



Photo by Robert Levine

# Annual Report

FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022



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*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 justice and stewardship of the earth.*

## Clergy & Staff

REV. ANA LEVY-LYONS, SENIOR MINISTER

In the mythical story of the blind men and the elephant, several blind men feel different parts of an elephant and come away with differing impressions of what the elephant is. It's only by comparing notes that they can arrive at a more complete understanding. The First Unitarian Annual Report is a bit like that. Each staff member and committee and team in the congregation has a window into one aspect of congregational life. It is by putting them together that we can glimpse the whole. What follows here is the part of the First U elephant that I, in my role, am able to perceive.

This was a year of recovery and regrouping from the crisis phase of the coronavirus pandemic for us at First Unitarian and for the wider society. We joyfully returned to in-person worship in September and slowly opened up our spaces to more events throughout the year. Our in-person attendance has been growing steadily and we now also livestream our services for those who can't be physically present because of health concerns or geographic distance. The staff, musicians, Lay Worship Leaders, and Tech Team were called upon again and again to pivot and adapt to new modalities and they did it with grace, commitment, and creativity. The Board of Trustees, the Capital Reserve Group, and so many other congregational leaders have done extraordinary work in promoting First Unitarian's thriving in the present and sustainability over the long term. They have led with wisdom in the principled, real-life application of our UU values. I am so

proud of this congregation for the ways in which we have been weathering the storms of our times and even growing, emerging with compassion and joy.

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

- Special holiday services
  - Ingathering and Water Ceremony: Our first in-person worship in 18 months, this was a joyful service on the theme of continuing to give of ourselves even when the world disappoints us – when things are “so good, except...” The following week we poured some of our holy water into the river at Brooklyn Bridge Park to symbolically give back to the natural world.
  - Hunger Communion: We revived our annual Hunger Communion ritual and I preached a sermon about the importance of “sharing the mic” to amplify the voices of others.
  - Remembrance Service (Oct 31): Meagan Henry led this annual service to honor our departed loved ones with photos and song, as well as a sermon on loss.
  - Christmas Eve: We had a beautiful in-person (and online) service with gorgeous music despite all of the setbacks and complexities of the Covid surge. I preached “The First Noel” on the power of our mundane acts to start a new tradition or snowball into something larger than we could have imagined.
  - Word of the Year: This New Year’s service was a collaboration with Lay Worship Leader Bridgette Raes. We introduced the concept of choosing a “word of the year” in lieu of a resolution and provided pathways to discovering one’s word.
  - Palm Sunday: This beautiful music-based service celebrated the power of the people to seize the moment to make change right – “Cast Down Your Bucket Where You Are.” We gave out palm leaves,

per tradition, and Ana Egge's song, "This Time" served as a powerful spring anthem. We had a full house, with many people returning for the first time since the pandemic.

- Easter: This service celebrated the power of committed intention and "All-the-Way Prayer." We practiced the ritual of letting go and letting die what must die with our annual flash paper fire ritual.
  
- Exodus Series: Our multigenerational/ Jazz Sunday worship series this year has explored seven stories from the biblical book of Exodus through theatre, sermons, and music. We've lifted up the powerful spiritual and justice themes of these stories, as tales of a political liberation as well as an allegory for the iterative process of internal liberation from our own Egypt/mitzrayim/places of constriction. Deep thanks to Mandy Rinzel for her work directing and sometimes writing the plays and to all the First Unitarian Players for their creativity and enthusiasm in bringing these stories to life.
  
- Walking and Talking with God: In this 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.
  
- Spiritual Autobiography Guided Retreat: In this five-session in-person guided retreat, participants write their own spiritual autobiography — a living narrative of one's spiritual journey from childhood to the present. We share writings with the group and discuss what it means to "grow spiritually."

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

- **Worship highlights:**
  - **What Meaning Means:** In spiritual preparation for the holidays, this service explored the concept of meaning and called on people to resist the nihilistic de-meaning of our world and embrace earnest authenticity. We also welcomed new members and lit our menorah in celebration of the 7<sup>th</sup> day of Chanukah.
  - **When the Rapture Comes:** This service centered around building bridges and speaking the language of the “other,” using the story of a rabbi who was asked by an evangelical Christian to take his dog when the Rapture comes.
  - **The Welcome Within:** This service focused on the spiritual meaning of our Call to Worship (“Whoever you are...”) and included a wonderful homily by Jenifer Leigh and a liturgical setting of the Call to Worship by Adam Podd.
  - **Passover Seder:** We revived this annual tradition this year with a seder and festive meal to honor the holiday. We told the story of liberation and connected it to our own struggles for liberation today.
  
- **Memorial Prayer Circles:** In light of many of our members losing loved ones over the last year or so, we are holding two sessions of a memorial prayer circle – one in person and one online this spring. We will pray and sing and participants will have a chance to share memories of their loved one.
  
- **Community-building groups:**
  - **Midweek Discussion Group:** This daytime group, for retired and non-traditional-schedule people, meets with me monthly to discuss readings and themes around spirituality and personal growth.

- Young Adult Potluck Dinners with Rev. Ana: This monthly dinner and discussion group has just been restarting this year after a pandemic hiatus.
- Peer Pastoral Support Groups:
  - Nancy Witherell and Mark Perlmutter ran a group for people with chronic illnesses.
  - Judy Dederick and Nancy Witherell are leading a group this spring, “Self-Care in Stressful Times”
- Community-building outside events:
  - 9/11 Memorial: Participated in the annual 9/11 commemoration with the Brooklyn Heights Interfaith Clergy Association, reading out the reflections of passers-by on the promenade.
  - Diwali Prayer (Nov 3): I offered a prayer by video as part of an interfaith Diwali celebration hosted by Sadhana (a progressive Hindu group in our larger community)
- Congregational Health: The Committee on Ministry is working to identify a consultant to work with the congregation, board, and staff on healthy communication and right relations. They are currently talking with Sana Saeed (our point of contact with the UUA) as well as outside consultants. The COM is Mike Alcott, Cara Haft, Patrick Gunn, Lauren Webb, and Vonda Brunsting.
- Online Host Team: We formed a new team to serve as the hosts of our online services and help our online participants feel welcomed and connected to the community: Beth Evans, Sam McKelvie, Liz Shaw, Devin Judge-Lord, and Cindy Reynolds

## Equip people with the skill and confidence to become change makers

- Worship highlights:
  - Durable Goods – MLK Sunday: This service focused on the power of faith as a “durable good” that grounded Rev. King’s work and can ground ours. It included a call to work to protect voting rights on MLK Day, honoring the request of Rev. King’s family, “no celebration without legislation.”
  - Unrealized Loss: This sermon focused on the losses we’ve sustained in the modern world in our relationships with the Holy, with the earth, and with each other. It was a call to reinvest in the things that matter most. This theme is the basis for a new book I’m writing – *Unrealized Loss: The Secret Grief of the Secular Left*
- Sacred Studies: For the second year, we are offering a series of book discussions and film screenings to help cultivate a wide-angle spiritual framework and a shared spiritual language. The curriculum explores the intersections of ecological crisis, race, gender, and poverty. Titles this year included: *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer (Tasha Brownfield); *Laudato Si*, an encyclical by Pope Francis (Rev. Ana); *Cooked: Survival* by *Zipcode* film screening and discussion (Rev. Ana with filmmaker Judith Helfand); *No Other Gods: The Politics of the Ten Commandments* (Rev. Ana); *Man’s Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl (Garnett Losak)
- Lay Worship Leader Program – This is a leadership development program in which lay leaders receive training in public speaking, writing, and worship arts. They assist regularly in worship and each develop a theme and preach a homily once during the year. This year we’ve had a wonderful team



of Lay Worship Leaders: Mark Rinzel, Bridgette Raes, Molly Castle (youth), and Jenifer Leigh.

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

- Shmita Project: This is a community experiment based in the Biblical concept of the Shmita (“release”) Year, interpreted as practices of release in relation to ourselves, one another, and the earth. We kicked off with three back-to-back weekly sessions (I offered each session both online and in-person) and then transitioned to monthly check-in meetings for our year-long community of practice. The group may lead a worship service and/or find ways to share our learnings with the congregation.
- Activism: We have provided opportunities for activism, including a Climate Rally at Grand Army Plaza and People Vs. Fossil Fuels in D.C., where Meagan Henry participated in non-violent direct action.
- Ecologies of Hope (March 10): Drawing from my research on Shmita and our Shmita project, I gave a workshop to students at Spence High School on Biblical traditions around caring for the land, part of a climate change series they were doing.
- Solar panels and eco-friendly heating/cooling: See Green Team and Facilities Committee reports for details.

### **Develop and Responsibly Manage Resources**

- Covid Recovery: The Covid Response Team has helped us navigate the ever-shifting landscape of pandemic information and make policy recommendations to the board. Many thanks to these dedicated members. Our covid safety policy for this year has been to require vaccinations and

masks for worship services. With some exceptions, like Christmas Eve, we have used the honor system, not checking vaccination cards. This is both an expression of trust in our community and a practical choice to not overburden our volunteers. See the CRT report for details.

- Stewardship-related worship
  - Celebrating Our Sacred Spaces: Participated in the wonderfully creative and impactful worship service designed by the Capital Reserve Group that kicked off our Building Our Future campaign. My homilies provided a theological grounding to each highlighted element.
  - Auction Sermons: This year I delivered two auction sermons from previous years' auctions: Religious But Not Spiritual (Lee Pardee) and The Spirit of Aloha (Julie and Dirk Elting) in which Julie hand made leis as gifts to me and each of the children present.
  - Stewardship kickoff: This service and sermon were centered on the stewardship theme of "all that we cherish." The week before we had asked people to participate in canvassing each other by writing a note to an unknown other congregant and then distributed them during the service. I preached on the intangible qualities made possible by our contributions. I wrote an original song/ chant for the occasion, "With Grateful Hearts."
  
- Ministerial Internship program: Tasha Brownfield is our intern minister for two years 2021-2023. Tasha participates in worship on a regular basis as well as pastoral care and other areas of congregational life. I meet with her regularly for mentorship, and we've established an Intern Committee to fulfill Tasha's UUA requirement. See Tasha's report for details.

- Community Minister: Rev. Daniel Lawlor joined us as Community Minister this year. Rev. Daniel is a newly-fellowshipped, new Brooklynite UU minister and he is co-director of the UU Ministry for Earth.
- Tech Team: Thanks to the extraordinary commitment, hard work, skill, creativity, generosity, and expertise of our Tech Team, we now have a professional-quality livestream that allows access to our worship services to all those who are unable to come to the sanctuary. See the Tech Team report for details.

