



Annual Report

FISCAL YEAR 2022-2023

Purpose Statement: The First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn is a joyful, loving, religious community that inspires and empowers people to
Grow spiritually, Care for one another, and Work for social justice and stewardship of the earth – Adopted by the Congregation - May 17, 2015



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Clergy & Staff

REV. ANA LEVY-LYONS
SENIOR MINISTER

This year feels like the year that First Unitarian is truly “back” – and then some – after the worst of the pandemic. Our worship services feel full, energy is high, and on Sunday afternoons every room is often bustling with activity. Even with all the sorrows of our world right now, there is a tangible optimism and joy in the congregation. We are building a multigenerational community that is serving its members at a time when the need is great.

Creativity has been a hallmark of our rebuilding process and our program staff – Adam Podd, Meagan Henry, Garnett Losak, Wendy Russell, and Tasha Brownfield – have brought their tremendous gifts to the process. Each of them is always bursting with new ideas and process improvements – along with the energy, collaborative skill, and dedication to bring those ideas to fruition. And we are grateful to our building staff, Kevin Brunson and Bobby Blackman, who serve the mission of this congregation with not only competence but kindness.

I am also deeply grateful to our congregational leaders who have gone above and beyond this year, guiding us through large and complex projects with extraordinary commitment and hard work. I’m thinking specifically of the board and the board team that is navigating our staffing needs for next year; the Facilities Committee, managing multiple building projects including the enormous façade restoration project; the Finance and Stewardship teams, planning the funding for all our dreams; and of course, our Tech Team, continuing to provide professional-quality sound and video for our services and events for all who can’t attend in person.

In the fall, the program staff and I redesigned our worship service to experiment with creating a more integrated, heart-centered experience. We aimed to accentuate the musical, the emotional/ spiritual, and the collaborative/ co-creative dimensions of worship. We made some further changes over the winter based on feedback we requested and received. The response by the congregation has been enormously positive and our worship services now feel like they flow more freely, knit the community together, and touch people’s hearts more deeply. Special thanks to Adam for his flexibility, hard work, and enthusiasm for this project.

Promote spiritual exploration, development and practice

- UU holiday services highlights:

- Going with the Holy Flow (Sept 11): This celebratory ingathering service explored themes of surrender and flow, inspired by the Hudson/Muhikannuk River. We also shared our annual Water Ceremony and created our communal holy water.
 - Hunger Communion vs. Hunger Games (Nov 20): This service, which featured our annual Hunger Communion ceremony, focused on the difference between a “communion” approach to life (collaborative and generous) and a “game” approach to life (competitive and fear-based).
 - MLK’s Revolutionary Vision (January 15): On MLK weekend, this service lifted up Rev. King’s words in the Ware Lecture at General Assembly in 1966, both the message he conveyed about racial equality and the subtext that he did not convey out loud about capitalism and the need for a redistribution of wealth.
 - New Year’s Letter Writing (Jan 8): We continued our annual tradition of writing letters to our future selves. We mail or email these letters back to each person the next New Year.
- Christian and Jewish holiday services highlights:
 - Christmas Eve – Newborn King: Our traditional candlelight service was back in full swing this year. The music was spectacular, with full choir, string quartet and percussion, with selections ranging from classical to contemporary. We built the service around the paradox of the “newborn king” – one is both fully realized and not yet realized, like each of us. We finished with a dramatic entrance by fully costumed magi followed by giving of the magi’s gifts on people’s way out – gold (chocolate coins), frankincense, and myrrh (essential oils).
 - Christmas Day – This mellow, informal cozy service at 9am used a lessons and carols format with an interactive reflection piece led by Garnett.
 - Menorah Lighting Gathering (Dec 20): On this third night of Hanukah, I led an online candle-lighting for our Jewish UU’s (and anyone who wanted to join). We each lit our menorahs, sang Hanukah songs, and shared stories.
 - Palm Sunday (April 2): Our traditional music-focused service had a beautiful mix of instrumentation and vocal styles, including Adam Podd’s powerful original arrangement of “The Times They Are A-Changin.”
 - Easter (April 9): This service felt truly joyful and celebratory with a full house, the jazz band, breathtaking music, and our flash paper ritual. I preached on the concept of “rolling away the stone” and our human capacity for transforming obstacles in our own lives and experiencing mini-resurrections.

