebook attendance is live viewing only. Many more people watch all or part of the worship services in the days, weeks, or months following the livestream.

Newcomers

Since the beginning of the fiscal year, 136 people have contacted me to request the Zoom link for our Sunday services. Many others attend our Facebook livestream. All Zoom visitors are invited by email to attend a newcomer’s orientation. Those who make online donations receive a mailed thank you note.

Programming

For the past several summers I have worked to develop summer programming beyond the Sunday service. In the summer of 2020, it was more important than ever that we provided our members with opportunities to be together, to learn, and to explore their spirituality.

My first concern was pastoral care. Rev. Michael Crumpler, our sabbatical minister, was completing his ministry at the end of June and while I am able to provide some assistance to people in need, I am not trained to provide spiritual guidance or professional pastoral care. I discussed the possibility of our intern minister, Ethan Loewi, serving the congregation through the summer on an hourly basis, and both Ethan and the Board agreed to my proposal. Ethan and I alternated leading a mid-week prayer service and a 3 times per week afternoon check-in. I wrote and led a 5-week, “Five Smooth Stones” mini-group that was attended by 8 participants. It was the highlight of my summer.

Other programming of note:

- Monthly Newcomer’s Orientation – year-round on the first Sunday of the month

- Second session of “Five Smooth Stones Mini-Group”, 7 participants, Fall 2020
- Sacred Studies Book Discussion – *Man’s Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl. Co-led with Samantha Waller. 11 participants, Winter 2021
- Pathways to Membership, Winter, 2021 (see more about this in membership)

Membership

Unfortunately, many First U members left Brooklyn over the past year, accelerating the period of exodus that began the year before. Others have declined or neglected to complete pledge forms and have lost their membership status.

As of May 3rd, First Unitarian’s membership is 269 people. While that is down from a recent high of nearly 300, it is up from a low of under 250 earlier this year. With the anticipation of returning to the Sanctuary in the fall, several members have returned to membership and improbably, 24 people signed the membership book since the beginning of the pandemic (March 2020), 14 in this fiscal year so far, and 10 in June of last year after the annual report was published. Most of these people had attended services in the Sanctuary at some point, but 5 have only known us as a Zoom congregation.

Our new members signed a “virtual” membership book and were welcomed to the congregation in worship. The new member litany was adapted to conform to Zoom restrictions. Even so, many of our new members reported that they found the ceremony to be meaningful. They each received in the mail a gift of a UUA Welcome Book, bookmark, pocket card, and a welcome to membership card. The Membership Committee is planning an in-person ceremony and book signing on the church patio on Sunday, June 6th.

Pathways to Membership

Over three consecutive Sundays at the end of January and early February, the membership committee led a Zoom version of Pathways to Membership. 7 people participated and all had either signed the membership book previously or did so afterward. Leading the class on Zoom was a challenge, but with significant support from the wonderful membership committee, Bridgette Raes, Judith Sedaitis, Marty Bernstein and the Board Liaison Megan Munroe, the class was a great success. Nevertheless, we decided to wait until we could meet in person to offer the next session.

Communications

In the fall of 2020, we experienced a website outage that was well beyond my expertise. Thankfully, First U member, Jay Lawrence, was able to do emergency surgery and get us back up and running within a couple of days. Jay also upgraded our systems, added security software, backed up the system, and has been a valuable resource for ongoing tech support. The website, which would benefit from a design overhaul and the addition of analytics software, is now operating on an up-to-date platform.

Needless to say, it became more important than ever that we communicate with our friends and members as often as possible and through a range of media. I continue to publish the weekly e-

news on Thursday afternoons. It includes the order of service (thank you to our office manager, Wendy Russell, for her diligence in having it ready by deadline every week) and the zoom link for the worship service as well as general news and announcements.

In order to provide some sense of physical connection, we added several additional postal mailings to our program year. In the fall we sent “silver” threads and a Silver Thread Poem written by Rev. Ana to coincide with her sermon, “Theseus & The Minitour”. At the launch of the stewardship campaign, in February, a letter from our board presidents that included a small puzzle piece was mailed, and in May an invitation to the annual meeting was sent to all members. A final mailing ahead of the Flower Communion is planned for the end of the program year. All of these mailings were in addition to regular pledge and tax statements.

The First U Facebook page continues to be a source of news and information, not to mention live and post-live viewing of our Sunday service, as do our specialized pages for families, Queer folk, and young adults. We continue to support pages for people interested in weddings, and as a resource for justice work. Meagan Henry and Sophie Major publish a weekly family e-news throughout the program year.

The congregation also has Instagram and Twitter accounts. Both continue to evolve. A Tik Tok account has been created but is not yet active.

- E-News Subscribers: 1,568
- Facebook Fans: 1,900+
- Instagram Followers: 369
- Twitter Followers: 219

Staff News

Ian Hurt, our fulltime custodian, for the past 3 years, resigned in the early spring and our parttime custodian, Bobby Blackman, was hired to replace him. Ian has relocated to Delaware where he has extended family. We will miss him, but we are pleased that he is ready for the next stage and we wish him well.

In May, our Director of Facilities, Chris Johnson announced that he was ready to retire. His last day will be June 30, 2021. During his tenure, Chris professionalized the position of Sexton, creating systems for ensuring that our building is up to code, that department of buildings filings and reporting were current and that long ignored repairs were completed. In addition to his staff responsibilities, Chris has been an integral member of the First U community, leading an annual summer service, co-hosting our community Thanksgiving dinner, and stepping up when called upon. Read Chris’s letter of resignation in the addenda.

At the time of this writing, a search committee has been formed. Committee members are: Lee Pardee, Paul Freitag, Matt Robinson, Amit Mehta. I will be the staff liaison and Rev. Ana will participate as needed.

Rentals and Other Revenue

I am working closely with the Long-Term Rental Team and our broker, Christopher Turner of Denham Wolf, to secure a renewal of our lease with Imagine Early Learning Centers. This has been a year-long project which at the time of writing is not concluded. Patrick Gunn, Carolyn Ellis, Lee Pardee (finance liaison) and John Carroll (board liaison) have been working tirelessly to ensure that First Unitarian has a fair agreement that works for both parties. Thank you to Carolyn Ellis, for securing our attorney, Debra Sapp, on a pro bono basis.

We are fortunate that both of our apartment tenants have renewed their leases for another year. The Board of Trustees agreed to no rent increase.

The pandemic curtailed almost all of our “other rental” and ceremonies rentals. However, starting in the spring we were able to provide space to several arts organizations for rehearsals and recording that required large space. I offered a special pandemic rate of \$25/hour.

Saint Ann’s School has been renting the Chapel and the Sanctuary in order to reduce class size. Thanks to this unexpected revenue, we will come close to making our “other rental” budget for the year.

Last summer, with significant help from our office manager, Wendy Russell, I applied for and received a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan of \$108,000 from the federal government. This loan was offered as a part of a package of pandemic support for small businesses. Receipt of the funds committed us to retaining all of our fulltime staff for the period of the loan. In the early spring we were informed that the loan was forgiven.

Stewardship & Pledging

This has been a stressful year. Some of our members have lost jobs, others have reduced income and still others are fearful of future financial insecurity. It is unlikely that we will reach our pledge revenue goal this year. The finance committee is projecting that we will end the year at approximately 80% of the budget. Additionally, our plate revenue will end up at about three quarters of what we would normally expect, which is unsurprising given that we are not worshipping in person, and our non-pledge contributions will finish at 50%. (see more in the Finance Committee Report).

Our Fiscal Year 2022 campaign launched on February 28th and is on-going (see stewardship report). At this point, we can report the following information

- Year to year increase (based on pledges received) 2%
- Range: \$50-\$16,000
- Average Pledge: \$1,800
- Most common pledge: \$1,000

The congregation is reminded that all donations to the congregation, no matter the size are received with gratitude. To those members of the congregation who have not completed pledge forms, I encourage you to do so. Your pledge is a sign of commitment to your spiritual community and is a blessing to receive. I am always honored to work with our stewardship team. The dedication of this group year after year is inspiring.

Public Ministry

I am concluding my first year on the board of trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Membership Professionals (UUAMP). Besides giving me an opportunity to share my leadership experience beyond the walls of First Unitarian, my participation in this organization has provided me with a rich network of membership professionals with whom I share best practices and ideas. I am pleased to report the Rev. Michael Crumpler will be the keynote speaker at this June's UUAMP Professional Days.

We have been lending our kitchen to a small justice organization for the preparation of soup that is delivered to a free food truck that serves people in need in Crown Heights.

I organized a Thanksgiving food drive in the Sanctuary coinciding with our annual Hunger Communion on the Sunday before the holiday. The food, which filled a van was delivered to the First Presbyterian food pantry for community distribution.

Pursuant to the success of the Thanksgiving food drive, I have been working with the Deacons to collect food during our regular open Sanctuary days on the first Wednesday of every month from 4-6PM. I created a safety and procedures guide for this endeavor with input from the COVID Response Team and have made it available to all of our Deacon hosts.