### **Life Cycle**

- Officiated at memorial service for Olive Hoogenboom (Oct. 9, 2021)
- Officiated at baby blessing for Shai Csurri Levavi, son of Merrill Csurri Levavi and Fudge Levavi, Central Park, June 28, 2021
- Ethan Loewi ordination (Nov 14): First U ordained our former intern minister to UU ministry in a joyful celebration. Our sabbatical minister, Rev. Michael Crumpler, preached the ordination sermon and I delivered the Charge to the Minister and the Right Hand of Fellowship address.
- Baby blessing for Nico Vivaan Bero-Chatrath, son of Julie Bero and Rishi Chatrath (April 10, 2022)
- In June I will be officiating at memorial services for Kathy Sonderman and Elaine Macken.

MEAGAN HENRY, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & FAMILY MINISTRY  
Becky Huffman, Chair, Religious Education Council, contributed to this report.

### ***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.*

**Religious Education Council Members:** Amit Meta: Board Liaison, June Wohlhorn, Michele Ascione, MariaSara Alcott, Denise Wharton

#### **Overview**

This September we returned to in-person gathering after being physically apart for 18 months. We also returned with an excellent multi-platform worship service option for those who are still unable to attend in person. What this meant for adults who were able to be vaccinated was different for children who were still unable to be vaccinated for the first several months of the Religious Education (RE) program year. In consultation with our congregation's COVID Response Task Force (CRT), the staff team, the Religious Education Council (REC), and our parents/guardians of young children, we decided the best start to our program this year was to have a soft opening and take things slowly. This gave children and families the opportunity to begin gathering outside in the Chapel Garden and front steps and to attend worship together as a family or the adult parents and guardians

could attend worship while their children enjoyed supervised play time outside. To celebrate our Sundays re-opening to in-person gatherings, we held a block party and picnic on the first Sunday back on September 12th after the service.

Our soft re-opening in the Fall gave us the opportunity to slowly rebuild our connections with one another. We quickly found the largest need for our families was to give the children social time together and the parents time to be in the worship service. By December we realized we were ready to begin the new year with a full RE program indoors, using our classroom spaces which are equipped with high quality, portable air filtration units. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 Omicron variant pushed our start date to February, but even with that disappointing set back, we opened with a full RE program on February 6th, 2022. As of May, 2022, our average RE attendance numbers are 25 children and youth and 8 adults, and this number includes Sundays when we only have nursery and toddler care because it is a holiday weekend or all ages worship service. Our largest regular RE Sunday had an attendance of 44 children and 13 adults. This is about 15 fewer children and youth than in years previous to 2020. We feel confident that our rebuilding phase and our slow approach is working, and we expect to have a full program again next year. Thankfully, we have a family-centered and dedicated staff and membership who have all come together to create fun programming and offer a variety of covid-safe social events and activities throughout this challenging year. We feel so much love and gratitude for the many volunteers who make our RE program run and for all our families who create this beloved community!

#### **2021-2022 RE Volunteers**

**1/2/3 OWL:** Amanda Stergianopoulou, Peter Engel, Abby Soule

**5/6 OWL:** Denise Wharton, Peter Engel, Amanda Stergianopoulou

**4/5/6 Crossing Paths:** Eva Rogels Weiss, Michele Ascione, with subbing assistance from Lee Ilan, Andrew Bongiorno, James Henry, Said Ibrihimi

**JR High OWL:** Merrill Csuri, Deirdre Lorde, Denise Wharton, Kirsten DeFur, with LGBTQ guest speaker panel made up of members from the wider community.

**Coming Of Age:** Teachers: Meagan Henry, Becky Huffman and Mentors: Michael Alcott, Bob Bero, Tyrone Davis Jr, Cara Haft

**Youth Group Advisors:** Merrill Csuri, Winnie Zwick, Molly Skinner-Day, Meagan Henry

**Nursery Staff:** Hannah Haines (September - December), Phylisa St. Fleur (started in February)

### **Highlights From This Year:**

**All Ages Worship** (formerly known as Multigenerational Worship)

- Passover Sermon Series, Rev. Ana and Amanda Rinzel with help from many children and adults, known as the “First U Players.”
- Holiday Pageant - The Grinch, directed by Becky Huffman
- Family Christmas Eve Service, led by Meagan Henry and Becky Huffman

**Children’s Chorus** - Hanukkah Video, directed by our Children’s Chorus Director Bert Eisentadt

**Youth Group Service** - led by our High School Youth Group

**Coming of Age Credo Service**

### **Holiday Celebrations**

Despite the interruptions and restrictions that the ongoing pandemic brought, we were able to have our usual holiday celebrations, although in adjusted forms. We held the annual Halloween party outside, and our little monsters, aliens, princesses and robots had a great time doing crafts and eating goodies. Our holiday pageant this year was followed by a visit from Santa and the usual festive celebrations. We had hot cocoa and cookies in the Chapel Garden. The Spring Festival this year was held on Palm Sunday. Children did crafts and played with

balloons. This year we will hold our “Everyone’s Birthday Party” on June 5th, followed by a Thank You Bruch for our amazing RE teachers, mentors and staff.

### **Family Activities and Events**

This year we had to scale back our usual series of picnics, game nights and retreats due to the ongoing pandemic. However, we were able to hold a couple of events at the beginning and end of the year. We had an Ingathering Sunday Block Party and Lunch in September, and in the spring we will hold a Game Night and two picnics at Jane’s Carousel.

### **Religious Education Classes**

Our focus this year was to give our children and youth an opportunity to be together and build community after being physically apart and away from the building for 18 months. We placed an emphasis on providing our most valued programming for as many ages as possible. We offered Our Whole Lives for grades 2 through 8 and our Coming of Age program for our 8th grade youth.

- Our Whole Lives: Unitarian Universalist values-based sexuality education
  - Lower Elementary 2/3/4th Grades (January - May)
  - Upper Elementary 5th/6th Grades (September - December)
  - Younger Jr. High 7th Grade (February - May)
  - Older Jr. High 8th Grade (combined with Coming of Age)
- Crossing Paths: World Religions in conversation with our Unitarian Universalist beliefs. This class explored a variety of world religions and had guest speakers front eh congregation come to talk with them about Hinduism, Islam, and Atheism. They also learned about Christianity and Buddhism.
- Coming Of Age: Our 8th graders had their COA program this year in an abbreviated version that ran February through May. They explored Unitarian Universalist history and beliefs, attended an online credo writing

workshop with COA youth from around the region, attended their Wilderness Retreat including solo time in nature, and they will deliver their credo statements during the COA worship service on May 22.

- Youth Group: High School, grades 9-12. This group grew in numbers and attendance again this year and has 10 youth members. Their focus was on building community in-person, learning about cultural differences, and preparing for their service-learning immersion experience to West Virginia this July. The Youth Group is guided by two Youth Leaders, Molly Castle and Willamina Garrelts.

### **Looking to the Future**

We've all learned in the past two years that predicting the future is impossible, and even planning for future events is fraught with uncertainty. However, we on the RE Council and RE staff have high hopes for next year. We know, now more than ever, the importance of our community. We believe in our mission. Next year we hope to expand our Council to include many new members. We plan to hold regular RE classes, holiday celebrations and family events. We know how to build flexibility into our programming. Whatever comes in 2022-2023, we plan to meet it with grace, bravery, and a sense of purpose.

Thank you to our amazing staff, teachers, mentors, advisors and volunteers. This year was a labor of love and we thank you for bringing your whole self to the beautiful work of building community and empowering children.

**GARNETT LOSAK, DIRECTOR OF CONGREGATIONAL LIFE**

This is my tenth year on staff at First Unitarian and my fifth as Director of Congregational Life. I am grateful to the congregation for its continued support of my position and its trust in my abilities.



The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant challenges to the First Unitarian staff, clergy, and membership, but together we have weathered the worst. Now that the pandemic appears to be entering a new stage, no less virulent, but less deadly, and as most of our members and friends are vaccinated, we are slowly but surely moving toward something close to regular order. The bulk of this report will document the steps I have taken over the past year to support the congregation through this transition.

### **Personnel**

At the close of the 20-21 program year, our Director of Facilities, Christopher Johnson, announced his departure. The board convened a search committee to find a replacement with the goal of having someone in place before the end of the summer. Matt Robinson, Amit Mehta, Lee Pardee, and Paul Freitag agreed to serve on the committee. We immediately began the search process by posting want ads on several on-line job boards. The committee weeded through more than 50 resumes eventually interviewing 3 qualified candidates. In August 2021, Kevin Brunson joined the staff as Director of Facilities. Kevin is an experienced building super with years of experience in building maintenance, and custodial supervision. As of this writing, Kevin is completing 8 months on the staff. He has proven to be a dedicated employee with a deep respect for religious communities. We are thrilled to have him on board.

Credit must be given to Chris Johnson for professionalizing the DOF position and leaving our building in good condition. We are especially grateful to him for providing us with a detailed manual that has been an invaluable resource during the transition.

At the end of the 21-22 program year, our fulltime custodian, Ian Hurt, also resigned to be closer to family in Delaware. Our weekend custodian, Bobby Blackman, was promoted to Ian's position and, as the building was still

underutilized at that time, it was determined that we should hold off replacing his position until staffing was needed. At this writing, we are actively searching for a weekend custodian. Thank you to Bobby and Sophie Major, our religious education assistant, for working occasional Saturdays as needed.

In April, we hired Zarek Deosarin to serve as Sunday morning fill-in producer for on-line services and as special events technical coordinator. We are now charging \$500 for live streaming of ceremonies and other special events which will be split between Zarek and the congregation. Members of the congregation will only be responsible for Zarek's compensation.

For several years, one of my goals has been to update our staff handbook. This year, I was finally able to tackle that task with significant help from First U member and Trustee, Jennie Goldin, who is a human resources executive. The new manual reflects our current personnel policies, updates sections on electronic communications, updates our vacation policy, and adds a policy for remote work. The new handbook was approved by the board and distributed to the staff in the early part of 2022.

## **Building Rentals**

### *Imagine Early Learning Center*

In the summer of 2021, we concluded our renewal negotiations with our long-term tenant, Imagine Early Learning Centers (IELC). This was a two-year project in partnership with Denham Wolf. The new 10-year lease increases our annual rental for the first year by over \$125,000 with regular increases throughout the term of the lease. Imagine will also cover any property tax increases on 50 Monroe Place. In exchange for the rental increase, we have vacated the space previously used for UniFair storage. That space will become an office for the site director. Other provisions include a regular extermination contract and a one-time \$30,000 allowance for renovations to the classrooms.

New York State law requires that a lease of 10 years or more to a non-profit organization must be approved by the charities bureau inspector general's office. First U trustee, Carolyn Ellis, an attorney with experience in this area, filed the petition on behalf of the congregation and, after several revisions, the petition was approved.