- Passover Seder (April 11): Our annual community Seder was sweet and joyful with over 60 members and friends from the local community participating. Several members collaborated with me in leading the seder and a large crew worked together to create a delicious vegetarian 3-course Passover meal.
- Fairytales: From The Emperor’s New Clothes to Beauty and the Beast, in this year’s worship series on fairytales we treated fairytales as scripture and explored the layers of meaning contained in these ancient myths. These were multigenerational services and included dramatic storytelling with our First Unitarian Players (of all ages) who threw themselves into the projects with creativity and talent, creating props, costumes, and even improv segments. Many thanks to all who shared their gifts with us this year.
- Other worship highlights:
 - Talking to Strangers (Sept 18): This service explored the spiritual dimensions of our interactions with others, from the intimacy of the *hongi* ritual to the practice of intentionally talking with strangers in NYC.
 - The Avatar Blues (Feb 26): Based on the Avatar movies, this service lifted up the beauty of grieving the losses of our world and named this grief as a prerequisite for healing and transformation. I suggested that First U might be a place where both grief and dreams of a different future are welcome.
 - Wrestling with Angels (April 30): This service explored the context and spiritual meanings of two Hebrew prayers – Mah Tov and Ashrei – and debuted my original compositions set to the text of those prayers. Adam wrote a gorgeous choral arrangement of the Ashrei for this service.
- The Artist’s Way workshop: Kicked off with a sermon on January 29, Ana Egge and I have led this joyful 12-session in-person workshop. It explores the spiritual dimensions of the creative process and “creative recovery,” drawing from the work of Julia Cameron, including the practices of Morning Pages and Artist Dates. There is tremendous enthusiasm for this workshop – 43 people registered initially and at least 20 participate each week.
- 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.

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

- Right Relations: The COM and I have identified a consultant – Bill Kondrath – to work with the congregation, board, and staff on healthy communication, managing conflict, and right relations. We worked with him to plan and roll out a series of workshops and meetings intended to foster a stronger congregational culture and give us tools for lovingly engaging conflict and difficult conversations. He led workshops with staff and with lay leaders and we are hoping to bring him back for a follow-up session in the fall.
- Someone Like Me As a Member (Nov 13): This service, which included our fall New Member Ceremony, explored the idea of membership for UU's, who tend to be non-joiners – our resistance to membership and the spiritual value of stepping in with both feet.
- Monday Discussion Group: This group, for retired and non-traditional-schedule people meets monthly to discuss readings and themes around spirituality and personal growth.

Equip people with the skill and confidence to become change makers

- Lay Worship Leader Program: This is a leadership development program for congregants to grow their skills and confidence for leadership at First U and beyond. The Lay Worship Leaders receive training in sermon writing, communication skills (with Jeff Levy-Lyons), and worship arts. This year's class is: David Haeri, Summer Gertz, Yuri Weber, and Helen Bauer. Our intern minister, Tasha Brownfield, also assists in worship.
- Sacred Studies: This year we tried a different approach to Sacred Studies reading: rather than offer single-session discussions of several books, we offered multiple session reading groups for two books – one more political/ cultural criticism and one more pastoral: *World Without Mind* by Franklin Foer (with me) and *When Things Fall Apart* by Pema Chodron (with Meagan). We also offered a class in *UU Theology and Philosophy*, led by Judith Sedaitis with support from Tasha Brownfield.
- Summer Worship Sermon Writing Workshop (May 2)- the workshop was designed to inspire people and offer some tools for preaching at a summer service.

Become an environmentally responsible congregation

- Solar panels (Feb 21): The long-anticipated solar panels went up on our roof, which will both help us better align our practices with our values and save us a little money in the long run.
- The Green Team worked with the staff to bring back composting, first just for our community and later, hopefully, opening it to the wider Brooklyn Heights community.

- Sacred Studies – “The Land Is Mine:” This winter/ spring I taught a 12-session course on ecology and social justice in the Hebrew Bible via zoom. This paralleled a course I taught for the first time at St. Francis College in Brooklyn.
- I Flunked the Shmita Year (Sept 25): This service was a collaboration among the group that participated in the Shmita Project over this last year. It was an experiment in modern day Shmita practice (Shmita is the biblical sabbatical year in which the land lies fallow and debts are forgiven) – exploring what happens when we try to practice release of the land, each other, and ourselves.
- Climate Action (Nov 16): Members of our Green Team and Climate Action Team participated in the campaign launch for the Climate, Jobs, and Justice package to fully fund bold climate action in NY state.