After the sudden death of Rev. Hope Johnson, I organized a fund drive to purchase a burial site in Vista Hill, First Unitarian's section of Green-Wood Cemetery. We raised funds from members and friends of First Unitarian, the wider UU community and, especially, friends and members of the Garden City congregation where Hope had served as senior minister. We were able to pay for the burial site (\$3,000) and send Hope's sister, Janice Marie over \$1,000 to pay for incidental burial costs.

Committee Work Not Mentioned Elsewhere in This Report

(see submissions from each group for more information)

Most activities of the congregation require some level of support from members of the administration staff. Examples of support for the past year include: creating Zoom meetings, publishing and making in-service announcements, reimbursement of expenses, website support, etc. In addition, I supplied more comprehensive support to the following groups and committees:

Leadership Development Committee (LDC)

- Attended all meetings of this elected committee, offering advice and support where needed.

Legacy Society

- Designed Legacy Society pin and thank you cards, supplied information as needed to the organizers, created on-line registration form

Capital Fund Group (CFG)

- Created web page, designed on-line pledge form, consulted on projects, other support as needed

Share the Plate Committee

- Revised the STP policy and supported the committee as needed throughout the year, included a letter from the congregation to all donations.

COVID Response Team

- Attended all meetings, provided administrative support as needed. The work of this team is on-going.

Finance Committee

- Provided administrative help and support as needed. Arranged for the committee to meet with our risk manager to review insurance needs and costs. Most staff support was provided by office manager, Wendy Russell.

Pastoral Care Team

- Attended most meetings, provided information on members and friends who needed care, in some cases provided care directly.

Green Team

- Worked with the team to change electricity supplier from an ESCO to Community Solar, a Green Street Project located in Canarsie Thank you to Jan Thompson for her work on this project which reduces our reliance on fossil fuels.

Conclusion

I am finishing up my 9th year of employment and my 30th year of membership at my beloved First Unitarian. Never could I have imagined a year like this one. In its 177-year history, our congregation has never been forced to close its doors. Times like these test the fortitude of our organizations. Years of hard work by leaders past and present have built a congregation that has proven it can withstand even the most difficult of challenges. I applaud the dedicated work of all who came before and all who continue to lend their time, treasure, and talent to our shared mission.

Thank you to all of you who make my job a ministry and to the best staff I could ever hope to work with.

Adam Podd
Music Director

This has been a remarkable year for music and worship at First Unitarian. This was my seventh year as Director of Music, and though presented entirely online, this community of music-makers has much to be proud of and excited about.

In March of 2020, the transition to online-only services was sudden and challenging, and it began our exploration of what effective worship could look like on this new platform. As we continued with Zoom worship this program year, we continued to find new ways to engage the congregation in worship. One of the biggest changes to the music program was the addition of pre-recorded “virtual choir” style videos. We continued making “live” music (in real time) every Sunday morning (in the limited capacity that Zoom allows) but we added the element of pre-recorded musical collaborations. Each pre-recorded piece was created specifically for this congregation as an element of worship. These included accompanied solos, duets, quartets, and even a handful of pieces sung by our full choir. Perhaps the most ambitious was the Christmas Eve *Silent Night* “Sing-Along” finale which included over 75 participants from our choir and congregation. All in all, we produced more than twenty of these pre-recorded pieces, which remain on the First U YouTube channel, and have over 20,000 views as of the writing of this report.

Besides helping others find joy and meaning throughout this challenging year, these videos have enhanced First U’s online presence, and put us at the center of attention in the national UU community. Our music program has now been recognized by many UU faith leaders, including at the UUA, and become a model for others navigating how to do Zoom worship well. I was commissioned by the UUA to create content for other congregations to use in worship, and I’ve been at the center of many conversations with UU music colleagues discussing virtual choir production for worship services. First U’s virtual choir version of “There Is More Love Somewhere” was used in the UUA’s *Side With Love* worship service in February.

Perhaps my personal favorite musical element this year has been the prelude that starts our worship services each week. Singer/songwriter, and First U member Ana Egge and I co-wrote a new song called “We Choose Love” specifically for this purpose and with this community in mind. Our goal was to have a different member or friend of our congregation sing this same song every single Sunday to begin the service - 40 Sundays, 40 singers. This has been a very well-received way to see and hear from so many voices in our community - familiar, and brand new.

Christmas Eve and Palm Sunday were special as always, with chamber groups accompanying our great soloists and choir, including the award-winning NYC-based brass quartet, *The Westerlies*, who agreed to perform in exchange for rehearsal space in our Sanctuary.

The improvements to our sanctuary’s sound system were installed and will be ready to put to good use when services return to that space! Funds to purchase the system were raised in 2019, but the pandemic stalled the installation until this spring.

The Julie McKinney Fund, which supports the music program at First Unitarian, raised \$10,700 so far this year. Thank you to everyone who contributed. (see a list of JMF donor in the addendum to this report).

No musician will soon forget the challenges of the past year - not just financially if music was their livelihood, but emotionally and spiritually for those that consider making music with and for others a big piece of their identity. I continue to be grateful to this congregation, community, our wonderful soloists (Candice Helfand-Rogers, Brandon Hornsby-Selvin, Dennis Wees, and Kiena Williams) and my colleagues on the staff for contributing to my sense of self and providing a supportive space for my musical expression.

Christopher Johnson

Director of Facilities

In my role as First Unitarian's Director of Facilities, I have either managed, performed or consulted on all facilities related projects, repairs or issues for FY 20-21. I have handled all building emergencies for the church campus. NYC Department of Buildings and Department of Health inspections have been on-going as required by law, and everything is up to code. I have responded to tenant concerns so as to maintain good relations. I have participated in all Board of Trustees meetings and informed them about any issues or concerns.

1. I participated as a member of the Capital Review Committee from which the comprehensive 15 year and beyond, capital project list and expense document were produced.
2. The FY 21 Facilities operating budget
3. The Supply line will come in under budget due to less building usage because of covid. The Purchase Services portion of the budget will be less than budgeted as a result of me working as church contractor instead of outsourcing much of the skilled work.
4. Below is a list of some of the larger projects completed or expected to be completed by the end of the fiscal year.
5. Interior wheelchair undercroft/chapel hallway completed by me and funded by an anonymous donation. Disabled persons now have access to the undercroft fellowship hour and water closet. As part of the project, I was able to build a small storage closet in the undercroft that will be used for UniFair supplies.
6. Stairwell and kitchen floor painted.
7. Interior kitchen cabinets cleaned, primed, and painted.
8. East sanctuary exterior stained-glass windows glazed, caulked, primed and painted from chapel roof.
9. New custodian hired. Bobby Blackman, formerly parttime custodian, is now fulltime replacing Ian Hurt who has relocated to Delaware. Bobby has been given training with regards to emergency protocols.
10. Chapel façade repaired addressing safety concerns. Cost was considerably less than was budgeted.
11. 3rd floor office water closet renovated.
12. Copy room water closet renovated.
13. Old boiler room electrical safety problems repaired. Sanctuary exterior step lighting rewired.
14. The sanctuary sconces should be working before the end of the fiscal year.
15. The undercroft floor received its annual deep cleaning, light sanding, and coat of clear polyurethane.

In addition to all of this, I have written an extensive Facilities Manager Reference Manual, which chronicles much of the necessary information needed for the successful operation of the facilities department. It is my hope that this will prove to be an invaluable document for anyone who is in charge of the campus buildings.

Intern Minister

Ethan Loewi

Overview

Serving as First U's Intern Minister this past year, while finishing my third and final year of seminary, has been a challenge, pleasure, and privilege every step of the way. Since my first day on the job--in August of 2019, that halcyon era--I've felt welcomed and supported by this community. You've trusted me with the task of ministry and given me countless opportunities to learn and grow. Even and especially during the painful times of this pandemic, amid the uncertainty and sorrow of this dizzying year, you've brightened my days with your laughter, faith, and kindness. I've been inspired by your willingness to help each other through hardship, as well as your deep commitment to social justice and spiritual growth. Luke 8:16 teaches us that "No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light." In my two years at First U, I've learned this is a community that puts its light on a stand--and you've taught me to do the same.

I write this report to summarize some of my key duties in the past year; just as importantly, I want to give copious thanks to my colleagues on staff! To Garnett Losak, Adam Podd, Meagan Henry, Chris Johnson, Wendy Russell, Sophie Major, Ian Hurt, Bobby Blackman, Rev. Michael Crumpler, and of course my wonderful supervisor Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons: working with you has been an incredible gift. I've learned so much from this team and been so grateful for the camaraderie. Thank you for sharing your trust, encouragement, and expertise with such generosity, especially as we've adapted to the many hurdles of all-online-everything. I also want to thank my terrific Intern Minister Committee (aka the IMC, aka The High Council): John Carroll, Amit Mehta, Liz Jones, Barbara Ratzlaff, and Mark Perlmutter. Your insightful feedback and support have been invaluable. Between the staff, my Intern Committee, and the congregation, I've felt constantly blessed by the community I've found in this internship. It's something of a cliché for a seminarian to say that their internship committee "made them a minister"-- but in this case, I think the cliché definitely holds true.