### *Child's Play*

This past summer Child's Play, a children's afterschool theater program, approached us about renting the chapel for a summer camp. Child's Play has been a regular tenant for several years, but they have rented elsewhere in the summer due to our lack of air conditioning. Their summer location became unavailable with minimal notice, and we were able to accommodate them. I asked Child's Play if they would consider a multi-year deal if we installed A/C and they readily agreed. The next step was to ask the board to consider moving the A/C project, up by a year. It had been scheduled for FY23-24. The board also agreed, and the project was assigned to the facilities committee. A/C will be installed by summer and the 4-year Child's Play summer camp agreement will pay for approximately 50% of the total cost of installation.

### *Apartments*

Both of our apartment tenants have renewed their leases for another year. As part of the lease extension for the simplex apartment I adjusted start and end lease dates to reflect our fiscal year. We asked for, and received, a small rent increase on the simplex. The duplex was renewed with no increase.

### *Other Rentals*

As the pandemic waned, the demand for in person meetings and performances roared back. The First U Buildings are busier than ever, hosting concerts, community meetings, book launches, weddings, memorials, 12-steps meetings, and

events. Our mission calls us to “care for one another and work for justice and stewardship of the earth”. We are blessed to have a campus that can support arts and community programs with reasonable use fees.

So far this year, we have raised over \$81,000 in “other rentals & Room Fees” against a budget of \$65,000. I expect to receive another \$10-\$15,000 before the end of the fiscal year. The final will be at least 40% above the budgeted amount for the current fiscal year.

### **Worship & Programming**

Our summer worship program was on-line for the second year in a row. The summer worship committee recruited leaders for each Sunday (see the Summer Worship report). I added my voice to the July 4<sup>th</sup> service “preaching” a “sermon” on the theme of Grace.

One of the joys of my job is the opportunity to create and lead programs. I have been particularly focused on summer programming when First U has traditionally been quiet. Over the summer I led or organized:

- An evening trip to see a cyclones game
- A 6-session small group on theological concepts through a UU lens
- 2 on-line newcomer’s orientations
- 2 summer evening Picnics on The Patio

During the program year I led:

- Monthly newcomer orientations
- Welcome back picnic on Monroe Place. We paid for this lunch with points from our credit card. Thank you to Heights Falafel for providing us with delicious and affordable food.
- A second session of my summer small group, expanded to 8 weeks

- With the Women’s Leadership Alliance and the RE Council, organized an Easter basket program for families in transitional housing through Diaspora Services of Brooklyn
- With Soles for Souls, at the recommendation of Nancy Wolf and with support from Weaving Social Justice, organized a shoe collection program for Haiti that coincided with UniFair
- A winter clothing drive for Afghan Refugees brought to our attention by Sunita Viswinath of Women for Afghan Women
- With Nancy Wolf and Weaving Social Justice, coordinated two E-waste collections
- Supported the Winter Solstice Service, led by Tasha Brownfield

As Christmas approached and it was becoming clear that the Omicron variant of COVID-19 was spreading through New York City, it became necessary to consider our approach to Christmas Eve services. After much handwringing and consultation with our COVID Response Team, and at the direction of the Board, we decided to initially restrict attendance at the Candlelight Service to 250 and then as the pandemic became worse, to 100. I organized a pre-registration process and recruited several people to check vaccination cards and ID’s drawing them in with the promise of reserved seating and hot chocolate and cookies before the service. Thanks go to Monica Murphy, Julianne Hausler, Beth Evans, Edwin Lord, Red Yoshimoto, and Emmett Wasik for serving the community as Vax/ID checkers. This was, in many ways, a thankless job, but one that protected our congregation and the wider community from potentially serious illness.

### **Membership & Stewardship**

As of May, 2022, we have welcomed 10 people into membership with the expectation of at least seven more before the end of the fiscal year. We held two new member Sundays, in November and March, and a third is scheduled for June 5<sup>th</sup>. We certified 279 members with the UUA in February 2022.

Our by by-laws require that in order to retain voting status, all members of the congregation must complete a pledge form every year and make at least a partial payment on their current year pledge. Our membership records are adjusted before the Annual Meeting to ensure that only members in good standing are provided with a voting card. At this writing, 18 members have not made payments on their current year pledges and 49 member families (55 members) have not completed pledge forms for next year. I anticipate a significant decline in our membership as the fiscal year comes to a close.

There is no single cause of this loss of members. The pandemic is, of course, a major factor. As we moved on-line some of our members who were uninterested in “virtual” worship have drifted away. Several members have moved out of the city (although many have retained their memberships), others may be dealing with job insecurity, illness, or other pastoral concerns. Many of this last group are still participating in congregational life and may still fulfill their membership requirements when life feels more secure.

There is good news. Our dedicated members are as committed as ever to First Unitarian’s mission and purpose. Most members have either maintained their pledge levels or increased their donations. This in spite of some very large pledges to the capital fund (see capital fund report).

**Pledge Data (as of May 11, 2022)**

Pledges increased	57	Total Amount of Increase	\$15,937
Pledges maintained	81		
Pledges Decreased	19	Total Amount of Decrease	-\$14,300
New Pledges	10	New Pledge Total	\$13,500
<b>Total Pledged</b>	<b>\$280,858</b>	<b>Total number of pledges</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>Total Pledged (FY22)</b>	<b>\$316,000</b>	<b>Total number of pledges (FY22)</b>	<b>206</b>

I want to thank our very hardworking stewardship team, Dwight Mathis (Chair), Lee Pardee, Elees Woods, Tyrone Davis, Jr., Marty Bernstein, and Colleen Olson (Board Liaison). Stewardship work is often underappreciated, but it is truly ministry. Generosity is a basic Unitarian Universalist spiritual practice.

This year we will celebrate the Service of the Living Tradition in person on May 15<sup>th</sup>. This service commemorates milestone membership anniversaries. The following people will be recognized:

10 years

- Eva Rogals & Mark Weiss
- Jackie Frost and James Goward
- Derek Pearl
- Elizabeth Shaw and Eric Ashton
- Kurt and Pat Steele
- Barbara Ratzlaff

25 years

- Emily Levine
- Kathy and Nick Titakis

40 years

- Ellen Wolf

### **Communications**

Most notably, I have the honor of “doing” the announcements during the worship service every Sunday morning. I love this part of my job. Having a leadership position on the staff enables me to be more effective as an administrator, and a membership director. I have great appreciation for Rev. Ana’s shared leadership style that allows me to have this level of visibility.

I produce a weekly e-news that is sent on Thursday afternoons at 4PM (every other week in the summer). This year, I sent several “special” e-communicues, for UniFair, Auction, General Assembly, and Christmas Eve, one pastoral letter from Rev. Ana, a fundraising letter for the capital fund campaign and several COVID safety protocol communications. Currently 1,648 people are subscribed to receive the E-news.

Our Facebook page continues to be our most robust social media. On a weekly basis, I publish a worship event and the Sabbath quote. I also share events of interest from the UUA or social justice groups, news of note from our members, and pictures or notices about events within the congregation. Thanks to our Tech Team, our worship service is streamed on Facebook every week. Our Facebook Page has 1,190 fans.

We also support several Facebook Groups: Young Adults Ministries (Twenties & Thirties), Ceremonies, First U Families, Social Justice, and Queer Caucus. While I have oversight responsibilities for all of these groups, my regular participation is limited.

### **Committee Work**

Virtually everything that happens at First Unitarian touches my “office”. It may be a light touch (reserving meeting space, publishing an announcement) or a bear hug (attending or even organizing meetings) Below is a list of Committees/Task Forces/Groups that have required a significant investment of my time.

- Leadership Development Committee: Attended all Meetings, offered information on members for leadership positions.
- COVID Response Team: Attended meetings as availability allowed. Offered opinions and advise from a staff point of view



- Caring Ministry: Attended most meetings, offered information about members and friends in need. Occasionally provided direct care when required.
- Finance Committee: Worked with members of the committee to revise several out-of-date policies.
- Facilities Committee: As the supervisor to the facilities staff, I was significantly involved in all areas of planning for projects throughout the year.
- Board of Trustees: Attended all meetings. Offered advice and expertise as requested.
- Stewardship Team: Attended and often organized all meetings, kept records, organized events.
- Tech Team: Worked to convene the team and helped recruit Zoom hosts. With Justin Parkinson, wrote (and rewrote) the host manual. Assisted with the recruitment of Zarek Deosarin, tech team assistant and special events coordinator.
- UniFair & Auction: Attended meetings provided office support (with Wendy Russell) as needed. Attended, and at worked at, both events.

### **Public Ministry**

- I will finish my first term on the board of directors of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Membership Professionals (UUAMP) and expect to be elected to a second term at the Annual Meeting in June.
- I attended “Virtual GA” in June 2021 and will be traveling to Portland, OR for this GA this June.
- I have been invited to lead a workshop on volunteerism at the annual meeting of the Association of Unitarian Universalist Administrators (AUUA) on June 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## **Conclusion**

This has been a year of ups and downs, fits and starts. We returned to the Sanctuary in September in joyful celebration while many of our members were and continue to be understandably fearful of being in large groups, and without the ability to gather in fellowship after the service. We were forced to return to virtual services in January but have since returned to the Sanctuary, and are now gathering outside for coffee and fellowship under the sidewalk bridge that has turned out to have a silver lining as well as protection for people entering and leaving the Sanctuary.

It has been a year of fits and starts for me as well. Our new building staff is still learning the ropes, and it has been a challenge to go from 0 to 60 in a very short period of time, especially without a weekend custodian. The congregation has had to relearn many of the systems that we've put in place to simplify and codify office procedures, and, let's face it, wearing a mask while singing hymns is just not great!

And yet, we are pushing forward with A/C in the chapel and Frances White Room, and solar panels are going up on the roof of the 48 building. Coffee is being served on Sunday afternoons, we have made Easter baskets for deserving children, sent shoes to Haiti and warm clothes to Afghan refugees. We have hosted community meetings, concerts, recitals, book launches, and more. Our tech team is providing our on-line congregation with excellent on-line worship that gets better every week.

When I think about how much we can accomplish in the face of so many obstacles, my love for our congregation and the people who make it work grows each and every day.

Thank you to my incredible staff, Wendy Russell, Kevin Brunson, and Bobby Blackman and to my colleagues, Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons, Meagan Henry, and Adam Podd, and to Sophie Major who steps up whenever she's asked! Most of all, thank

you to all of you who serve the mission and purpose of First Unitarian and give your time, talent, and treasure every day!

### ADAM PODD, MUSIC DIRECTOR

This has been my 8th program year as Music Director at First Unitarian. I'm proud of another great year of quality music-making and community in First U's music department.