Develop and Responsibly Manage Resources

- Staff visioning: Working together with the staff and the staff visioning team, we developed a proposal to meet our staffing needs after this year. It includes several staff position changes, including Meagan’s transition to the role of Assistant Minister, Wendy taking broader program coordination responsibilities, and a net increase of one new staff position to manage our buildings and rental business. To keep within budget, we will likely not have an intern minister next year.
- Intern Minister: This is Tasha Brownfield’s second and final year with us as our intern minister. She has served us with great dedication through preaching, assisting in worship, coordinating the Caring Ministry Team, and offering pastoral care. She also taught adult education classes. Tasha and I meet weekly or bi-weekly for supervision and spiritual formation.
- In the Spirit of Growth (March 5): In this kickoff service to our stewardship campaign, following up on my annual stewardship letter, I emphasized the importance of our repeated small actions, including giving to our congregation, in building a full life and determining who, at the end of the day, we “work for.” I also participated in our Neighborhood Fundraiser event in the sanctuary and in our High Donor event.

Life Cycle

Baby Blessings

- Mabel deFur Lenz, child of Kirsten deFur and Mark Lenz, sister of Emeline (Sept 25, 2022)
- Charlotte Rose Roberts (Oct 23, 2022), daughter of Kelly Roberts, granddaughter of Wendy Russell

- Henry Carton, son of Katie Trossello and Jeff Carton (Feb 12, 2023)
- Luca Lee, daughter of Lindsey Lee (April 2, 2023)
- Lila Jawad Hijazi, daughter of Starling Carter and Jawad Hijazi, granddaughter of Meagan Henry (May 7, 2023)

Parting blessing for Liz Komar, who is moving away (Jan 29, 2023)

Wedding for Isabela Bertani (daughter of Catalina Bertani) and Laura Isela Gonzalez Reyes (Dec 20, 2022)

**MEAGAN HENRY
DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION & FAMILY MINISTRY**

As I complete my 10th year serving First Unitarian as your Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry and I am approaching my graduation from seminary at Meadville Lombard Theological School, I am filled with a sense of deep gratitude for this opportunity. From Rev. Ana’s mentorship to the staff team support and the incredible community of leaders and members of First U, I feel like I’ve been in a decade-long “master class” on how to be a minister. This has been an incredibly rich experience for me as we have experimented, learned, and deepened our spirituality and our community together. Building a beloved faith community is no small accomplishment during this time in history when an epidemic of division and isolation is on the rise. My friends, what we have here and what we offer is sorely needed, and in some cases, it is a life-saving grace to those in need. I am delighted to be in a position to serve this community into the future as your Assistant Minister.

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: Becky Huffman (Chair), Beth Evans (Board Liaison), Erin Hopkins, June Wholhorn, Michele Ascione, and Meagan Henry and Sophie Majors attend all REC meetings.

Religious Education Assistant: Sophie Majors

Overview

This September we fully restarted our in-person Religious Education (RE) Program. We offered our comprehensive program of RE classes on Sundays, mixed with All Ages worship services and Children's Chapel Sundays and Children's Choir rehearsals. There are 55 children officially registered in the program. However, I know of several (around 10) additional children who attend and are not registered this year. Although our actual number of participants is more than 55, they don't all attend every Sunday and attendance varies widely from week to week.

Games Nights were a big hit this winter and served to create a warm community bond, with birthdays celebrated and some families bringing friends from outside First U.

We are not quite back to our pre-pandemic numbers, but we are well on our way. Several very active families moved away over the past three years and although we still feel this loss we are slowly growing. Our biggest loss in numbers is in the K-5th grade group. We are lucky that our middle and high school youth were well-bonded and their families were already firmly connected to the First U community prior to the pandemic because our numbers are solid in 7th-12th grades.