Worship

I've been responsible for preaching and leading Sunday worship four times this year and will lead one more service on May 30th. In addition, I've served as lay worship leader approximately once a month and delivered feedback to my fellow lay worship leaders on their homilies. Similarly, in the summer of 2020 I led a workshop on sermon writing and delivery for summer worship leaders and will do so again this June. I also worked with a number of last year's summer worship leaders to polish and edit their sermons. One highlight of my year, worship-wise, was designing a weekly "Evening Prayers" service. Thanks to my fellow staff members, who led it with me on a rotating basis, we were able to offer this service throughout the summer.

Another major component of my worship duties has been running the slides for Sunday worship: sharing hymn lyrics, wisdom story illustrations, videos, and more. Pivoting to online worship has been no small task, and I've been consistently grateful for the talent and versatility of the staff team in making it happen.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral care has been a key part of my role throughout my internship. In both years, I've led the "Caring Ministry" team—a group of lay pastoral caregivers that makes calls, sends cards, delivers meals, and otherwise offers a friendly listening ear to those in need of one. In addition to offering direct pastoral care myself, I've overseen many aspects of team operations: I've led meetings, prepared and delivered pastoral care trainings, and handled logistics of the "Chapel Ministry" program, which offers community members a weekly post-worship opportunity to speak with Chapel Ministers—congregants with professional backgrounds in therapy, pastoral care, or social work. During the pandemic, I created a new online sign-up process so Chapel Ministry could continue virtually. I also worked with the staff to design a slate of new pastoral care events during the pandemic, including check-ins, game nights, and small group ministries. During the summer of 2020 we were offering some form of check-in, worship, or event almost every day of the week. Leading the Caring Ministry team has been a huge highlight of my internship: to everyone on the team, I've been inspired by your warmth, hard work, and commitment to helping your fellow community members through hard times. Whether delivering meals (sometimes during a pandemic!), helping to lead check-ins over the summer, or offering spiritual support to those going through grief or illness, you've done so much to make First U a place where all are cared for in their times of need.

Spiritual Development and Small Group Ministries

After leading a covenant group ministry last year on the theme of "Old Testament Migrations," this year I led a four-session class on "Unitarian Universalist History and Identity." In addition, I have supported the religious education program by presenting wisdom stories, and meeting with youth in the congregation to lead seminars on major figures such as Fannie Lou Hamer and Michael Servetus. I have also led two "Sacred Studies" book group discussions, on *Nickel and Dimed* by Barbara Ehrenreich and *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. More recently I led an event on end-of-life conversations, which discussed issues such as choosing a health care proxy and creating a living will. Later this month, I will lead two group discussions on the 2020 Commission on Institutional Change report, *Widening the Circle of Concern*. Additionally, I have strived in my sermons to explore the legacies and current relevance of major figures in UU history, such as Rev. Egbert Ethelred Brown and Maria Cook.

Section 2: Governance Committees

Board of Trustees

We've completed our 188th year as *The First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn*, created in 1833 as a beacon of liberal theology. Those two centuries include many traumas that challenged the leaders and members of First U. We expect this year, which we spent grappling with challenges and uncertainty from the worldwide Covid pandemic while maintaining our focus on social justice, to be remembered alongside those disruptive ones.

Even apart from the virus' challenge to our lives (which remains formidable, as ongoing in India and elsewhere demonstrate), it challenged our mental health, livelihoods, local businesses, and communities. Alongside all that, the United States plunged into unprecedented political polarization. We learned that *coup d'etat* attempts aren't things that only happen elsewhere, and that new voting laws to suppress the African American vote aren't things that only happen in the past.

But we felt encouraged as scientists and doctors developed and tested vaccines at unprecedented speed - a testament to the biologists whose free and responsible search for truth, in the century since the last global pandemic, has revolutionized our understanding of life. Amidst the pandemic, society mobilized to protect the less fortunate; we participated at First Unitarian by collecting food and providing kitchen space for those making it, to distribute during the pandemic.

We also felt encouraged as much of the country rose to protest the murder of George Floyd, a rising many of us joined by participating in protests and marches and threw light on the broader problem of police violence against African Americans. We offered our Chapel as a refuge for marchers and activists.

We persevered; held each other close at a distance; and gave thanks for each person who showed up, laughed, cried and celebrated "the spirit that unites us." Time sometimes stood still, but elsewhere zoomed. In the midst of all this, we welcomed 24 new members to the congregation.

We're deeply grateful for our staff, a wellspring of creative, intelligent, dedicated, talented, energetic, and hard-working people. Each week we look forward to Sundays and the "illuminated moment of our gathering" and also to Thursdays when we receive our e-newsletter with connections to spiritual opportunities and with news of our community.

Our custodian Ian Hurt, a valued member of our community for three years, resigned this spring to leave New York and find a new career. We hired Bobby Blackman, who has worked for Imagine Daycare and for us, as a fulltime custodian in March.

We feel thankful to our fellow trustees, committee chairs and members, other volunteers, thespians, musicians, technicians, stewards, members, and friends. All of this talent, energy, and tenacity fused into the magic our community is.

We hosted our monthly board meetings, weekly standing committee meetings, and retreat gatherings on Zoom, but they did not feel remote. Trustees Sam McKelvie moved to Quincy, IL and Matt Robinson to Rochester, NY; both remained steadfast, responsible, and involved with the board. Andrew Bongiorno resigned from the board after a difficult bout with Covid, including quarantine apart from his family, and increased job responsibilities. Carolyn Ellis will serve out his term. We feel thankful to Bruce Wilde, our long-standing Clerk who recently relocated with his family to Kingston NY.

The Congregation advanced our Forward First goals through launching new initiatives and reimagining old ones.

To promote collective and individual spiritual exploration, growth and practice, we held workshops, sermons, and prayers that spoke to our mortality; launched two spiritual autobiographies workshops, and supported Meagan Henry's pursuit of a Master's of Divinity.

To equip people with the skills and confidence to become change makers for justice in their communities, we put our support behind legislation and action to release aging persons from prison, approved a Rev. Crumpler-led anti-racist curriculum for leaders, discussed and studied how to adopt the UUA's proposed 8th principle, and participated in protesting and supporting the protest against the police murder of George Floyd.

To become an environmentally responsible congregation and advocate for sustainable living, we included a green criteria in our building project planning, highlighting repairs that will reduce our carbon footprint; completed an assessment of our buildings' energy use; and proposed energy-efficient heating and cooling in the Chapel and Frances White Room as well as solar panels on the roof of 48 Monroe. (Executing those measures depends on the performance of our capital campaign.) We're also considering investing part of our endowment in companies working on energy conservation, efficient lighting and electronics, and alternate energy sources like geothermal, wind, and solar.

To develop and responsibly manage the resources needed to support the congregation's work and growth. First, our people. We established a Talent Development Initiative (TDI), to monitor volunteer needs in our various initiatives and committees, field inquiries from anyone interested in volunteering, and recruit volunteers, to ensure we match volunteers with roles that best fit their passions and our needs.

Second, our space. We created and commissioned the Capital Review Group (CRG), including volunteers and our Facilities Director, which produced a well-considered and thoroughly documented long-term plan to maintain and improve our buildings. CRG also drafted documents, which the board approved, to manage the bidding process when we need to look to external vendors. We approved a project to create a wheelchair and walker-friendly area amidst the pews, for congregants and friends who would benefit from this. We conducted a Winter Appeal for equipment to improve our online streaming of services after we return to the sanctuary. A volunteer Technology Team has formed and mobilized to examine options for equipment we can buy and operate with the money we raised.

Third, our finances. The recurrent debate over endowment draws pits the present generation at First Unitarian Brooklyn vs. the future, including many of our children and the staff who will care for them. Like managers of other endowments (associated with endowed universities and other endowed non-profits), we intend a “sustainable draw” to balance present and future needs. Our annual budgets over recent years have skewed that balance, overdrawing from the future to fund the present. We have reduced our budgeted unsustainable draws (as a fraction of endowment: from 0.81% in our 2019-20 budget, and 1.44% in our 2020-21, to 0.44% for our 2021-22) and we feel confident we can make that 0.0% next year.

Despite the pandemic, we maintained our event fundraising: We conducted a December Mini-Unifair, a bake sale with holiday wreaths, ornaments and bakery treats, and we held our Spring Auction online May 1. On the rental of our space, we’re in the midst of negotiating, together with our Denham Wolf advisors, a new lease with Imagine Daycare. We expect this negotiation to increase our rental income in future years. Finally, we launched a Legacy Society to encourage congregants to consider including First Unitarian Brooklyn in their estate planning.

We hope that, even from behind a computer screen, you’ve all found this year at First Unitarian Brooklyn a rejuvenating, nourishing, and maybe even therapeutic experience. We feel honored to have served, learned from, and represented you over the course of our co-presidency, during this 188th congregational year that now draws to a close.