Most remarkably, we were able to have worship and make music together in person, which, though not as we originally hoped, unmasked, unencumbered, and now care-free, was still a powerful and overwhelming experience. The choir began singing every week again, starting with Ingathering as "usual" from pre-covid times. The choir has remained masked all year, for rehearsals and services, with soloists taking extra precautions to sing unmasked at times, under the guidance of the Covid Response Team.

We are fortunate to have retained our four regular professional section-leaders, (Kiena Williams, Candice Helfand-Rogers, Dennis Wees, and Brandon Hornsby-Selvin) who are familiar faces and voices to anyone who regularly attends.

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

We held monthly jazz services again, with a full band on the second Sunday of each month, drawing on musical traditions from jazz, roots, blues, gospel, and folk

music to enhance our worship services - often with new arrangements for the choir and band. Here's to a great year!

## TASHA BROWFIELD, INTERN MINISTER

### **Overview**

Serving as First Unitarian's Intern Minister this past year, during my second of three years of seminary, has been such a blessed opportunity for growth, learning, and acceptance. When I first started with you all, in August of 2021, still under COVID isolation and zoom worship, I was welcomed with open arms. You've trusted me to come into your community to provide ministry and allowed me a safe place to explore and make mistakes along the way. Even amidst another unexpected COVID lockdown in the winter, a time filled with mourning and fear, you've stood firm by me to allow me to explore the new theology of Pantheistic Mysticism. And even more importantly, the First Unitarian community has added life, kindness, and joy to my life. I've been inspired by your willingness to explore and enter into new ideas about spirituality. In my first year, out of two, at First Unitarian, I've learned this community is resilient, caring, and healing.

I write this report to summarize some of my main ministry components in the past year and to recognize and give thanks to my colleagues on staff! To Garnett Losak, Adam Podd, Meagan Henry, Kevin Brunson, Wendy Russell, Sophie Major, Bobby Blackman, Rev. Daniel Lawlor, and, of course, my supervisor Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons: working with you has been both fun and transformative in personal healing. I could not have asked for a better team of people to work with at my first parish placement, and I am so grateful for all the grace and love you've extended me. Thank you for sharing your expertise and trust in my ministry with such care, especially as we've all been exploring re-opening worship amidst a pandemic. I also want to thank my Intern Minister Committee: Amit Mehta, Liz Jones, Edwin Lord,

Jenifer Leigh, and Sean Sellers. Your detailed and attentive reports and comments have been transformative in my ministry and in articulating my theology. I tell everyone who asks me about my placement at First Unitarian that I could not have been more blessed and lucky to be invited into this community. Compared to the critique and fight I faced at Yale Divinity School, I never feel the need to redact myself with you all. While being an intern here, I've felt constantly supported and loved by everyone on staff, my Intern Committee, and the congregation; for that, I could never express enough thanks.

### **Worship**

I've been responsible for preaching and leading Sunday worship seven times this year and will lead one more service on May 29th. In addition, I've served as a lay worship leader approximately once a month. Additionally, in the winter of 2021, I led and curated a Winter Solstice Celebration to honor the Earth-Centered Faiths within Unitarian Universalism. A highlight of my year was the openness of the staff and congregation to receive a Tarot Card during one of my sermons. Another highlight was everyone pretending to be an ant with me! Thanks to my fellow staff members, who helped me brainstorm and pull together these explorative services, and a thank you to the congregation for entering into the story of my inner child's worldview with me

Another significant component of my worship duties has been leading prayers for Sunday worship. On top of sharing prayers during the eight sermons for the year, I have offered prayers for two additional weeks, for a total of ten times. Additionally, I have read two Wisdom Stories, been a zoom host three times, and participated as a choir member. I am grateful for the staff entrusting my exploration in so many different roles during my time here at First Unitarian.

### **Caring Ministry Team**

The Caring Ministry team at Frist Unitarian has been a keystone block of my role as an Intern minister. This year, I've led the Caring Ministry Team—a group of lay spiritual caregivers that care for the congregation. The Caring Ministry Team most frequently supports the congregation through check-in phone calls, emails, hand-written cards, and personal meetings on zoom and in person. The Caring Ministry Team has helped in meal delivery and hospital visits.

In addition to offering direct pastoral care myself, I've overseen many aspects of team operations: I've led meetings, provided training in Spiritual Listening, and handled logistics of the “Chapel Ministry” program, which offers community members a weekly post-worship opportunity to speak with Lay Chapel Ministers—congregants with professional backgrounds in therapy, pastoral care, or social work. I served as the Lay Chapel Minister for fifteen weeks this year and managed and scheduled the additional weeks with qualified people in the Caring Ministry Team. While reopening after COVID, we have had community members both in the sanctuary and on zoom. I have created space for in-person and online worshipers to participate in spiritual care. Additionally, after having to go fully online for six weeks in the winter, we had to go back to the fully online model of Lay Chapel Ministry and then re-transition back to in-person in February. I have created two new Google Forms to streamline this process for online and in-person appendices.

I have brought ideas from the Caring Ministry Team to the staff, like adding a privacy screen to the Chapel of all Faiths and curating a memorial prayer circle. Next month, I will lead a Memorial Prayer Circle to respond to the times of grief that the congregation has been facing in the last couple of years- spouses, parents, siblings, and close friends. This service aims to keep our community members'

loved ones memories alive at First Unitarian. I am hosting a zoom memorial service for those who are unable to attend an in-person prayer circle that will be led by Rev. Ana the following day.

Leading the Caring Ministry Team has not only been a phenomenal learning experience but a profound opportunity for personal healing and growth. Thank you to everyone who has participated in the Caring Ministry Team. I've been inspired by your inventiveness, attentiveness to your community's needs, grace towards one another, and commitment to serving everyone. You *each* have done such phenomenal work for all those First Unitarians, and I am so proud to lead you all.

### **Spiritual Development and Small Group Ministries**

I led and founded a Tarot and Tea series for spiritual exploration throughout the year. These sessions have been focused on community building, de-stigmatizing and redefining the practice of tarot, and exploring the earth-centered faiths in the Unitarian Universalist tradition. I am also scheduled to lead a "Sacred Studies" book group discussion on *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. This Sacred Studies event is planned for participants to learn more about Indigenous Eco-Justice from the Potawatomi Nation's perspective.

More broadly, I have been founding and exploring Pantheistic-based ministry within the Unitarian Universalist tradition. I asked Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons in September 2021, "so, this doesn't exist yet, and I will probably fumble a lot along the way, but could I root everything that I do here in my theology Pantheism?" To my delight, she gladly agreed. My theology, that I have come to term Pantheistic Mysticism, does not exist yet as in academic literature or articulated spiritual practice. Although articulating my theology is still a very live practice, I have been able to explore the physical exercise of Pantheistic Mystic ministry while at First

Unitarian. All of my sermons and small group events have been aimed at curating this ministry for the first time in history. I want to thank everyone, especially Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons, for saying yes to exploring with me on my spiritual journey. I could not imagine a better internship site placement; thank you.

# Governance Committees

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

We've completed our 189th year as The First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn, created in 1833 as a beacon of liberal theology.

We have, this year, grown more accustomed to the up-and-down swings that come with life during a pandemic. In doing so, we have not just rolled with the punches; we have remained steadfast in our commitment to our mission and our principles, and we have continued to move forward as a progressive congregation. With our faith as a north star, we have continued to make a tangible difference in the world around us.

In an effort to welcome all who wish to join us, incredible strides have been made. For the first time, a proper space has been designated for those who have limited mobility -- a ramp and a lift make the building accessible, and the removal of several pews has created space for wheelchairs. For those who participate in services remotely, a new streaming setup has made the experience as close as one could get to being there in person.



Multi-year efforts to bring our historic campus more in line with our values are bearing fruit. We have begun preparations for the installation of solar panels on the roof of 48 Monroe Place. Our chapel will now be heated and cooled -- thanks to a new high-efficiency heat-pump system.

Although we spent last year holding remote services, we were thrilled to return to the sanctuary, keeping ourselves and others safe with vaccines and masks. That first day back was filled with awe and emotions. Those who chose to stay at home to watch services via Zoom or Facebook, found a near-live experience with newly installed cameras, high-tech digital production and the skills of our tech team volunteers, who oversaw the upgrade and now run the production on Sundays. We are grateful to Jay Lawrence, Justin Parkinson, Robin Bossert, and Beth Evans, who worked so hard to find and install the camera equipment, as well as the livestream producers, including Jay, Justin, Jean Shepherd and Robin. We are also thankful to regular hosts of the weekly Zoom service: Beth Evans, Sam McKelvie, Cindy Reynolds, Devin Judge-Lord, and Liz Shaw.

And in this mixed-media world, we welcomed 10 members to the congregation, bringing our total to 279. Some people joined before ever seeing the sanctuary live and in person!

Three board members formed the Talent Development Committee, whose mission is to monitor volunteer needs in First U's 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. TDI discussed with each volunteer group what excited them, skills a volunteer would develop by participating, nature of the work, time commitment, and suggested tenure. TDI also organized two surveys of the congregation to identify people interested in doing more, then discussed with these people individually their

interests and best fits to our needs. Members: Amit Mehta, Colleen Olson and Judith Sedaitis.

Jeanie Wing, who joined First Unitarian as a member in June 1969, was approved as a lifetime member at our May board meeting.

And we remember Elaine Macken and Dale Addington, two members whom we lost this past year.

We were fortunate to be able to join one another in the Sanctuary for Christmas Eve, Palm Sunday and Easter, which were all glorious. The return of the annual Passover dinner was memorable as well.

We brought back our live fundraising events too: In December we held Unifair, selling donations, holiday wreaths, ornaments and bakery treats (Thank you, Emily Levine!), and added a shoe and coat drive to the festivities. We celebrated and bid against each other at our “April Showers” Spring Auction in the chapel and Frances White Room. All in good fun.

We’re deeply grateful for our hardworking, dedicated, knowledgeable and astute members of our staff, who were able to turn on a proverbial dime as we faced different circumstances on any given day. We give thanks to the Covid Response Team which meets every two weeks -- monitoring health reports, news and the CDC recommendations, to keep us safe.

We said goodbye to our attentive Director of Facilities, Chris Johnson – a valued member of our community for five years, who resigned in July -- but not before creating a detailed to-do list. We welcomed Kevin Brunson into this position, and he hit the ground running in September.

We couldn't do anything without the talent and gifts from our deeply committed community, including fellow trustees, deacons, committee chairs and members, musicians, other volunteers, (hello, bakers, decorators, ushers and chefs), members and friends.