2022-2023 RE Volunteers

- K/1 Love Surrounds Us: Peter Engel, Marci Mehta
- K/1 OWL: Amanda Stergianopoulou, Peter Engel, Marci Mehta
- 2/3/4 Moral Tales: Michele Ascione, with rotating parent volunteers
- 4/5/6 Toolbox of Faith: Rachel Cole, Eva Rogels Weiss
- 7/8 JR High OWL: Merril Csuri, Deirdre Lorde, Kirsten DeFur, and Abby Soule with LGBTQ guest speaker panel made up of members from the wider community.
- 7/8 Amazing Grace: Becky Huffman
- 9th-12th grades Youth Group Advisors: Merril Csuri, Sean Sellers, Winnie Zwick, and Meagan Henry

Nursery Staff: Phylisa St. Fleur, with assistance from Sophie Majors and RE student volunteers Ana Vavagiakis (11th grader) and Ruth Seneviratne (7th grader)

Highlights from this year

All Ages Worship

- Fairytale Sermon Series on 1st Sundays led by Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons
- Holiday Pageant - Elf! directed by Becky Huffman
- Family Christmas Eve Service led by Meagan Henry and Becky Huffman
- Easter Sunday with the fire ritual led by Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons

Children's Choir - Director, Bert Eisenstadt, offered Children's Choir after services and taught songs during Children's Chapel.

Social Justice Project - The Religious Education Council (REC) responded to the desire for our children to participate in a justice-oriented group project by creating an opportunity to make Care Kits for the unhoused in our larger community. Families donated items on a list circulated by the REC and the children put the care kits together as a group. Items included tuna/cracker packs, protein bars, toothbrushes, toothpaste, disinfectant wipes, socks, tissues, and notes from the children. These care kits were then given to families to distribute to people on the streets and trains.

Youth Group Service - Our High School Youth Group led worship on the theme of "Accepting Change." Three youth wrote and delivered homilies, two youth played music, several participated in the Wisdom Story, The Lorax, and we had a youth lay leader.

Holiday Celebrations - This year's celebrations included our Halloween Party, Winter Holiday Party, Spring Festival, and End of the RE Year Birthday Party for All of Us and RE Teacher Recognition celebration.

Family Activities and Events - We hosted four all ages family Dinner & Games Nights between January through March. Parent Discussion Groups were offered five times throughout the program year. The RE program offered a light lunch in the Chapel many Sundays after the service in order to provide a space for families to relax and socialize.

Children & Youth Religious Education Class Descriptions

Love Surrounds Us: K/1st Grades (September - December & May - June). This program explores all the UU Principles in the context of Beloved Community of family/home, school, neighborhood. Participants engage in activities that emphasize the love they feel in their community.

Our Whole Lives: Lower Elementary K/1st Grades (January - April). Unitarian Universalist values-based sexuality education. This level of OWL is an eight-workshop curriculum that helps children ages five through seven begin the lifelong process of

acquiring information and forming attitudes and values about identity, relationships, safety and health. Unlike many other sexuality curricula currently available, this program is comprehensive and progressive. In an inclusive and developmentally appropriate manner, it addresses sensitive topics that are typically excluded.

Moral Tales: 2/3/4th Grades. Every day our children go forth into a complex world where they are often faced with difficult decisions and situations. Moral Tales provides children with spiritual and ethical tools to make choices and take actions that reflect their Unitarian Universalist beliefs and values.

Toolbox of Faith: 4/5/6th Grades. Invites participants to reflect on qualities of our Unitarian Universalist faith, such as integrity, courage and love, as tools they can use in living their lives and building their own faith.

Our Whole Lives: Jr. High 7th & 8th Grades (September - May). A sexuality education program for youth that models and teaches caring, compassion, respect, and justice. A holistic program that moves beyond the intellect to address the attitudes, values, and feelings that youth have about themselves and the world. Topics include reproduction, safe sexual behaviors, STI prevention, body image, social media/internet, bullying/bystander responsibilities, and consent education.

Youth Group: High School, 9-12 Grades. This group grew in numbers and attendance again this year and has 11 members. Their focus was on building community, learning about cultural differences, creating a budget, fundraising and preparing for their service learning immersion experience to West Virginia this July. The Youth Group is guided by two Youth Leaders, Willamina Garrelts and Jaden Li Gunn with the assistance of four Adult Advisors.

Adult Religious Education Programming

Covenant Groups: Sixteen members participated in two covenant groups organized and supported by Garnett.