Class of 2021

Sam McKelvie
John Carroll
Vonda Brunsting

Class of 2022

Amit Mehta
Colleen Olson

Class of 2023

Megan Munroe
Andrea Parkinson
Matt Robinson-Henrie

Carolyn Ells (class of 2022, completing the term of Andrew Bongiorno)

Class of 2024

Mary Huhn
Jay Sheth
Judith Sedaitis

Nominees to the Board



Colleen Olson & Amit, Mehta, Co-Presidents, Board of Trustees

Deacons

The By-Laws of the Congregation 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.”

Currently there are only eight Deacons due to the vacancies left by the deaths of Alfredo Blanco and Olive Hoogenboom. The Deacons are Robert Bero, Thomas Check, Elizabeth Davis, Edwin

Lord, Emily Pardee, Constance Newsom, Bruce Wilde, and Nancy Wolf. As per the By-Laws, upon a vacancy, the remaining Deacons nominate and the Congregation elects a new Deacon.

However, the pandemic has precluded in-person meetings of the Deacons to nominate successors to fill the two vacancies. Telephone conversations and emails keep the Deacons in touch.

The 2021 Good Friday Commemorative Communion was conducted successfully on Zoom. Meagan Henry, Director of Education and Family Ministry, officiated with Deacon Emily Pardee giving opening words, Rev. Ana Levy Lyons offering the prayer, Deacon Robert Bero delivering the homily, and Music Director Adam Podd providing the music.

During the Past Year

The Sanctuary has been open to visitors one Wednesday each month. Deacons have been taking turns greeting visitors. During this time the Deacons also receive donations of non-perishable food to be donated to the food pantry at The First Presbyterian Church.

As in the past, individual Deacons also served the Congregation on standing and ad hoc committees: Capital Review Group, Facilities, Finance, Immigrant Solidarity, Ministry, Pastoral Care, Social Justice, and Stewardship.

The Sanctuary has been closed because of the Pandemic thereby delaying a number of memorials. With the reopening of the Sanctuary these memorials will take place.

The Deacons stand ready to usher at these memorials and to serve the families of the deceased as requested.



Constance Newsom, for the Deacons

Facilities Committee

1) 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.”

2) Overview: In meeting these duties during the 2020-2021 program year, Facilities Committee (FC) members worked on projects 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, via Zoom, during the pandemic. The following members have attended Facilities Committee

meetings during the 2020-2021 program year: Liz Davis (Chair), Gloria Furman, Nancy Wolf, Gaither Pratt, Connie Newsom, Allen Kone (consultant), and Colleen Olson (Board Liaison to the Facilities Committee – November 2020 to present). We generally met on the 2nd Sunday of each month, following the worship service. Facilities Committee members have continuously made recommendations to the Board, and to the Director of Facilities, about needed repairs, historic restorations, capital improvements, safety concerns, and have shared the “institutional history” of our buildings. We regularly conferred with Director of Facilities Chris Johnson via e-mail. Gate Pratt, Nancy Wolf, and Colleen Olson also held on-site consultations with Chris, as needed.

3) Creation of Sanctuary seating for people who use wheelchairs & an “Area of Rescue Assistance” in the west side of the Sanctuary’s Vestibule, for people using wheelchairs.

- On March 11, 2021, architect Gaither Pratt presented the Facilities Committee’s recommendations to the Board, about the proposed location of a seating area for those using wheelchairs, to be created in the Sanctuary. We thank the Board for its approval of the Facilities Committee’s recommendations. We also thank Gate for his leadership on this project, which is ongoing, as well as Nancy Wolf and Gloria Furman, members of the Facilities Committee’s sub-committee, for their dedicated work on this project during the 2020-2021 and 2019-2020 program years, including summer, 2020, during the pandemic. The financial details of the project are outlined below.
- Summary of Sanctuary seating proposal: In response to the need to accommodate people in wheelchairs attending Sanctuary services and other events, the Facilities Committee (FC) designed a Sanctuary pew alteration which provides for the removal of a half-pew on each of the 2nd and 3rd rear pews, on either side of the center aisle, and replacement with wood which matches the original walnut, wherever wood replacement is necessary. Three (3) main points were considered in designating this area for the accommodation of people using wheelchairs:

1) ADA guidelines that specify there be no "second class seating"

for those with disabilities, specifically people using wheelchairs.

2) Aesthetics of our historic Sanctuary.

3) Emergency evacuation plan.

To elaborate:

- ADA Requirements

Close examination of the Sanctuary revealed that seating on the center aisle offered the best view of the chancel as well as the best lighting and sound. Center aisle seating is "first class seating."

- B) Sanctuary Aesthetics

The symmetrical removal of several half-pews on each side of the rear center aisle is sensitive to the original Lafever design of the Sanctuary. Matching the original walnut wood of the pews respects the Sanctuary's aesthetics.

- C) Proposed "Area of Rescue Assistance" / Emergency Evacuation

Members of the Facilities Committee reviewed a letter from safety experts from NY Fire Consultants, Inc. NY Fire Consultant Inspector Angelo Figueroa and Reviewer James T. Bullock wrote, in a letter signed December 26, 2020, about the proposed locations of seating for people using wheelchairs in our Sanctuary, including an assessment of "which location will facilitate the quickest egress from the church in the event of an emergency." Gaither Pratt later followed up with Mr. Bullock by telephone about his recommendation, and the additional proposed inclusion of an "Area of Rescue Assistance" (AoRA).

Following the lead of Mary Most, of the Green Team, Facilities Committee member Nancy Wolf interviewed Mr. David McFeeters, the Facilities Manager of The First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington, Vermont. Mr. McFeeters reported that their local fire department required designation of an emergency evacuation area, where wheelchair occupants would congregate while awaiting evacuation by the fire department. We thank Mary Most for her input, and Nancy Wolf for following up on this information, which we incorporated into our amended recommendation to the Board.

The Board voted to approve the Facilities Committee's recommendation, that the Board exercise its discretion to create an "Area of Rescue Assistance" (AoRA) in the west side of the Sanctuary's Vestibule, to be designated for use by people using wheelchairs, and other persons needing assistance, while waiting for help in exiting the building in an emergency.

The Board also voted to approve the Facilities Committee's recommendation, that the Board authorize the purchase of one (1) special "evacuation chair" which could be used by first responders to carry people using wheelchairs down the front steps, in an emergency.

To compensate for the loss of pew seating in the locations where the pews would be removed, the purchase of appropriate chairs was also included in the Facilities Committee's design and recommendations. These chairs could be used by caregivers of congregants and others using wheelchairs or, when few or no people using wheelchairs occupied the area, general seating.

The proposed funding for the Facilities Committee's recommended project, was compiled by Nancy Wolf and Facilities Committee participant Allen Kone. Special thanks are due to Nancy and Allen for this research and analysis. Due to competing uses of the Sanctuary by outside rental groups, this work is expected to be performed in June 2021 or July 2021.

Budget and Proposed Expenses:

- 1) Capital Budget, "Capital Projects Schedule" FYE21

– Approved by Congregation at Annual Meeting,

June 10, 2020 - “Sanctuary Pew Removal.” \$14,000

2) Bid from Tamer, 465 Baltic St., Brooklyn, 11217. \$9,750

September 1, 2020.

3) Purchase of wooden folding chairs. Estimated 20 chairs \$1,200
at \$60.00 per chair.

4) Purchase of 1 “evacuation chair.” Estimated cost \$300.00.

Proposed Total Cost of \$11,250 which is considerably below the \$14,000 amount ratified by the Congregation at the June 10, 2020 Annual Meeting.

4) Repair of Sidewalk in front of Chapel:

During the fall of 2020, the Board appointed Nancy Wolf to lead an effort to work with representatives of the adjacent co-op building at 123 Pierrepont St., (“co-op”) immediately east of the Chapel, to repair the damaged sidewalk in front of the Chapel, which, as Nancy reported, was caused after “a large tree that the [c]o-op had planted on the property line had raised our sidewalk” and created a “hazardous condition.”

Nancy Wolf reported to the Board, on April 5, 2021, that, upon agreement, the costs for this repair would be allocated, as detailed below, by using the contractor proposed by the co-op. Nancy also reported to the Board that an “additional repair of the cracked sidewalk in front of the Chapel” which is unrelated to the tree roots, upon agreement, would also be repaired, as it will be “cost-effective” for this work to undertaken at the same time. Nancy reported that the proposal was reviewed by Gate Pratt, Tom Check (Capital Review Group), Director of Facilities Chris Johnson, and Colleen Olson (Board Liaison to the Facilities Committee & Board Co-President), and other members of the Facilities Committee, before submitting the recommendations to the Board for its approval. Nancy reported that the co-op chose “Saga Contracting Co. Corp.” as the sidewalk contractor, and that she requested that our “aggregate sidewalk be matched as much as possible.” Nancy reported to the Board, on April 5, 2021, about the financial details of this project, which were anticipated to include:

1) From: Saga Contracting Co. Corp., 780 E. 2nd Street, Apt. E, Brooklyn, NY 11218:

Breaking concrete around the tree and (following work done to the roots that caused the damage) installation of new level concrete sidewalk that will match existing sidewalk as much as possible, using expansion joints that will be sealed.