Thank you to moderator Michael Alcott, who is stepping down from his position, and to Patricia Steele, our esteemed treasurer, who is also stepping down. Thank you to Carolyn Ellis, who replaced Andrew Bongiorno and joined our standing committee in the fall, and to Jenny Goldin, who stepped in to fill the vacancy left by Andrea Parkinson.

On the rental of our space, we completed, with assistance of our Denham Wolf real estate advisors, a 10-year renewal of the shared-space agreement with Imagine Early Learning Center. That agreement took effect as of September 1, 2021, substantially increasing our yearly rental income. As you will see in the proposed budget we are projecting \$339,000 of income from Imagine's payments in the coming fiscal year, that's an increase of more than \$96,000 from last year, and there will be annual increases in years to come. Importantly, if the City increases our real estate taxes attributable to our sharing space with Imagine, a for-profit entity, we can pass that increase to Imagine. While the agreement is important to our operating budget, it is also important to our capital budget as 10% of Imagine's payments for the prior year are used to support the capital budget -- \$27,265 in 2022/23.

After a few years of overdrawing from our endowment to fund the present, we have managed to reduce our budgeted unsustainable draw to 0% for the 2022-23 year. We hope to achieve that sustainable draw in years to come, keeping the endowment strong for future generations.

Speaking of the future, through the Capital Campaign, “Building Our Future,” that continued through the Winter fundraising drive, we raised \$400,000, which will help pay for the facade and roof repairs, the energy-efficient HVAC heating and cooling system and the solar panels.

The Capital Review Group, which was charged with being interim Facilities Management Committee, made the transition to be the FMC earlier this year. Thank you to everyone on the CRG/FMC for their continued thorough work in making these projects happen.

And finally, we bid a fond farewell to a member (of sorts) of our congregation: Our beloved crabapple tree, which for many years has provided us with beauty, shade, and a reminder of the occasional need to take a seat and just breathe for a few minutes. The crabapple makes way for much needed repairs to our facade, a project which we hope to complete within the next 18 months.

It is truly overwhelming to think of all we have accomplished and all that has happened this past year. We thank each and every one of you for being a part of our 189th (!!!) year; hand in hand, we have continued to make a tangible difference in the world around us. We look ahead to our 190th year with hope, with love, and with our faith as our guide. Onward!

Mary Huhn & Matt Robinson-Henrie

Board Co-Presidents

**Class of 2022**

Carolyn Ellis, Amit Mehta, Colleen Olson

**Class of 2023**

Jenny Goldin (completing the term of Andrea Parker), Megan Monroe, Matt Robinson-Henrie

**Class of 2024**

Mary Huhn, Jay Sheth, Judith Sedaitis

**Nominees Class of 2025**

Robin Bossert, Beth Evans, Lisa Pacenza

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; assist at the funeral or memorial service of a Member, is so requested by the Member's survivors; advise and assist the Ministers in promoting the health of the Society."

The deaths of Senior Deacon Alfredo Blanco and his successor, Senior Deacon Olive Hoogenboom left only eight Deacons. As per the By-Laws, the remaining Deacons nominated, and the Congregation elected, Marty Bernstein and Laurel Lesio.

The ten Deacons are Marty Bernstein, Robert Bero, Thomas Check, Elizabeth Davis, Laurel Lesio, Edwin Lord, Emily Pardee, Constance Newsom, Bruce Wilde and Nancy Wolf.

While the Pandemic continued to preclude in-person meetings, the Deacons met on Zoom and communicated through telephone conversations and email.

The Good Friday Commemorative Communion remembers individuals of all faiths who have sacrificed themselves on behalf of others. The 2022 Good Friday in-

person service on April 15 was planned by the Deacons and co-celebrated by the Rev. Michael Crumpler and Meagan Henry, Director of Education and Family Ministry. For the first time the service was live streamed.

As is customary, following the service, the Ministers, Deacons and their spouses enjoyed sherry or a sweet drink in the library.

While former Music Director William Peek, invited by the Hoogenboom family, played the organ, the Deacons processed at the memorial for Church Historian and Senior Deacon Olive Hoogenboom.

At the request of the family, the Deacons ushered and greeted guests for Olive's memorial. They assisted in other ways as well.

As in the past, individual Deacons have also served the Congregation on various committees, Choir, Capital Review Group, Facilities, Finance, Immigrant Solidarity, Ministry, Pastoral Care, Social Justice and Stewardship. Several Deacons also service as Head Ushers for Sunday services.

Constance Newsom, Senior Deacon

## FACILITIES COMMITTEE

The past year has brought many changes to the Facilities Committee. In addition to overseeing the 15-year Capital Repair Plan, the Capital Review Group (CRG) took on the duties of the Facilities Committee in May 2021 on an interim basis. In January 2022 the board asked the CRG to accept the role and title of the Facilities Committee permanently. We thank the former Facilities members for their years of dedicated service and knowledge.

In the past program year we have said goodbye to our Director of Facilities, Christopher Johnson, who retired in July 2021. Chris's tireless work for our congregation was reflected in the smooth transition he created for his successor, which included preparing a Facilities Manager Reference Manual and a list of ongoing and upcoming projects. In the fall of 2021, we were excited to welcome our new Director of Facilities, Kevin Brunson, who is a wonderful help to our committee.

We would especially like to thank all the members and friends of the congregation who donated to the Building Our Future campaign, which raised \$400,000 for the Capital Reserve Fund. Your generosity has empowered us to make repairs that keep our community safe, to make exciting and environmentally-conscious upgrades, and to plan responsibly for our buildings' future.

### **Our Role**

The Facilities Committee is a mandated committee whose role is described in the congregation's bylaws:

*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.*

Our committee has aimed to meet the present needs of maintaining, securing, and enhancing our buildings, while also engaging in long-term planning as we did as the CRG. By continuing to follow and update the 15-year capital repair plan, we

hope to maintain this broad viewpoint that the congregation introduced by voting to create a Capital Reserve Fund in May 2019.

### **The Restricted Capital Fund and 15-Year Repair Plan**

When the Restricted Capital Fund was separated from the endowment in 2019, it became the primary source of funds for building repairs, allowing us to shield the operating budget from large capital expenses that can vary greatly from year to year. It also created a way for us to set aside funds for major repairs that we expect to happen several years in the future. While the Finance Committee ultimately manages the capital budget, our committee also has a role in continuously revising the 15-year capital repair plan to prioritize important projects and spread out expenditures to keep the fund stable in the long term.

### **Events**

We kicked off the program year in September 2021 with a clean-up day led by Liz Davis, who has several years of experience organizing volunteer work days. This event was an exciting opportunity for volunteers to return to our space, many for the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and for congregants to meet Kevin. Volunteers, committee members, and staff worked together on dusting, weeding, organizing, and other tasks to tidy up our spaces after a year of remote worship. On May 7, a dozen hale and hearty Congregants volunteered at another workday to spruce up the garden and prepare our facilities for upcoming projects.

### **Projects**

The most significant project that our committee has worked on this year is planning for the repair of the Sanctuary's brownstone facade. In the summer of 2021, it was discovered that material was spalling from the facade and that a small tree was growing from the roof of the Sanctuary. This prompted our committee to



ask the Board of Trustees for authority to hire an architect to inspect the full surface of the facade and assess its condition.

After conducting a bidding process and reviewing bids from three firms, we recommended that the Board of Trustees engage AYON Studio to access the facade from a lift to inspect the whole surface over the course of two days for \$11,700. We paid an additional \$10,855 to UP Construction and Restoration for the use of a boom lift and operator so that the architect could inspect the highest points of the building up close, both visually and by examining with a rubber mallet. Committee member Matt Castle took this opportunity to ride the lift up and remove the small cherry tree that was growing on the roof, and Kevin rode the lift to remove a vine growing on the facade.

The architect who performed the inspection, Angel Ayón, reported that nearly all of the brownstone surface of the pinnacles as well as most of the surface on the upper parts of the front facade were deteriorating. This includes original stone as well as patches from a previous repair in 1996, many of which he deemed to be loosely adhered. He also noted that many of the wooden window frames are in poor condition.

Our committee notified the Board that the condition of the pinnacles was, according to the architect, a potential safety hazard, and recommended that they authorize the installation of a sidewalk shed that would both protect people from any risk of falling fragments and serve as a base for the full scaffolding needed for the repair. We conducted a competitive bidding process and reviewed bids from six firms. We ultimately selected Arsenal Scaffold, who showed a thorough understanding of our needs and offered the lowest bid at \$183,348. This includes the installation, rental, and removal of the sidewalk shed for 21 months as well as the installation, rental, and removal of the higher supported scaffold for nine

months. The committee is now working on selecting a contractor to perform the actual repair work. We are also in the process of applying for a grant of up to \$250,000 from the National Fund for Sacred Places, and another grant from the New York Landmarks Conservancy of up to \$80,000, to help fund the repair.

The Facilities Committee has been involved in a number of other projects this year, including:

- Completing the installation of a wheelchair seating area in the Sanctuary by removing four half-pews along the central aisle. This pew removal was done by Tamer for \$9,750, plus an additional \$2,250 to source and install antique floorboards and stain and seal the new floor. We would like to thank the members of the previous Facilities Committee for the thought and effort they put into conceiving this project.
- Completing the repair of a portion of sidewalk in front of the chapel that had been damaged by tree roots. The repair was done by Saga for \$6,100.
- Inspecting and replacing the seals of the 50 Monroe boiler, which had been leaking. This work was done by Abetta Boiler and Welding Service Inc. for \$8,500 and is expected to prolong the life of the boiler for several years.
- Inspecting and replacing the old gas line to 113 Pierrepont Street, which was completed by Vigilante Plumbing, Heating and Air Conditioning for \$7,050.
- Re-installing broken pieces of the pulpit that were found in the 48 Monroe furnace room.
- Assisting the Green Team in their effort to install a mini-split heating and cooling system in the Chapel and Frances White Room. This project will allow First Unitarian to try this more efficient and ecologically-friendly technology on a small scale so that we can get an idea of how we might gradually substitute it for boilers that burn fossil fuels. At the time of this report, the team was preparing the back play yard for the installation of condensers.

- Assisting the Green Team in their effort to install solar panels on the roof of 48 Monroe Place. At the time of this report, Green Team members had received and evaluated bids for the solar panels, and were exploring options for replacing the roof, a necessary first step, with the help of architect Andrew Wright.
- Assembling a Fire Safety Team to explore our options for upgrading our fire detection system. At the time of this report, the team, led by Robin Bossert and including Patrick Gunn and Kevin Brunson, had recommended a company, Fire and Building Code Services (FBCS), that quoted \$37,500 to design a new fire and smoke detection and alarm system for our buildings.