Sacred Studies:

- Reading Groups: We offered multiple session reading groups for three books – World Without Mind by Franklin Foer (with Rev. Ana), When Things Fall Apart by Pema Chodron (with Meagan), and Man’s Search For Meaning by Viktor Frankl (with Garnett).
- Class: “The Land Is Mine” Rev. Ana taught a 12-session course on ecology and social justice in the Hebrew Bible via zoom.

Unitarian and Universalist History and Philosophy: Led by Tasha Brownfield, Intern Minister, and Board member, Judith Sedaitis. Participants read and discussed short history

texts as well as primary sources and autobiography in a hybrid class format-- meeting online followed by an in-person follow-up discussion on Sundays.

Walking and Talking with God: In this bi-monthly Bible study group Rev. Ana leads discussions of passages from the Hebrew Bible and lay members lead discussions of the New Testament. Members share in depth check-ins about their spiritual journeys and pray together.

New Worship

Music Director, Adam Podd, and I created and offered a monthly Vespers that began with our January 1st service and ran through June 1st. This is an evening worship during the week. The first one was held on Sunday, January 1 at 4:30PM and the other five were held on Thursday evenings at 6:45PM. This is a contemplative evening worship consisting of music, readings, prayer, and periods of silence. The vibe is intimate and relaxed with low lighting and candles and the chairs in a circle with an altar in the middle holding a chalice and candles. I find this worship offers a much needed mid-week respite for our members and friends. Adam and I hope to continue offering Vespers next year.

GARNETT LOSAK DIRECTOR OF CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

It is hard for me to believe that I am finishing up my 11th year on staff and my 5th year as your Director of Congregational Life. This has been a year of readjusting to regular order after nearly two years of pandemic life and a third year of stops and starts. Nearly every space in our campus is in use on Sunday afternoons, we are fully opened for a wide range of community activities, and, thanks to our wonderful facilities management committee and building staff, we are plowing through the projects in our capital plan.

My job at First Unitarian has become too big for me to handle and still have time needed for rest and renewal. I find myself working well into the evening most days and often 7 days a week. In January of this year I determined that it was time to retire. I will (not) celebrate my 65th birthday in October. I informed Rev Ana and the board of my intentions and offered to continue on a part time basis from July 1 through December 31, 2023, to aid in the transition.

Life being what it is, retirement has been put off for the time being. The board has agreed to hire a business manager to take on management of the building, the building staff, and the rental business. Meagan Henry will take the reins on pastoral care, and summer worship planning. This will free me up to concentrate on the work I love: membership,

congregational support, and development. Starting with the new fiscal year, my hours will be reduced to 4/5 time (with a commensurate reduction in compensation). I am indebted to the board for making this new arrangement possible for me. And I am greatly relieved to have more time for activities away from First Unitarian.

Membership

Overview

In the current fiscal year to date, 98 people have visited First Unitarian and completed welcome cards. 78 reported their birthdate. The median age of these visitors is 33 and the average is 38. Additionally, of the 153 members who signed the membership book in the past 10 years, 48 (32%) are under the age of 40. 50% of our 22 new members in the current fiscal year are under the age of 40 (see more about young adult ministry later in this report).

Connections Committee

Members: Marty Bernstein, Spencer Brill, Michael DeSantis, Colleen Olson, Bridgette Raes, Rachel Stark, Eleanor Traubman, Beth Evans (Board Liaison)

I am pleased to report that the Connections Committee (formerly the Membership Committee) has grown to include 7 members. The committee meets monthly on Zoom on the first Wednesday. This year I have taken on the chair responsibilities, but Michael DeSantis has stepped up to chair the committee in the next program year.

The Connections Committee is charged with the following congregational programs and activities

- New Member Sundays (3 this year)
- The Service of the Living Tradition, honoring members celebrating milestone membership anniversaries
- Water Communion welcome back lunch (September)
- End of year picnic (June)
- Newcomer Orientations (first Sunday of the month, October through June and once or twice in the summer)
- Pathways to membership, 6-hour membership class (one time this year in April)
- Other programs and activities that support connection and community throughout the year.

In order to provide our newcomers with additional opportunities to connect, this year we instituted a system of “touches”. After completing a welcome card, a newcomer receives a welcome email from me with an invitation to attend a newcomer orientation. They are also

provided with a name tag and are signed up to receive our weekly e-newsletter. A second touch comes from a member of the connections committee. This can be a phone call, an email, or a text. This touch is an invitation to meet before or after worship. A third touch happens on Sunday when the newcomer is introduced to one or two additional people during fellowship hour. We hope that, through this process, newcomers will feel more at home sooner.