Payment of 1/2 of bid for work near the tree: \$2,800. Co-op will pay other half

2) From: Saga Contracting Co. Corp.:

Additional work to repair two additional sidewalk sections, approximately 50 square feet. Installation will match sidewalk repair near the tree. \$1,200

Also, new curb stone repair along the street near the tree. \$1,500

Also, repair of the stone edging along the garden. \$1,800

3. Saga uses an expediter to handle drawings and applications to Landmarks. The price for this is \$1,200. First U and the Co-op will share this price, 50-50. \$600

TOTAL RECOMMENDED REQUEST

\$2,800 - 1/2 of original bid

\$1,200 - Additional sidewalk repair

\$1,500 - Repair of curb along the street

\$1,800 - Repair of stone edging along the garden

\$ 600 - First U share of expediter fee

TOTAL: \$7,900

We thank Nancy Wolf for her outstanding work in coordinating this complex and important project.

5) 175th Anniversary Fund: The 175th Anniversary Committee, which was formed to commemorate the 175th Anniversary of the dedication of our Sanctuary, spanned the 2018-2019 and the 2019-2020 program years. As a follow-up to the 175th Anniversary Committee's "Minard Lafever Roundtable Symposium," the Facilities Committee renewed its earlier recommendation, along with the 175th 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 noted mid-19th century architect-builder Minard Lafever's specifications. The Facilities Committee & the 175th Anniversary Committee recommended that the special funds raised as a part of the 175th Anniversary celebration, by members of the "Lafever Society," who each donated \$175 for a special purpose fund, be applied to this project. The proceeds included funding from 30 plus donors, who gave a total of \$5772. With related merchandise sales, the fund totaled \$6,284. Connie Newsom and Pat Lawrence served as co-chairs. Connie continued to work on this project during the 2020-2021 program year and is identifying decorative painters who could potentially complete this work. This project, which is in a preliminary phase, will ultimately require Board approval for its implementation.

6) The Facilities Committee participated in the "Faith in Action Expo" on October 4, 2020. Liz Davis (Chair) represented the Facilities Committee, as served with others as a member of an online panel, via Zoom, and shared the Committee's work and goals with interested congregants.

7) Nancy Wolf has continued to serve as a liaison between the "Green Team" and the Facilities Committee and provided regular updates about the environmentally sustainable and energy-efficient building-related improvements suggested by the Green Team. This year, Facilities Committee members continued to review 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. Green Team representatives [Mary Most (Chair), Jan Thompson and Linnea Paton] attended two (2) Facilities Committee meetings as our guests, via Zoom this program year, and shared their plans for the potential installation of solar panels on the roof of 48 Monroe Place, as well as other energy-efficiency proposals. We were pleased to have the opportunity to work collaboratively with the Green Team. We noted that projects that are visible from the exterior or street view of our buildings will require NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission (L.P.C.) approval.

8) Recommendation about Chapel Façade: After chipped and falling stone from the Chapel façade raised the question of whether to restore the façade, or merely to patch the deterioration which resulted from the spalling, the Facilities Committee submitted its recommendation to the Board, and expressed a strong preference for restoration as the more lasting and aesthetic approach. We reviewed the three bids that were received. Two of the bidders, Burda Construction Corp. and Edson USA, quoted prices on a stone restoration, their approach to the repair. Excellent Contracting LLC bid on patching. Despite the Facilities Committee's recommendation for restoring the facade, the Board approved Excellent's lower bid for patching. Excellent's was the only bid on patching. The Chapel façade work began in April 2021.

9) Capital Review Group (C.R.G.): 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-FundPolicy.pdf>. This year, the Board appointed a Capital Review Group (C.R.G.) to update this document, and to create a long-term plan and schedule for anticipated building-related repairs and improvements, to be funded by a proposed Capital Fund Campaign. The Board appointed architect Gaither Pratt and Liz Davis, Facilities Committee Chair, to represent the Facilities Committee on the Capital Review Group (C.R.G.). The other members of the Capital Review Group (C.R.G.), which met weekly via Zoom throughout February, 2020 and March, 2020 are: Tom Check (Chair), Director of Facilities Chris Johnson, Lee Pardee, and John Carroll (Board Liaison). The proposed documents will be presented to the Congregation for a vote of approval at the Annual Meeting on May 16, 2021.

10) The Facilities Committee welcomes all who are interested in preserving and maintaining our historic buildings. Other congregational members who attended Facilities Committee meetings during the 2020-2021 program year included: Sam McKelvie (Board Liaison to the Facilities Committee – July 2020 to November 2020), Amit Mehta (Board Co-President), Cynthia Reynolds, Robert Levine, Tom Check (Chair - Capital Review Group – C.R.G.), Mary Most (Chair – Green Team), Jan Thompson (Green Team), and Linnea Paton (Green Team). Director of Facilities Chris Johnson also attended Facilities Committee Meetings as his schedule permitted. We look forward to when we can safely resume in-person meetings in our buildings, following the State of New York's mandated closure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please contact Chair Liz Davis at: ead1142@yahoo.com if you are interested in attending a Facilities Committee Meeting.



Liz Davis, Chair, for the Facilities Committee - May 5, 2021

Finance Committee

The Committee welcomed new member Robin Bossert and Board Liaison Amit Mehta and said thank you and farewell to former member Mike Alcott.

This year the committee continued its regular work, using remote tools like Zoom due to the ongoing pandemic. The primary focus was maintaining the congregation's financial health during this time. Our endowment recovered from the losses of 2020, which will allow the congregation to continue to draw funds to support the operating budget. Pledge income in FY21 is projected to fall below the budgeted amount due to economic hardships caused by the pandemic, but the congregation's operating expenses have also been reduced during remote worship, and the FY21 operating deficit is projected to be smaller than budgeted. Members of the congregation have committed to generous pledges for FY22, largely sustaining or increasing the amounts of their pledges.

In FY21 the Committee:

- Utilized the budget process developed in FY20 which allowed for excellent communication with the board and staff when drafting the FY22 budget.
- Worked with the Office Administrator, Wendy Russell, and a CPA consultant to implement best practices for the congregation's bookkeeping that allows us to track the capital budget and endowment alongside the operating budget.
- Proposed a policy for "carry forward" items, where funds are raised for a specific purpose in one fiscal year but not spent until another fiscal year. Per the policy approved by the Board, groups wishing to carry forward any funds must submit a proposal to the board prior to the end of the fiscal year in which the funds were raised.
- Worked with Adam Podd and the Board to determine a mission statement and the correct historical balance for the Julie McKinney Music Fund.
- Reformatted the congregational budget reporting to separate offsets that had been recorded within one budget line into separate revenue and expense line items. This allows for direct comparison between congregational reports and the congregation's accounting software, provides a clearer picture of overall revenue and expenses year over year, and reduces the opportunity for human error when generating the congregational reports.
- Consulted with the Capital Resource Group on their 15-year repair plan and financial model.
- Conducted monthly reviews of the congregation's financial reports.
- Initiated quarterly meetings with managing director of the endowment to review ongoing performance and explore ways for First U to increase its socially and ecologically responsible investing while meeting the congregation's financial needs.
- Completed quarterly reviews of the congregation's accounts for the third and fourth quarters of FY20 and the first three quarters of FY21. These reviews continue to be

useful in ensuring accuracy in the congregation's financial reports and assurance that the congregations' funds are being used as intended.

- Met with the congregation's insurance broker to discuss opportunities for obtaining competitive quotes on the buildings' insurance.
- Worked with the Board of Trustees and Staff to draft a FY22 budget that supports and expands the congregation's programming while significantly reducing the amount the congregation takes from the endowment in excess of the prudent draw. The goal is to eliminate the excess draw with a balanced operating budget in FY23.
- Conducted two online congregational budget forums prior to the annual meeting.

Many thanks to this year's members.

If you are a member of the congregation who is interested in joining the Finance Committee, please contact Chair Elizabeth Shaw, ecshaw@gmail.com.

Members: Pat Steele, (Treasurer), Amit Mehta (Board Liaison), Robin Bossert, Lee Pardee, Elizabeth Shaw, Lake Wise



Elizabeth Shaw, For the Finance Committee

Leadership Development Committee

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

For the 2020-21 year, the members of the LDC were: Catalina Bertani, June Wohlhorn (Co-Chairs), Patrick Gunn, Laurel Lesio, and Laura Manos-Hey. Significant support was provided to the committee by Garnett Losak (Director of Congregational Life) and Matt Robinson (Board Liaison). Patrick Gunn and June Wohlhorn will conclude their terms after the Annual Meeting on May 16, 2021.

Nominations

For the 2021 General Assembly (GA)

Delegates were elected at the Congregational Meeting on February 21, 2021:

- Diane Crothers
- Cindy Eisemann Reynolds
- Mary Huhn
- Lisa Pacenza
- Lee Pardee

Because of the Pandemic, GA will be held virtually in 2021. Through the generosity of the Women's Leadership Alliance, all delegates' registration fees will be fully funded.