John Carroll

**Committee Members:** John Carroll (Chair), Matt Castle, Tom Check, Liz Davis, Lee Pardee (Finance Committee liaison), Judith Sedaitis (Board liaison), Sarah Seehafer

## FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Committee welcomed new members Devin Judge-Lord and David Andrew and continuing Board Liaison Amit Mehta.

This year the committee continued its regular work, using remote tools like Zoom due to the ongoing pandemic but also joyfully returning to some in-person meetings. The primary focus was maintaining the congregation's financial health and planning for responsible use of the additional rental income stemming from the new lease with Imagine Daycare. Our endowment saw significant increases during the first three quarters of the fiscal year. Volatility in the market during the final quarter of FY22 is impacting First U's endowment and is being monitored closely by the Finance Committee in coordination with our financial manager at Boston Trust Walden. Pledge income in FY22 is projected to fall slightly below the

budgeted amount, continuing the trend of the last few years. Offsetting this, rental income will be higher as the budgeted amount was projected before the details of the new Imagine Daycare lease were finalized. Expenses were lower than expected, due to continued reduced programming activity and to a lower real estate tax bill now that the additional payments to correct for past years' underpayment have been completed. Overall, revenue for FY22 is projected to be 101% of the budgeted amount, while expenses are projected at 98%, resulting in a lower than budgeted operating deficit. This will eliminate the need to withdraw more than the sustainable amount from the congregation's endowment in FY22.

**In FY22 the Committee:**

- Continued the budget process developed in FY20 which allowed for excellent communication with the board and staff when drafting the FY23 budget.
- Continued to work with the Office Administrator, Wendy Russell, and a CPA consultant to improve bookkeeping practices for the endowment, including tracking
- Drafted updated policies related to bookkeeping and finance, to reflect current practices at First U, which were approved by the Board:
  - Reimbursement Policy - Updated to consolidate and replace the previous Bookkeeping, Fiscal Year Accounts Payable, and Committee Budget Reimbursement Policies.
  - Capital Fund Policy - Updated to clarify the calculation of 10% of the prior year's fixed rental income to the fund.
  - Fundraising Policy – Updated to refer to the process outlined in the Carry Forward Fund policy for funds that are raised for a specific purpose but not fully spent the same fiscal year
- Began the process of updating the following policies, which are expected to be presented to the Board in FY23 for approval:

- Investment Policy – Working with our investment manager at Boston Trust Walden, the Finance Committee is updating this policy to reflect our current investment strategy, including our socially responsible investment restrictions as previously approved by the Congregation.
- Policy on Authority over Accounts - Working with the office staff, the Finance Committee is updating this policy so that it reflects current best practices for managing all of First U's accounts across various institutions and platforms, including new online services.
- Drafted a Proposal to Adopt Health Insurance Contribution Policy, which was approved by the board. The new policy will implement a 10% individual contribution to health insurance premium costs for new staff hired after the beginning of FY23.
- Consulted with the Facilities committee on their 15-year repair plan and financial model, and on options for financing the newly identified required repairs to the brownstone and spires.
- Conducted monthly reviews of the congregation's financial reports.
- Continued the quarterly meetings implemented in FY21 with the managing director of our 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 fourth quarter of FY21 and the first three quarters of FY22. These reviews continue to be useful in ensuring accuracy in the congregation's financial reports and assuring that the congregations' funds are being used as intended. Reviews of this type have been identified as a best practice as new online fundraising platforms and accounts are implemented by congregations and nonprofits.

- Worked with the Board of Trustees and Staff to draft a FY23 budget that supports and expands the congregation’s programming while keeping the draw on the endowment to cover the operating deficit below the calculated sustainable level. The FY23 operating budget being presented for vote at the congregational meeting in May 2022 includes a draw which is \$500 less than the sustainable
- Conducted one online and one in-person congregational budget forum 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](mailto:ecshaw@gmail.com).

Elizabeth Shaw, For the Finance Committee

Members: Pat Steele, (Treasurer), Amit Mehta (Board Liaison), Robin Bossert, Lee Pardee, Elizabeth Shaw, Lake Wise, Devin Judge-Lord and David Andrew

## 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 2021-2022 year, the members of the LDC were: Catalina Bertani, Laurel Lesio (Co-Chairs), Cara Haft, Sam McKelvie and Laura Manos-Hey. Significant

support was provided to the committee by Garnett Losak (Director of Congregational Life) and Mary Huhn (Board Liaison). Catalina, Laurel, and Laura will conclude their terms after the Annual Meeting on May 15th, 2022.

### **Nominations for the 2022 General Assembly in Portland, OR (GA)**

Delegates were elected at the Congregational Meeting on February 27th, 2022:

- Beth Evans
- Justin Parkinson
- Josette Trombetta
- Dwight Mathis
- Lee Pardee
- Abby Grosslein

General Assembly will be held in Portland, Oregon with virtual options. Through the generosity of the Women's Alliance, all delegates will be awarded \$500 towards expenses.

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 15th, 2022**

#### **Board of Trustees, Class of 2025 (three-year terms)**

(replacing retiring Trustees Colleen Olson, Amit Mehta, Carolyn Ellis)

- Lisa Pacenza
- Robin Bossert
- Beth Evans

Jennifer Goldin was appointed for two years (through 2024), completing the balance of Andrea Parkinson's term.

**Clerk of the Congregation:** Elees Woods (second one-year term)

**Moderator:** Patrick Gunn (first one-year term)

**Leadership Development Committee** (two-year terms)

- Dawn Elane Reed
- Colleen Olson
- Michele Weisman

Bios and pictures of nominee slates have been announced on the congregation's website. In addition to the slate listed above, Cara Haft and Sam McKelvie will 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.

Submitted by Laurel Lesio, Co-Chair

Catalina Bertani, Co-Chair

Cara Haft

Laure Manos-Hey

Sam McKelvie

Mary Huhn: Board Liaison



# Program Committees

## SPRING AUCTION: APRIL SHOWERS BRING MAY FLOWERS

About 40 congregants attended our beautiful spring auction on April 30th and bid on the wide array of meals, lessons, consultations, jewelry, and tours--over 60 items—that were donated. We didn't include an online bidding component this year and may want to reconsider using one again next year to increase participation.

The chapel and Frances White Room were transformed into a shimmer of showers and blossoms by Sean Sellers and Catalina Bertani. The appetizers and apple pies by Anita Shephard and her helpers, Vonda, Julienne, Julie, and Sophie were stunning and delicious, and of such quantity that we were able to sell a good amount after services the next day. Thanks to Mary Huhn, Lisa Pacenza, and Lee Pardee for staffing the bar. To David Andrew and all the other congregants who helped with clean up. Of course, Wendy and Garnett were indispensable to the success of the event.

All told, we grossed \$6,952 with a net of \$5,614.70 for our congregation and a special raffle of Slyboro cider from Hicks Orchard netted a donation of \$107 to a cidery in Ukraine.

Judith Sendaitis, Auction Organizer

## BUILDING OUR FUTURE

In 2019 the congregation voted to create a capital reserve fund for First Unitarian. The reserve was to be funded by a transfer of \$400,000 from the general endowment, a percentage of annual rents, fund earnings, other contributions, and a capital fund campaign. Former board member Sam McKelvie initiated the planning for the Building Our Future capital fund campaign and recruited a team: co-chairs Tom Check, Lee Pardee and Cybele Raver and members Tyrone Davis, Jr., Bruce Wilde, and Elees Woods. The campaign was put on hold in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but then the team pushed forward in 2021. Throughout the spring and summer, they met with the congregation's financial leaders, and by the public kickoff date on September 26, they had already raised \$260,000 in pledges.

The Building Our Future kickoff event was inspiring. As congregants entered the sanctuary that Sunday, they were greeted by a wonderful Building Our Future banner conceived by Sean Sellers and, along with display posters, created by Emily Levine. Congregants John Carroll and James Mills gave a heartfelt testimonial on what First Unitarian's buildings meant to them. That was followed by an extravaganza making full use of the congregation's upgraded video and audio systems in which congregants Tyrone Davis, Jr., Becky Huffman and RE children, Liz Komar, Dawn Elane Reed, Sean Sellers, Nathalie Thielen-Helper, Jan Thompson, and Nancy Wolf, along with Vania R., one of the asylum seekers that the congregation has been assisting through the work of our Immigrant Solidarity Committee, all presented aspects of our buildings and how they support First Unitarian's mission. Adding to all of this was beautiful music prepared by Adam Podd and inspiring homilies by Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons. It was a spectacular event.

The Building Our Future team followed this kickoff event with Zoom gatherings for members of multiple affinity groups, several update reports to the congregation, and email and regular mail outreach to congregants. As a result, the Building Our Future campaign successfully raised \$400,000 in pledges for the congregation's Capital Reserve Fund, which will enable us to pay for 15 years' worth of significant capital maintenance and repair projects.

We gratefully thank all of the generous donors to the Building Our Future Campaign (See a complete list of donors as of May, 2022, in the addenda).

Lee Pardee, for the Building our Future Committee

## COVID RESPONSE TEAM

The Covid Response Team was created by the board over two years ago to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic. It consisted of a board member and members of the congregation with knowledge and experience in architecture, medical health and epidemiology. Along with members of the staff, the team would meet and make recommendations to the board on how to best protect the health & safety of our congregation.

We hadn't expected that the need for the team would be ongoing all the way to this day. With that in mind we are so grateful to have welcomed two new members to the team who have stepped up to fill vacancies, Julie Bero and Ruth Ottman. They are joining me along with Monica Murphy.

We have been continuing to meet regularly with members of the staff to monitor the current situation, taking into account CDC recommendations, New York City and New York State guidelines to make recommendations to the board regarding

policies and procedures to continue to keep the congregation safe as we navigate our new world of fellowshiping in person and virtually.

We will meet regularly as long as the need continues.

In Fellowship,

Dawn Elane Reed

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COUNCIL

(See Meagan Henry's Report)

## SHARE THE PLATE COMMITTEE

Chair: Julie Elting

Members: Said Ibrahim, Robert Harper, Megan Walsh, and Michael White

Board Representative: Carolyn Ellis

In May 2021, co-chair Said Ibrahim stepped down to just a committee member. Carolyn Ellis and Garnett Losak, Director of Congregational Life, offered support and guidance when needed. The complete 5-member committee has been together since fall 2020 (3 members from spring 2020). All meetings were in Zoom or just email discussion and voting.

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 FUUB 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. To bring the process within the FUUB Gmail domain, Garnett Losak

created a new nomination form with input from the committee. The key element is that the nominated organizations are registered 501(c)(3) organizations and meet FUUB'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. This year attempts to hold even Zoom meetings were not successful to discuss and vote so a rank order form for anonymous voting was created. Multiple months were selected at a time. Notification to members that their nominations were received on the Form were still not consistently sent, nor were notices that a nomination had been chosen. Aside from voting, the work of the committee has fallen only on the chair.