New Members

New members are invited to a light breakfast before the service where they have an opportunity to meet each other, chat with Rev. Ana and other members of the staff and leaders and sign the membership book. This year we enhanced our new member in-worship ceremony adding an introduction to each member with a short bio and a sung welcome from the congregation.

This year, the connections committee hosted 3-new member Sunday

- November 13, 2022: 7 new members (4 had signed the membership over the summer but were recognized on this date.
- February 26, 2023: 8 new members
- May 8, 2023: 7 new members

Three people have indicated that they are willing and able to sign the membership book at the next opportunity, likely in mid-November.

As of this writing, our total membership is 280. The total will be revised downward after the annual meeting when current members who have not completed pledge forms will lose their voting status. Even so, our congregation is growing and is nearing pre-COVID levels.

Young Adult Ministry

We are incredibly fortunate to have a group of young adults who are willing and able to become congregation leaders. Early in the program year, I was approached by several new young adults who were interested in organizing themselves into a cohesive community. With Rev. Ana and Liz Komar (who has since moved to Washington DC), I organized an after-worship workshop where attendees could share their wishes for programs and activities. Two regular activities emerged from this meeting, a monthly brunch and a monthly spiritual discussion. I support both of these programs with space reservations, communication, and a small budget for refreshments. Our congregation can be proud that we have given these newcomers to First Unitarian and, in most cases, to Unitarian Universalism the space to be together, to lead, and to explore their spirituality without interference. (see more in the YAM report)

Service of the Living Tradition

This was a banner year for milestone membership anniversaries. Invitations were via email and through E-vite to a celebration service to be held on May 21st. 3 members (Tom Kennedy, Florie Maynard, and Mariam Bardakis) celebrated 40 years and one (Gloria Furman) celebrated 50 years. I commissioned platters with a chalice decoration for each of the celebrants.

Other honorees

25 Years

Mike Alcott
Jennie Goldin
Art Hall
Wanda Lucibello
Cindy Reynolds
Mariasara Alcott
Edwin Lord

10 Years

David Garvoille
Marci Lucia
Amit Mehta
Alex Caputo
Marie Johnson
Joe Pokorny
Hillary Scott
Kristi Fullerton-Rico
Devin Judge-Lord

Other Connections Committee Events

On the first day back to the Sanctuary after summer worship, the committee hosted a buffet salad bar lunch. We were still functioning within COVID-19 protocols, so the lunch was served in the chapel, but tables and chairs were provided in the chapel garden, and on the sidewalk for outdoor dining. Many of the younger folks had their lunch on the Sanctuary stairs. The lunch was paid for with credit card points and cost less than \$400.

In February, the Connections Committee hosted an all-congregation taco lunch following the worship service. The suggested donation was \$10 (\$5 for children under 12). The lunch was very well attended and was fully paid for with a small profit that was donated to the congregation's hospitality account. Rachel Stark and I shopped at Costco and prepped the meal in my kitchen on Saturday and other members of the committee helped with set-up and clean-up. Colleen Olson organized ice breaker activities for each table. It is our hope that this event will inspire other committees to host monthly lunches starting next October.

We had hoped to offer two Pathways to Membership classes this year, but the first offering was undersubscribed and cancelled. In April we led a small class of 4 people. Several

people expressed interest but had conflicts. We hope to provide people with plenty of lead time for a fall program so that schedules can be cleared.

The committee is planning a retreat in June to set a calendar for next year.

Public Ministry

Serving the Wider Community

We can be proud of our service to the wider Brooklyn community. Our building is open to a variety of justice, arts, and community groups almost every day. Among the groups using our building are:

Arts Organizations

- Issue Project Room
- Brooklyn Heights Chamber Society
- Brooklyn Art Song Society
- Repast Baroque Ensemble
- Voices in the Heights
- Brooklyn Philharmonic
- BK Treble Choir
- Empire City Men's Chorus
- Rock Voices
- Half-Normal Productions

Education & Children's Groups

- Child's Play afterschool program
- Noel Pointer Foundation

Community Organizations and Self-Help Groups

- Twelve-step groups
- New Kings Democrats
- Extinction Rebellion
- RAPP (Release Aging People from Prison)
- Books Are Magic
- Neighborhood Synagogue (high holiday services)

Other

- Student projects
- Coop Board Meetings
- Weddings, Memorial Services, and other rites of passage

These rentals not only enhance our congregation's reputation as a community center, but also provide over 50% of our operating revenue.