The tradition of the congregation has been, whenever possible, to nominate at least one youth from our Sunday school program as a delegate to the 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.

Candidate slate for election at the Annual Meeting, May 16, 2021

Board of Trustees, Class of 2022 (one-year term)

- Carolyn Ellis (completing the term of Andrew Bongiorno)

Board of Trustees, Class of 2023 (three-year terms)

(replacing retiring Trustees Vonda Brunsting, John Carroll, and Sam McKelvie)

- Mary Huhn
- Judith Sedaitis
- Jayesh Sheth

Clerk of the Society: Elees Woods

Moderator: Michael Alcott (fourth one-year term)

Leadership Development Committee (two-year terms)

- Cara Haft
- Sam McKelvie

Bios and pictures of nominee slates have been announced on the congregation's website. In addition to the slate listed above, Catalina Bertani, Laura Manos-Hey and Laurel Lesio continue to serve on the LDC for the second year of their two-year terms.

Leadership Development

The committee's focus is primarily on nominating members of the congregation for UUA General Assembly delegates, Board of Trustees, the Clerk, Moderator, and replacing its own members. And this work again took up the majority of the time of the committee.

In addition, significant efforts were put into concluding a multi-year project during which the LDC considered:

1. What area of congregational life is most in need of leadership development
2. What is the capacity of the LDC given its mandate to nominate leaders for the board, general assembly and LDC and its limited 5-person membership

3. What work product would be most useful to the Board of Trustees

Ultimately, it was determined that the LDC would study the needs of the Stewardship Committee and how best to support its essential work. With input from the current 20/21 Stewardship team, we explored their work, identified areas of need, and suggested ways in which the staff, the board and the clergy, and the LDC itself, can best support them.

A final report reviewing the process and with recommendations for three areas that seem most important were presented to the Board.

With special thanks to Sean Fischer who was instrumental in initiating and guiding this process with patience and thoughtfulness. We are especially grateful for the experience and wisdom he continued to share beyond his term on the LDC.



June Wohlhorn for the Leadership Development Committee

Section 3 - Program and Social Justice Committees

Green Team

The Green Team established by congregational vote at the 2019 Annual Meeting has been 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, despite the COVID-19 pandemic which pivoted our events into online Zoom format:

- The Climate Action Google Group, started in Jan 2019, currently has 84 subscribers who share information and actions.
- The Green Team is now working closely with the Facilities Committee and the Capital Budget committee to review and incorporate many of the improvements suggested by our 2015 NYSERDA energy audit, and other environmentally preferable advances, into our capital budget planning.
- The Green Team has agreed to take on researching and presenting the possibilities for heat pump heating & cooling systems and the visionary (extremely expensive) concept of

geothermal energy. A feasibility study led by Isuru Seneviratne and Alison Derevensky is now underway for installing an air source heat pump system.

- The Green Team presented initial research on solar panels at the October 2020 Board Meeting, and proposed to source First U's electrical power through a community solar co-op.

After discussion with Rev Ana we did further research and developed a plan to add a larger 12-panel solar array to 48 Monroe that would pay for itself within 6 years. Additional electric needs will be supplemented by power produced by a solar co-op and ConEd.

- We encouraged congregants and the greater Brooklyn community to attend at online events and actions that build awareness of climate change and the need to reduce our carbon footprint, including:
 - **8/6/2020** Climate Action member and Sane Energy volunteer Nick Shearson helped organize a virtual teach-in on "The Future of Renewable Energy and Fighting Enviro-Racism in Brownsville and Williamsburg"
 - **1/26/2021** Green Team chair Mary Most presented a webinar on "Food Waste & Composting in NYC" at the Fourth Universalist Food Justice Panel
 - **2/2/2021** Green Team co-hosted District 2030 webinar on alternatives to fossil fuels for heating & cooling systems, with an introduction by Robin Bossert
 - **4/20/2021** Mary Most presented "What and How To Recycle in NYC" webinar with the Brooklyn Lifelong Learning at CUNY Brooklyn College
- The First U Green Team co-hosted the **Carbon Free January Challenge** with 350.org Brooklyn, a month-long education campaign organized by Jan Thompson through the Facebook page [350 BK Carbon Free January Challenge](#), to learn about and experiment with living Car Free, Meat Free, Waste Free, and Carbon-free Electricity. This sparked new habits, lively discussions, and several calls to action on supportive legislation.
- Robin Bossert reached out as liaison with District 2030, which resulted in co-hosting the 2/2/2021 webinar on alternative heating and cooling systems.
- First U hosted two successful e-waste collection events, in November 2020 and May 2021, through the Lower East Side Ecology Center, organized by Nancy Wolf.
- Our Worship and Religious Education continues to include calls for ecological awareness and action. We also promote our congregation's many earth-honoring celebrations for the solstice and equinox.
- It is expected that First U will enroll to receive DSNY Curbside Composting Collection when this program resumes in Fall 2021 and our congregants are back in the building.

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

Committee Members: Robin Bossert, Anne Calder, Abby Grosslein, Lee Ilan, Robert Levine, Linnea Paton, Isuru Seneviratne, Jayesh Sheath, Andrea Sheth, Jan Thompson, Nancy Wolf



Mary Most, Chair

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, 2020 - May 31, 2021

- 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 2020 she received her green card and completed English classes funded by the Committee. She temporarily moved to Florida for a nursing job and as of May 2021 is applying for medical jobs in New York. Her former hosts continue to support her emotionally and the Committee is prepared to offer further logistical and financial support to her if needed.
- 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 family works with a legal team paid for by Committee fundraising. Their asylum application is under review with USCIS. The parent has received a work permit.
- The Committee continues to support a Mexican asylum-seeker in partnership with the nonprofit Queer Detainee Empowerment Project (QDEP). She lives with members of the congregation while the Committee subsidizes her rent and QDEP oversees her asylum application and health care needs. She received her work permit in January 2021, and her asylum application is still under review.
- Over the past year, the Committee has built a partnership with activist group Close the Camps (CTC). Former CTC liaison Kelly Schaffer stepped down from the Committee in 2020 to focus on other work. Natalie Thielen Helper, a member of the congregation and chair of the Committee, is a CTC organizer and now serves in the liaison role as well. The Committee has encouraged volunteers and congregants to support CTC by participating in protests and direct actions. Committee members have participated in CTC protests including in August 2020, October 2020, February 2021, and March 2021; as well as a national action organized by immigrant rights group Cosecha on May 1, 2021 in Washington, D.C.
- 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, Close the

Camps, Congregation Beth Elohim, Cosecha, the Democratic Socialists of America, Faith in New York, Fourth Unitarian, Kolot Chayeinu, Never Again Action, NYC ICE Watch and Sunset Park ICE Watch, Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, the Queer Detainee Empowerment Project, Sanctuary Neighborhoods, and the Unitarian Church of All Souls.

- In September 2020, the Committee launched a GoFundMe to raise money for the legal expenses of the parent and child we have been supporting since 2019. As of May 6, 2021, this fundraiser has brought in \$4,978.
- In February 2021, the Committee held a Zoom trivia night fundraiser that brought in \$1,344, all of which will go to the needs of our asylum-seeking guests.
- As of May 2021, the Committee is preparing an application to host a summer 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
- Edwin Lord
- Dwight Mathis
- Lee Pardee
- Maureen Schad

To learn more or to volunteer, please contact any member or email us at 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

Legacy Society

The Board and Reverend Ana recommended that the Congregation create a Legacy Society to encourage members and friends of the Congregation to include First U in their estate and gift planning and to recognize those who do so. Tom and Sharon Kennedy were tasked with creating the Society. They have been reaching out to those who may have already made such

arrangements to developing materials to facilitate others in becoming Legacy Society members and encouraging new members. As of May 1, 2021, the Legacy Society has 15 known members. We have prepared a form (for those who wish to utilize it) that documents their intention to make such a gift or bequest and provides some basic information to the Congregation. It is available through the Congregation's office and website.

We have also identified a local Brooklyn Heights law office that will assist those who wish to become Society members in creating a will and other relevant documents, at a reduced rate.

This year, the Congregation received the following bequests:

- \$10,000 estate bequest from Olive Hoogenboom
- \$18,000 estate bequest from John Pritchard

We are grateful for their gifts.

We are also very grateful to those members and friends who have informed us of their intent to make a planned gift to FUUB. The members of the Legacy Society to date are:

Michael & Mariasara Alcott	Georgia Larson
Vonda Brunsting	Bob Levine
Tom Check & Nancy Witherell	Garnett Losak
Roger Cooper & Samira Kawash	Sara Meling
Douglas Eads	Colleen & Dwight Olson
Sandy Foutz	Margaret & Marty Weber
Becky Huffman & Andrew Bongiorno	Nancy Wolf
Sharon & Tom Kennedy	

When we can all get together again, we intend to hold a reception for Society members to honor existing members, welcome the new members and discuss the best ways to encourage Society membership.