- Goals from last year to improve functioning
  - a summer Zoom meeting where roles of the chairs and members are better defined. UNMET
  - creating a meeting schedule UNMET
  - monitoring the Form and vetting nominations DONE BY CHAIR, UNMET FOR COMMITTEE
  - notifying members their nominations were received PARTIALLY MET BY CHAIR
  - follow up with those selected with a process to provide a testimonial NOT MET
  - increasing visibility about the nomination process within the congregation PARTIALLY MET
  - A re-formatted nomination form should be considered. MET
  
- Goals for this year

- Need 4 new members, chair will stay on
- Unmet & Partially met goals will be revisited
- Examine nomination process, consider additional guidelines for organizations (aside from current 501c3, adhere to FUUB mission & goals, and member nominated)
- 

<b>Month</b>	<b>Recipient</b>	<b>Amount</b>
May 2021 (last year)	FUUB Immigrant Solidarity Committee	1435.00
June 2021 (last year)	League of Women Voters of the City of New York	723.50
July 2021	NY Writers Coalition	525.00
August 2021	SisterSong	612.50
September 2021	FUUB Minister's Fund	577.50
October 2021	FEDADSE	1626.69
November 2021	Church of the Larger Fellowship Worthy Now	1489.13
December 2021	Unitarian Universalist Service Committee	1154.90
January 2022	CAMBA	886.00
February 2022	Rehabilitation Through The Arts	1380.07

March 2022	Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth	1345.43
April 2022	FUUB Youth Group - Big Creek	1662.08
May 2022	New York Women's Foundation	pending

<b>Additionally, 1 Sunday of these months had a special collection day requested by the Board:</b>		
<b>Month</b>	<b>Recipient</b>	<b>Amount</b>
November 2021	Ethan's Ordination/Living Tradition Fund and Black Lives of UU	174.00 174.00
January 2022	Mayor's Fund Special Collection (Fire Victims)	345.00
March 2022	Special Collection Ukraine	285.56

<b>Detailed Information About Recipients</b>		
<b>Month</b>	<b>Recipient</b>	<b>Information Statement</b>
May 2021	FUUB Immigrant Solidarity Committee	"In keeping with the decision of our congregation to become a Sanctuary Space in 2017, the FUUB Immigrant Solidarity Committee provides direct aid and support to those who are going through the process of asylum and citizenship."
June 2021	League of Women	The League of Women Voters of the City of New York is a non-partisan organization whose purpose is to promote informed and active citizen

	Voters of the City of New York	participation in government. Our mission is to expand our outreach and increase all New Yorkers' participation in local communities and government through civics education, the "vote", and issue advocacy
July 2021	NY Writers Coalition	The Brooklyn-based NY Writers Coalition Inc. (NYWC) empowers and enriches the lives of New Yorkers of all backgrounds and experiences through the art of creative writing. Participants in their free and low-cost writing workshops in New York City become part of a community of peers, present their work publicly through NYWC's readings and publications, and connect with broader audiences. Their workshops are particularly targeted toward underserved people, including youth, seniors, women, LGBT communities, people with disabilities, people who are incarcerated or have been incarcerated, and others from traditionally silenced groups.
August 2021	SisterSong	SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective is a Southern based, national membership organization dedicated to building an effective network of individuals and organizations to improve institutional policies and systems that impact the reproductive lives of marginalized communities. SisterSong was formed in 1997 by 16 organizations of women of color from four mini-communities (Native American, African American, Latina, and Asian American) who recognized that all women have the right and responsibility to represent themselves and their communities locally and nationally.
Sept 2021	FUUB Minister's Fund	The minister's discretionary fund provides small one-time grants to members and friends of First Unitarian who have urgent and immediate need.
Oct 2021	FEDADSE	The FUUB has been demonstrating solidarity with Haitian People through our continuing relationship with the Fédération des Associations Pour Le Développement Du Sud-Est (FEDADSE). The recent devastating earthquake has resulted in the loss of lives, homes, crops, and livelihoods,



		exacerbating the ongoing burdens for the people of Haiti. As the October Share the Plate recipient, FUUB support will continue to promote humanitarian efforts in small rural areas of the country.
Nov 2021	Church of the Larger Fellowship Worthy Now	The Worthy Now Prison Ministry Network is a liberal religious coalition powered by the Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF). It includes individuals, groups, and communities of faith called to prison ministry/justice. "We declare that all persons are worthy of love, respect, and support — not at some future time when we are better people — but as we are right now." Worthy Now serves 1300 incarcerated people in the United States.
Dec 2021	Unitarian Universalist Service Committee	"Our mission: UUSC advances human rights and social justice around the world, partnering with those who confront unjust power structures and mobilizing to challenge oppressive policies. Our work is grounded in the belief that all people have inherent power and dignity."
Jan 2022	CAMBA	CAMBA is a Brooklyn-based nonprofit organization that works to change social dynamics so individuals, families, and communities can thrive and succeed. Social services provided include housing assistance, education and youth development, healthcare, family support and legal services. More than half of their clients are immigrants and refugees, and the majority of their families live in poverty. For more information <a href="https://camba.org/">https://camba.org/</a>
Feb 2022	Rehabilitation Through The Arts	Rehabilitation Through the Arts is the lead program through Prison Communities International and helps imprisoned people develop critical life skills through the arts, modeling an approach to the justice system based on human dignity rather than punishment. They operate in six men's and women's New York State correctional facilities within a 200-mile radius of NYC. For more information <a href="https://www.rta-arts.org/">https://www.rta-arts.org/</a>

March 2022	Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth	UU Ministry for Earth aspires to be a wellspring of spiritual grounding, education, and practical support for bold, accountable action for environmental justice, climate justice, and the flourishing of all life. One of the Ministry's major initiatives is "Spring for Change" supporting work with three upcoming ecological holidays - World Water Day (March 22), Earth Day (April 22), and Biodiversity Day (May 22).
April 2022	FUUB Youth Group - Big Creek	Once again, the FUUB Youth Group will travel to West Virginia this summer to provide service with Big Creek People In Action (BCPIA), completing projects for the community and people in need. Support from the congregation makes this important work by our youth possible
May 2022	New York Women's Foundation	The New York Women's Foundation is a platform for women (cis and trans) and non-binary people, and a force for change. The Foundation invests in women-led, innovative, and bold community-based solutions that promote the economic security, safety, and health of the most overlooked women.
June 2022	Coalition for the Homeless	The mission of the New York City-based Coalition for the Homeless is to assist and advocate for those who are homeless or at risk of losing their homes, champion equity in all public and private responses to homelessness and help individuals and families from all backgrounds secure vital services, safe indoor shelter, and decent permanent homes of their own.
July/ Aug 2022	FUUB Immigrant Solidarity Committee	The FUUB Immigrant Solidarity Committee hosts asylum-seekers, arranging housing with members and friends of the congregation, paying for their food, legal fees, and transportation, and helping with other needs in the long process of applying for and being granted asylum, which may take years. Donations support these efforts.

## STEWARDSHIP TEAM

This year's stewardship campaign kicked off on February 27<sup>th</sup> with the then "For All We Cherish". Letters from our board presidents and Rev. Ana were sent to the congregation ahead of the campaign launch that included a pledge form and information on how to complete a pledge on-line. As we had just concluded a capital fund campaign that raised almost \$400,000, we decided to ask our members and friends to either keep their pledges the same or increase by 5%.

As is our custom, the Board, Deacons, Finance Committee Members, & Stewardship Team were canvassed before the launch. Most had responded so that we were able to announce to the congregation that our leadership had already made financial commitments.

Launch day included a sermon from Rev. Ana and a testimonial from campaign chair, Dwight Mathis and the exchanging on notes that had been written the week before telling each other what we cherish about First Unitarian. Rev. Ana wrote an original song, "With Grateful Hearts". Members of the team were available after the service to help people complete forms and answer questions.

Over the next few weeks, we updated the congregation on our progress and the team continued to be available following the service.

The highlight of the campaign was an original song written and performed by First U member, and stewardship team member, Tyrone Davis, Jr. with accompaniment by Adam Podd and participation from the First U choir.

Pledges were slow to come in this year. At the end we resorted to sending individual emails (in some cases more than once). Thank you to Lee Pardee who took on most of the heavy lifting.

This has been a challenging year, but we are pleased that our dedicated members continue to support our congregation at last year's levels or, in many cases with increases. (See Garnett Losak's report for more details)

Garnett Losak, for the Stewardship Team

Dwight Mathis (Chair)

Marty Bernstein

Tyrone Davis, Jr.

Lee Pardee

Elees Woods

Colleen Olson (Board Liaison)

## SUMMER SERVICE COMMITTEE

If there was one word to describe summer services for 2021, it would be weary. Despite the COVID numbers technically being low enough that we could return to worship in-person, it was decided that summer services would be held virtually so that everyone could return to the sanctuary together in September in a more meaningful and celebratory way after so many months of being apart. Yet, after more than a year of conducting the majority of our lives behind screens, screen fatigue had set in, and it was harder to create enthusiasm around another season of online summer services especially as the city was opening up and there was plenty of competition for Sunday morning activities.

It did, however, not keep us from having an excellent season. We kicked off the summer with our usual Juneteenth service and joined the General Assembly on-line worship service at the end of June. Several committees created services again

last summer including Immigrant Solidarity and the First U chapter of The Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans (CUUPS).

Members of the congregation who delivered sermons and planned services included repeat performances and some new members who bravely stepped up. They included, Greg Matloff, Catalina Bertani, Jennifer Joy and Daniela Thom, Kristy Fullerton Rico, and Abby Grosslein. We were introduced to our intern minister for the next two years, Tasha Brownfield, who gave her first sermon during the summer, and Chris Johnson gave his final Labor Day sermon, a tradition he became known for.

This is a small committee, Garnett Losak and I, with help from Judith Sedaitis. If there is anyone who deserves special acknowledgment for what they bring to the committee, it is Garnett who handled the management of the technical side of getting the services together. Without her partnership in this endeavor, summer services would not be what they are. Thank you, Garnett.

Looking ahead to 2022, we are excited about being back in the sanctuary, holding services in what will now be our air-conditioned chapel, and we're working on expanding our committee in addition to building a summer services hospitality team that will replace our beloved Rod and the punch we lost with him.

Bridgette Raes for the Summer Services Committee

## 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.

For a second year we were not able to hold our annual dinners with either the Muslim community or the Haitian nonprofit, FEDADSE because of restrictions due to the COVID pandemic.