Unitarian Universalist Association of Membership Professionals (UUAMP)

This year I began my second two-year term on the board of UUAMP. This organization supports the efforts of membership professionals throughout the denomination. We meet on the third Sunday of the month on Zoom.

In June 2022, I was invited by the Association of UU Administrators (AUUA) to lead a 90-minute workshop on volunteerism at their annual professional day.

In March, I attended a 2-day board retreat outside of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The board created a 5-year strategic plan and mapped out plans for the next year.

I served on a board sub-committee to hire a UUAMP administrator.

I Served on the UUAMP General Assembly planning committee and staffed the UUAMP booth at GA.

Other

In April 2023, I was invited to Yale Divinity School to speak to UU and UCC students about working with staff and governance. I had the pleasure of attending the 11:00AM chapel service (Rev. Dr. William Barber preaching), enjoying lunch with the students, and touring the campus. Yale reimbursed my travel costs and treated me to breakfast and lunch. Thank you to our intern minister, Tasha Brownfield, for setting up a wonderful day.

Communications

I continue to administer most methods of general communication to our community and beyond. The weekly e-newsletter is sent on Thursday afternoons at 4PM (every other week in the summer). It includes information on the following Sunday's worship, programs and activities for the coming weeks and announcements required by the by-laws (i.e. congregational meetings). All announcements are duplicated in the Order of Service, which is prepared by our office manager, Wendy Russell, every week.

Our Facebook Page continues to be our most robust form of social media, although our use of Instagram has increased significantly over the past year. Our worship service is streamed to Facebook every week. Approximately 10-15 people watch live on Facebook, but the service receives hundreds of views throughout the week. (For information about our weekly Zoom services, see the tech report).

Our ancient website may not be beautiful, but I regularly hear from newcomers that their first connection to us was through fuub.org. Design and efficacy are important, but what's more important is that the information is clear and up to date. Our welcome page is updated every Sunday afternoon (or Monday morning) with information on the next week's worship service, and the order of service is uploaded as soon as it is available. Our member page is home for policies and procedures as well as documents required for congregational meetings. Plans are underway for a website redesign.

While I understand that announcements in worship are controversial, it is clear that this is the method that most effectively informs our members, friends, and visitors about programming and events. I endeavor to match the tone of the announcements with the tone of the service and to make this element of the service as worshipful as possible. I hope that I succeed most weeks.

Facts and Figures (as of May 1, 2023)

- E-News Subscribers – 1,687
- Facebook Followers – 2,341
- Instagram Followers – 482

Stewardship & Fundraising

Stewardship Team: Marty Bernstein, Catalina Bertani, David Ellis, Dwight Mathis, Lee Pardee, Robin Bossert (Board Liaison)

The theme of this year's campaign was The Spirit of Growth recognizing that our congregation is bouncing back from pandemic membership decline. The program began with a mailing to all members that included letters from Rev. Ana and our board co-presidents, a highly produced tri-fold brochure, and a QR code to the on-line pledge form. Thank you to Diane Ventre for her design support and for creating the lovely Spirit of Growth logo. The campaign launched on March 5th with cake in the Undercroft and our stewardship team in "funny hats" and carrying clipboards.

New member, David Ellis, offered to reach out to our top 15 donors individually. His efforts were greatly appreciated. Top donors (\$5,000 and up) were invited to a "Chalice Circle" event with Rev. Ana and the Board of Trustees on May 4th. Each member was given a gift of a pair of bees wax candles with a tag echoing our chalice lighting words, "Blessed is the Fire of our Faith". Thank you to David for footing the bill for cocktails and candles. Food was paid for from the congregational life budget and cost just over \$100.

Following the initial push, the team instituted a series of outreaches by email and text. These connections brought in a few more pledges day by day until the end of the campaign on Sunday April 16th. We are now in clean-up mode. Letters will go out to 29 member

families who have not completed pledge forms before the annual meeting. An email from the board asking for an additional \$50 from all pledging families went out on May 8th. The response was very good. 3 families completed pledge forms and 27 increased their pledge from \$50 to \$1000. An additional \$6,000 was raised.