Tom and Sharon Kennedy, Co-Chairs, The First Unitarian Legacy Society

[Share the Plate Committee](#)

In May 2020, transition to new leadership and a new committee occurred. There were no continuing members. James Mills, the previous Chair, Andrew Bongiorno, board liaison, and Garnett Losak, Director of Congregational Life, offered support in providing guidance to the new members of the STP. The new members joined STP voluntarily after being appointed by the board. Member names were shared in an email, but on follow-up two of those people never actually agreed to be on the committee - they had just expressed interest in learning more. This left the two new co-chairs (who had been First U members for just a year) and one member active. One of the "just interested" members agreed to participate until new members were found. Two additional members joined in fall 2020 to complete the 5-member committee.

The STP Committee is charged with soliciting beneficiary nominations from the congregation and selecting qualified organizations to receive a portion of the collection each month. These organizations should align with the mission of the First U to work for social justice, inclusion and stewardship of the earth. To encourage the members of the congregation to nominate organizations, information on how to submit nominations would be included in the weekly email bulletin with a link available here - [Share the Plate Online Nomination Form](#). The key element is that the nominated organizations are registered 501(c)(3) organizations and meet First U's mission.

STP Committee attempted to select an array of local, or local chapters, of organizations that support Unitarian principles. A few nominations did not meet mission requirements. STP deliberated the candidacy of nominated organizations and also received feedback from Garnett as needed during our selection process. Due to restrictions on gathering, meetings were held via Zoom or by email. Notification to members that their nominations were received on the Form was appreciated but was not consistently sent. Notification to each member that their nomination had been chosen did go well, where we also explained that a testimonial from an organizational leader, or the member, would be appreciated if given at a service. The linkage of Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP) in February 2021 with the Weaving Social Justice Service was a success.

Goals to improve functioning for the coming year include a summer Zoom meeting where roles of the chairs and members are better defined. This includes creating a meeting schedule, monitoring the form and vetting nominations, notifying members their nominations were received, follow up with those selected with a process to provide a testimonial, and increased visibility about the nomination process within the congregation. A re-formatted nomination form should be considered.

Month	Recipient	Amount
May 2020	FUUB Youth Group - Big Creek	\$ 1,234.00
June 2020	NYC Food Bank	\$ 1,229.50
July & August 2020	FUUB Immigrant Solidarity Committee/ Fortune Society	\$476.25
September 2020	The Reading Team	929.00
October 2020	UU the Vote	777.00
November 2020	The New York Abortion Access Fund	1,240.10

December 2020	Unitarian Universalist Service Committee	1,360.00
January 2021	Heights & Hills	1,111.50
February 2021	Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP)	1,372.50
March 2021	FUUB Youth Group - Big Creek People in Action	2,460.50
April 2021	NYC Food Bank	1,323.50
May 2021	FUUB Immigrant Solidarity Committee	pending

Co-chairs: Julie Elting and Said Ibrahim

Members: Robert Harper, Megan Walsh, and Michael White

Board Liaison: Andrea Parkinson

 Julie Elting for the Share the Plate Committee

Stewardship Team

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

The 2020-2021 fiscal year has been challenging. In spite of First Unitarian going fully digital for the end of last year and all of this year, members have continued to pledge and pay their pledges faithfully. Overall payments have gone down a bit this year, but fortunately so have expenses.

For our campaign for fiscal 2021-2022, the stewardship team recognized the stress that our members have been under. We asked members to continue pledging at the same level as the previous year if they could. We knew some members would not be able to do this, so we also asked members who were in solid financial situations to increase their pledges.

The stewardship campaign this year was entirely online. We scheduled over a dozen “cottage meetings” on Zoom and recruited enthusiastic First Unitarian members to serve as hosts. Robin Bossert, with assistance from Sam McKelvie, created a wonderful video montage of a year of Zoom worship services that was shown at each meeting and is now available to all. Garnett

Losak provided ongoing office support and newest stewardship team member Cybele Raver designed and delivered training to all of the hosts and canvassers. After all the meetings had been held, stewardship team members followed up with personal emails to First U members who had not attended a meeting.

As of this writing on April 30, we have raised \$279,000 towards our goal of \$340,000. We are hopeful that we will reach \$300,000 by our annual meeting on May 16, with the rest to be raised throughout the year.

If you have not yet turned in your pledge form for the 2020-2021 fiscal year, please contact any member of the stewardship team or Garnett Losak or [complete your pledge form for the 2021-22 fiscal year here.](#)

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

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

Stewardship Team

Sam McKelvie – Board Liaison

Garnett Losak – Staff Liaison

Marty Bernstein

James Mills

Lee Pardee

Cybele Raver

Bruce Wilde

Hosts

Vicki Antonini

Catalina Bertani

Tyrone Davis, Jr.

Cara Haft

Mary Huhn

Sharon and Tom Kennedy

Laurel and Bert Lesio-Eisenstadt

Jim Patrick

Judith Sedaitis

Molly Skinner-Day

Eles Woods



Lee Pardee, for the Stewardship Team

[Summer Service Committee](#)

Summer Services have always held a special place for me. I started attending First U in the summer of 2018 and wrote my own sermon in the summer of 2019. So, when I was asked to lead the new summer services committee despite not having any experience leading a committee or even serving on one, I jumped in with both feet. Little did I know I'd be thrown another learning curve due to the pandemic forcing services to being held online. One of the objectives of starting a summer services team was to create a structure to help assist and guide those who volunteer to be lay worship leaders. Early on, I was blessed with team member, Cara Haft, and her longtime expertise serving at First U who helped set up the administrative end of the team. Once Cara left to focus on other responsibilities, it was

Garnett Losak and I who worked in a stealth and efficient manner at a time when conducting services on-line was a relatively new endeavor. We had the benefit of our intern minister, Ethan Loewi, who taught an invaluable sermon writing class and our team also created benchmarks to support our lay worship leaders, which included reviewing and editing sermons and assisting with the crafting of their services. Judith Sedaitis jumped on the team midway at as an additional sermon editor and once Adam Podd left for summer break, we were fortunate to have Allie Lewis as our summer musician.

In spite of all the challenges we faced last summer with COVID and conducting services in a new way, these services were of outstanding quality due to our incredible team, committed lay worship leaders, which included Abby Grosslein, Amit Mehta, Allen Kone, Andrea Parkinson, Samantha Waller, Cybele Raver, Chris Johnson, and Ethan Loewi along with committees that volunteered to do services. In addition to Weaving's yearly Juneteenth service that kicks off our summer services, and Queer Caucus' yearly Pride service, The Women's Alliance and Immigrant Solidarity led their own services. If there was one benefit to moving services online this summer, it was the opportunity to livestream General Assembly's service on June 28th which gave all congregants the rare opportunity to view it. These summer services were a huge success in truly challenging times and my thanks extend to all involved in making it happen.



Bridgette Raes, Chair

Weaving Social Justice

Weaving Social Justice (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.

This was an unusual year. Because of restrictions due to the COVID pandemic we were not able to hold our annual dinners with either the Muslim community or the Haitian nonprofit, FEDADSE. We will also not be able to hold our outdoor Juneteenth picnic on Monroe Place.

FORUMS , FILMS AND DISCUSSIONS

BOOK DISCUSSION -Tuesday, 12/15/20. *How to Be An Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi . WSJ facilitated this discussion which was presented as part of the Sacred Studies series. The facilitators were Judith Sedaitis and Meagan Henry.

FILM SCREENING AND DISCUSSION -Saturday, 3/13/21. Film: *13th*. This documentary explores the “intersection of race, justice, and mass incarceration in the US.

FORUM ON RAPP (Release Aging People in Prison) – Saturday 1/31/21. This is a nonprofit that advocates for parole reform and the release of people over the age of 50 who have been

incarcerated for over 15 years. RAPP is raising support for bills in the New York State legislature to these ends. Two speakers who are members of RAPP and were formerly incarcerated spoke to us via Zoom, followed by a general Q&A and discussion. RAPP was accepted for a share-the-plate and the congregation voted to endorse their work at the February congregational meeting.

PROMOTION OF THE FOLLOWING ONGOING CAMPAIGNS:

BBG FIGHT FOR SUNLIGHT: an ongoing campaign to stop construction of a 40+ story building at 960 Franklin Ave which would overshadow the Botanic Gardens and Prospect Park and endanger the Garden's rare plants.

8th PRINCIPAL PROPOSAL. We have been reading out this anti-racist and anti-oppression proposed principle at our events.

HAITIAN REFORESTATION: We have been working with FEDADSE (Federation des Associations Pour Le Developpement du Sud-Est). Since we could not hold our fundraiser for this Haitian 501(c)3 nonprofit that has been focusing on planting trees in Haiti, we have been promoting FEDADSE's Go-Fund-Me page. <https://charity.gofundme.com/o/en/campaign/lets-reforest-southeast-haiti-with-your-help>

SUNDAY JUNETEENTH SERVICE – As usual, Weaving will lead our first summer service as a Juneteenth celebration on Sunday, June 20, 2021.