### **Forums**

FORUM ON REAL UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE - VOTING RIGHTS FOR INCARCERATED AND FORMERLY INCARCERATED PEOPLE - Wednesday 5/25/22. We first planned to hold this forum in March but were forced to abort due to technical issues. We have rescheduled to May 25<sup>th</sup> when we will hear from New York for Full Restoration of Voting Rights Coalition -and from the personal experience of those involved in the struggle. We will hear from 4 speakers, followed by a general Q&A and discussion.

### **Promotion of the Following Ongoing Campaigns**

- 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, FEDADSE was our congregation's Share-The-Plate organization for October 2021.
- SOLES 4 SOULS: We collected new and gently used shoes in December for this nonprofit that sends shoes and clothing to developing countries to fight poverty.
- RAPP (Release Aging People in Prison): We continue to promote support for this organization seeking to pass clemency legislation for the aging in prison and for parole reform in New York State.

### **Sunday Juneteenth Service**

As usual, Weaving will lead our first summer service as a Juneteenth celebration on Sunday, June 19, 2021. This year we will be able to host a potluck Juneteenth lunch.

### **Funding**

Our funding this past year was \$1850 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, Judy Dederick, Barbara Bornmann, John S. Murray, and Mary Huhn.

**Thanks:** – *We would like to thank the Share-The-Plate committee for agreeing share with FEDADSE in October. We would also like to thank those in the congregation who attended our monthly meetings and worked with us this year. And thanks Nancy for letting us know about Soles for Souls, and Garnett for helping us organize the collection.*

Rita Pearl, for Weaving Social Justice

## WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE

Between spring 2021 and now, the Women's Leadership Alliance has weathered another year of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In reviewing documents from the past year, I am confronted once again with the realization that we hoped to do more and were unable to. In the spirit of being gentle with ourselves and taking my own advice to meet people where they are, I make this report with as much positivity as I can muster.

A group which gathers in the spirit of autonomy and leadership, especially for women, is needed now more than ever. The leaked Supreme Court decision to overturn Roe vs. Wade has upped the ante for reproductive justice activists; The WLA will participate in a week of resistance from May 8-14. Despite the Roe news, combined with yet another year of attacks on our Trans and LGBTQIA+ family members, unacceptable harm on our Black and brown brothers and sisters, disease and disability from long COVID and other sicknesses, the Women's Leadership Alliance is still here.

Here are some highlights from this past year. Pat Steele, our illustrious former President, has kept the book club going and adapting. For a brief time, we thought we could meet in person, but Omicron disrupted that. Our film series did not find new leadership, but we hold out hope that it may sometime in the future. We were able to fund at least one leadership opportunity for the church's Religious Education assistant, Sophie Major. We again funded delegates to General Assembly and are always looking to create ways for our community members to speak about their experiences. As stewards of our endowment, separate from the church's funds, we donated to local nonprofits and gave direct support to some friends. We participated in work with First U members to stand for reproductive justice, in our communities and those around the country. We lost some beloved members -- Jim Gunning and Elaine Macken -- and welcomed new members. Long-time members, Georgia Larsen and Nancy Welles, joined the Clara Barton Sisterhood of women in their eighth decades. With loving thanks we sent off Cybele Raver, a 2020-2021 Board member at large, to new adventures. During Black Maternal Health week, just before Easter, we collaborated with Diaspora Community Services and the First U Religious Education group to make Easter baskets for a number of the organization's families.



Board Secretary Julie Elting and Treasurer Lisa Pacenza have done an incredible job in their first years as Board members. Langdon Holloway and Nancy Witherell continued another year of Board service as Members at Large. I, in my second year as President, am honored to have worked with them. Together we have done as much as we could to steward the Alliance.

I think our triumph of the past year was our spring equinox gathering on March 20. Most of the Board was able to gather on the church patio with almost ten additional female-identifying persons. Each person shared their story of why they felt called to the Alliance to work to further women's leadership. Even over the phone (while I was at work) I could feel the exuberant energy of the gathering. If we can channel that momentum, I know we can do great things in the next year, whatever challenges may arise.

I am sure I forgot something, as I write this through brain fog. But I know that the Women's Leadership Alliance had another good year and will grow in joy and togetherness. As Board Secretary Julie Elting said, we don't have to be perfect, we just have to be human. Thank you for your support.

Abby Grosslein, M.S.

# Appendix

## JULIE MCKINNEY FUND DONORS

### **Patron (\$1,000+)**

Jay & Pat Lawrence  
Dawn Elane Reed  
Sarah Seehafer  
Connie & Bob Newsom

### **Sponsor (\$500-\$999)**

Dwight Mathis  
Judy Dederick  
Nancy Welles  
Garnett Losak  
Sharon & Tom Kennedy  
Wanda Lucibello & Art Hall

### **Friend (\$250-\$499)**

James Goward & Jackie Frost  
Carolyn Haft  
Kathy Ivans & Bob Bero  
Michael & Mariasara Alcott  
Tom Check & Nancy Witherell  
Ruth Ottman

### **Donor (\$100-\$249)**

David Yin  
Georgia Larson  
Lorna Hollander  
Michele Weisman & Paul Freitag  
Maggie Norris  
Mark & Mandy Rinzel  
Bruce & Coco Wilde  
Dale Ho & Caroline Sharman  
Edwin Lord  
Elizabeth Davis

### **Donor (\$100-\$249)**

### **Donor (\$100-\$249), cont.**

Jenifer Leigh  
Judy Boals  
Julie Lam  
Marty & Pat Bernstein  
Vicki Antonini  
Wendy & Lenny Derevensky  
Ezra Helfand  
Gloria Furman  
Colleen & Dwight Olson  
Barbara Ratzlaff  
in memory of Rev. Paul Ratzlaff  
Judy Dederick  
Julie & Dirk Elting

### **Contributor (up to \$99)**

Allie Benson  
Andrea & Jay Sheth  
Bert Eisenstadt & Laurel Lesio-  
Eisenstadt  
Katie Trossello & Jeff Carton  
Wendy Russell  
Florence Maynard  
Greg Matloff & C. Bangs  
Lauren Dohr  
Janna Amelkin  
John Murray  
Said Ibrahimi  
Lesley Broder  
Michele Ascione  
Kay Corkett  
Merrill Csuri & Fudge Levavi  
Katie Trossello

## OUR FUTURE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN DONORS

### **Over \$10,000**

Carolyn Ellis & Lake Wise  
Clancy Blair & Cybele Raver  
Nancy Welles  
Bruce & Coco Wilde  
Lee Pardee  
Tom Check & Nancy Witherell  
Gloria Furman  
Jay & Pat Lawrence  
Pat & Kurt Steele  
Garnett Losak  
Sharon & Tom Kennedy

### **\$5,000-\$9,999**

Dirk & Julie Elting  
Kathy Ivans & Bob Bero  
Dawn Elane Reed  
Sara Faison  
Bob Levine  
Robin Bossert  
Vicki Antonini  
Connie & Bob Newsom  
in memory of Al Blanco

### **\$1,000-\$4,999**

Bill Wasik & Monica Murphy  
Judy Dederick  
Mary Most  
Becky Huffman & Andrew Bongiorno  
Carolyn Haft

### **\$1,000-\$4,999 (cont.)**

Lorna Hollander  
Marty & Pat Bernstein  
Michael & Mariasara Alcott  
Rachel Cole & Isuru Seneviratne  
Liz Jones & David Kausch  
Edwin Lord  
Elee Woods

James Goward & Jackie Frost  
James Mills & John Carroll  
Rev. Ana & Jeff Levy-Lyons  
Rita & Derek Pearl  
Jim Patrick  
Winnie Zwick & Brit Fryer  
Barbara Ratzlaff  
Bert Eisenstadt & Laurel Lesio  
Liz Komar  
Richard & Valrae Huffman  
Robert & Michelle Brackbill  
Sarah Seehafer  
Sean Fischer  
Steig Olson  
Elizabeth Davis  
Eliza Frecon & Mathew Castle  
Dale Ho & Caroline Sharman  
Laura Kriska & Patrick Gunn  
Jenifer Leigh Huitt  
Lee Ilan & Peter Engel  
Mark & Mandy Rinzel  
Steven Bergquist & Kenneth McCarthy  
**\$1,000-\$4,999 (cont.)**  
Vonda Brunsting  
Mark Farnum  
Tyrone Davis  
Barbara Kennedy  
Bridgette Raes & Frank Mazzola  
Catalina Bertani  
Colleen & Dwight Olson  
Douglas Eads  
Dwight Mathis  
Eva & Mark Rogals-Weiss  
Jennie Goldin  
Katherine & Nick Titakis  
Margaret & Marty Weber  
Margaret Von Muller  
Michele Weisman & Paul Freitag

**Up to \$1,000**

Ana Egge & Amy Foote  
Barbara Cutney  
Jan Thompson & Steffi Heintzeler  
Sam McKelvie  
Florence Maynard  
Jake Powell  
Kelly & Noah Schaffer  
Sam Gallia  
Sarah Morgan & Jack Shepherd  
Beth Evans & Ted Hechtman  
Kirsten deFur & Mark Lenz  
Wendy Russell  
Alice Barrett  
Bob & Maxine Schulof  
Eric Ashton & Elizabeth Shaw

**Up to \$1,000 (cont.)**

Gaither Pratt  
John & Catherine Rinzel  
June Wohlhorn  
Langdon L. Holloway  
Marci Lucia & Amit Mehta  
Meagan & James Henry  
Wendy & Lenny Derevensky  
Judith Sedaitis & Danius Glinskis  
Georgia Larson  
Lisa Pacenza  
Natalie Helper  
Thomas Russell  
Clare & Matt Robinson-Henrie  
Justin & Andrea Parkinson

Lilla Locurto & Bill Outcoul  
Wanda Lucibello & Art Hall  
Lauren Webb & Tommy Quesenberg  
Alexis & Daniel DiPietro  
Anne Calder  
Kay Corkett  
Kevin Brunson  
Molly Skinner-Day  
Parrish Turner  
Mary Huhn & Jim Rich  
Michele Ascione  
Nick Shearman  
Cindy Reynolds  
Diane Crothers  
Elizabeth Skinner  
John Murray  
Lauren Dohr  
Liz Kennedy & David Dickenson

**Up to \$1,000 (cont.)**

Mariam Bardakas  
Miles Chapin  
Julianne Hausler & Ward Yoshimoto  
Andrea & Jay Sheth  
Eleanor Traubman & Michael Sorgatz  
Greg Matloff & C. Bangs  
Janna Amelkin  
Jessica Sasko & Tak Cheung  
Mike D'Elia  
David Garvoille  
Marisa Lastres  
Summer Lively  
Amanda Nietzel