FUNDING – Our funding this past year was \$1400 from the congregational program budget. We wish to thank the Board for funding this important work.

MEMBERS - Meeting with us this year were: Robert Harper, Enza Itri, Derek Pearl, Rita Pearl, Michael White, Nancy Wolf, Judith Sedaitis, Barbara Cutney, Rosemary Talmadge

THANKS - *We would like to thank those in the congregation who attended our monthly meetings and worked with us during our discussions and on our upcoming Juneteenth service.*



Rita Pearl, for Weaving Social Justice

Women's Leadership Alliance

For the last year or so, our goal has been to revive the image and reputation of the Women's Leadership Alliance and cement our role in the congregation. The more work we are able to do in micro-pockets of the world through our financial contributions, and the more we talk about that work, the stronger our public face will be. Our activities fall into three major categories: programming, advocacy, and tradition.

The global pandemic of 2020 altered many of our programs. Pat Steele's annual report last year included a hope to gather in person in September 2020; delayed a year, we hope to do so in September 2021. We decided to put our monthly discussion group, In the Company of Women, on hold because it really works best in person. Our monthly Book Club continues to engage about a dozen members over Zoom. Our Spring film series was unable to go forward again this

year to the sadness of Kathy Ivans and those who have enjoyed it for many years. Kathy has organized the film series for 11 years and we hope to secure new leadership for the 2022 season.

Our bi-annual meeting in October 2020 was not a lunch, but a Zoom meeting of 27 people. A major achievement was the approval of a Board slate installing Abby Grosslein as our new President and Cybele Raver as Member at Large. In our spring meeting on March 25, we welcomed Lisa Pacenza and Julie Elting to our Board, thanking Pat Steele and Kathy Ivans for their long years of service. Over these two meetings, we voted to keep inclusive language in our Bylaws to encourage Male and gender-diverse people in our group. We hope to share a meal and fellowship together in the fall when it is safe.

A lot of the work that we do relates to finances and the stewardship of our sizable endowment. We fund the Religious Education Assistant and give money as needed to the Religious Education program. We gave funds to Planned Parenthood, the UUA, CityMeals, CityHarvest, and ChiPS. Beloved UU figure Hope Johnson passed last year, and we donated money to her funeral expenses. In November, we nominated the New York Abortion Fund for the congregation's Share the Plate and collected \$1,240!

A major effort of ours this spring was to formalize our Leadership Grant process. Each year, we are honored to provide funds to the General Assembly delegates, but also encourage members and friends to propose women's-issue-focused projects for funding. This year, we were pleased to help fund public workshops based on transgender and gender diverse curricula at Long Island University next fall and spring. With Dr. Elting's help, we created a grant application and made a more robust effort to solicit projects.

Tradition is exceptionally important to the Women's Leadership Alliance, which was created to give women authority over funds and programming at the church. To move into our next phase, we refreshed and updated our website at www.fuub.org/home/community/womens-alliance-2/. In February we presented our Women's History Month annual service with UUA National Organizer Nicole Pressley delivering the sermon, "If We Don't Get It... Imagine Womxn's Liberation." Her inspiring and invigorating essay was a strong contender for the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation annual sermon award. We were blessed to welcome Nicole and hope to continue working with her.

Last October we presented Miriam Campobasso's story in the e-news to commemorate her birth month. There is rich history of this organization within our congregation, and we will continue to highlight those stories as we encourage the next generation. Going forward, we aim to be more vocal about our work to both our membership and the congregation, and we are hopeful that new leadership will help WLA branch out into the community via bike rides or volunteering, educational workshops, speakers, and other such events. Stay tuned!



Abby Grosslein, President, Women's Leadership Alliance

The following committees did not submit reports

Capital Review Group – See Board and Facilities Committee Reports

Membership Committee – See Director of Congregational Life Report

Section 4: Addenda

Thank You to These Fiscal Year 20-21 Donors to
The Julie McKinney Music Fund
\$10,607 Raised

Patron (\$1,000+)

Dawn Elane Reed
Jay & Pat Lawrence
Sarah Seehafer

Sponsor (\$500-\$999)

Garnett Losak
Connie & Bob Newsom

Friend (\$250-\$499)

James Goward & Jackie Frost
Carolyn Ellis & H.Lake Wise
Carolyn Haft
Tom Check & Nancy Witherell
Sharon & Tom Kennedy
Bill Wasik & Monica Murphy
Judy Boals
Andrea & Jay Sheth

Donor (\$100-\$249)

Kathy Ivans & Bob Bero
David Yin
Michele Weisman & Paul Freitag
Bert Eisenstadt & Laurel Lesio-Eisenstadt
Rita & Derek Pearl
Laura Kriska & Patrick Gunn
Wendy & Lenny Derevensky
Liz Komar
Donor (\$100-\$249) cont.

Lee Pardee
Mary Huhn & Jim Rich
Edwin Lord
Julie Lam
Kate & Guy Eddon
Babbie Jacobs

Contributor (up to \$99)

Eliza Frecon & Mathew Castle
Florence Maynard
Marty & Pat Bernstein
Nicole Kosanke
Barbara Ratzlaff
Greg Matloff & C. Bangs
Vicki Antonini
Jim Patrick
Maddie & Ryan Hyde
Misa Washio
Lisa Pacenza
Jessica Sasko & Tak Cheung
David Garvoille
Nagash Agrawal & Kerri O'Neill
Kayla Reiman
Marna Herrity
Paige Carlson
Bryn Sumner
Janna Amelkin
Francesca Moser

Thank You to These Donors to

The Mid-Year Appeal to Purchase Live Streaming Equipment for our Sanctuary

\$15,042 Raised

Patron (\$1000+)

Bob Levine
(in memory of Kathy Sonderman)
Steig Olson
(in honor of Colleen Olson)
Dawn Elane Reed
Brynna Kaulback
(in memory of Rosemary Talmadge)
Robin Bossert

Sponsor (\$500-\$999)

Pat & Kurt Steele
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Friend (\$250-\$499)

Tom Check & Nancy Witherell
Barbara Ratzlaff
Clancy Blair & Cybele Raver
Laura Kriska & Patrick Gunn
Becky Huffman & Andrew Bongiorno
Margaret Martin & Jonathan Cousins
Marci Lucia & Amit Mehta
Kathy Ivans & Bob Bero
Carolyn Ellis & H. Lake Wise

Donor (\$100-\$249)

Sara Faison
Michele Ascione
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Liz Komar
Carolyn Haft
Nicole Kosanke
Diane Crothers
Nancy Wolf
Vicki Antonini
Michele Weisman & Paul Freitag
Mark & Lexi Perlmutter
Jim Patrick
Kate Ramsey

Contributor (up to \$99)

Rita & Derek Pearl
Regina & Weston Kirk
Dwight Mathis
Stella Day
Eliza Frecon & Mathew Castle
Elizabeth Davis
Gloria Furman
Bert Eisenstadt & Laurel Lesio-Eisenstadt
Jessica Sasko & Tak Cheung
June Wohlhorn
Florence Maynard
Vonda Brunsting
Sam McKelvie
Edwin Lord
Barbara Cutney
Eric Ashton & Elizabeth Shaw
Janna Amelkin
Judith Sedaitis & Danius Glinskis
Lisa Pacenza
David Garvoille
Rachel Stark
Clare & Matt Robinson-Henrie
Mary Huhn & Jim Rich
Kay Corkett
Greg Matloff & C. Bangs
Wendy Russell
Frances Curry
Joelle Te Paske
Jan Thompson & Steffi Heintzeler
Jake Powell
Gloria Howard
Cindy Eisemann
Katie & Patrick Durgin-Bruce
Amanda Nietzel
Francesca Moser

BROOKLYN

The First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn

A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

48 Monroe Place, Brooklyn, New York 11201 Website: www.fuub.org
Phone: 718-624-5466 • Fax: 718-797-2916 Email: office@fuub.org

April 27, 2021

Christopher D. Johnson, Director of Facilities
First Unitarian Congregational Society

Dear colleagues and congregational members,

It is with mixed emotions that I respectfully resign as your Director of Facilities, effective the first day of the fiscal year, July 1, 2021. This decision has been quite difficult. FUUB over the past 5 years has not only been my place of work, but my home and my life.

I have found myself becoming increasingly discontented over the past several months. There is no particular reason or fault. I know it is time for a change.

I have enjoyed living up to the responsibilities and challenges entrusted to me. I believe I have accomplished the work I came here to do. The campus is far better off today than when I came here 5 years ago. I also am better off for having been part of the First Unitarian community.

I will continue as usual until June at which time I will take my vacation so that I can make preparations to leave. I will of course maintain important communications and handle any emergencies.

I am available to those persons entrusted to find a suitable replacement. I am willing to train someone in the intricacies of the building infrastructure. I am currently finishing a building manager's manual which will chronicle much needed information for reference.

I have enjoyed working with a dedicated professional staff and will miss FUUB. To the many persons who have shown me kindness and voiced appreciation for my work, I will take those gifts with me.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher D. Johnson