Facts and Figures (as of May 10, 2023)

- Number of Pledges: 174
- Pledge Total: \$306,700
- New Pledges 20 (\$14,335)
- Pledges increased: 104
- Pledges even: 33
- Pledges decreased: 18

Other Fundraisers

All three of these events raised funds to support a \$30,000 matching grant from the Landmarks Preservation Fund (see more about this grant in the finance committee report)

Friday, September 23, 2022 – The Arts Support First Unitarian

Carmit Zori, the artistic director of the Brooklyn Heights Chamber Orchestra Society, offered to perform at a benefit concert for the façade project (see the facilities committee and capital campaign committee reports). I organized the event and invited Michael Brofman, from the Brooklyn Art Song Society and Students from the Noel Pointer Foundation to complete the program. Snacks and cocktails were sold during the intermission in the chapel which was beautifully decorated by Sean Sellers. The event raised almost \$3,000. We are incredibly grateful to Carmit, Michael, and The Noel Pointer Foundation for their generosity.

Thursday, April 26, 2023 – Community Open House

This event was the brainchild of our treasurer, Lee Pardee. I created the invitation, which was distributed to 500 households, and local officials. I also supported the event with a trip to Costco (with Lee) and acted as moderator for the program which featured an organ performance by our music director, Adam Podd and a solo song performance by our office manager (and professional singer), Wendy Russell. Councilperson, Lincoln Restler, attended the event and spoke on our behalf. I took on the role of MC. Snacks and cocktails were served in the chapel garden. While so far, we have received only one donation of \$100, we are confident that inviting members of the community to visit our Sanctuary will serve us as façade renovations continue through the summer and fall.

Friday, April 27, 2023 – The Lesson

First Unitarian member, Tyrone Davis, Jr. wrote and performed in a one person play that was originally performed at Ars Nova. I asked, and Tyrone generously agreed to reprise the play at First Unitarian as a fundraiser for the façade project. Tickets were \$25 (\$100 patron ticket). The chapel was full and the audience, which included many First U members and friends as well as friends and colleagues of Tyrone, was enthusiastic. A cocktail reception was held after the performance in the Undercroft. Thanks again to Sean Sellers and Catalina Bertani for their thoughtful, beautiful (and economic) decorations which were held over to Sunday. The event raised just under \$3,000.

(For information on UniFair and the Spring Auction see those reports)

Summer Worship

After two years of Zoom summer services, we were finally able to return to the newly air-conditioned chapel in the summer of 2022. As always, our summer worship leaders presented thoughtfully prepared services that offered a distinct counterpoint to professionally led services during the program year. We were fortunate to have Emily Gaggiano as our music director. Emily was able to lead hymns beautifully as well as provide the service with a performed piece each week. I enjoyed leading the July 4th service with a selection of poetry and prose offering different perspectives of the American experience ending with the hymn America, The Beautiful. Thank you to Bridgette Raes for supporting summer worship for the past three years.

Beginning this spring I am working with Meagan Henry to transition summer worship planning to her department.

June

6/19	Weaving Social Justice	Celebrating Juneteenth
6/26, 12:00P	Queer Time	Parrish Turner & David Andrew

July

7/4	Garnett Losak with Bridgette Raes	America The Beautiful
7/10	Wendy Russell, Yuri Weber & Stefan Bauer	Music is Joy
7/17	Dawn Reed with Jenifer Leigh	Spiritual Autobiography
7/24	Liz Komar with Peter Engel	Called to Love
7/31	Peter Engel with Lee Ilan	

August

8/7	David Andrew Luther King's Words & Our World	The Radical King: Dr. Martin
8/14	Robin Bossert & Friends	Spirituality in The Time of COVID
8/21	Judy Dederick with Garnett Losak	Enough: A Meditation Service
8/28	Amit Mehta with Lee Pardee	I, Hobbes: What if the Self is Just a Parlor Trick

September

9/4	Marci Lucia	Peanut Butter Cookies Make Us Stronger
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Governance

Board of Trustees

My work with the Board of Trustees includes the following:

- Attend all meetings and retreats
- Monthly reports which include updates on
- My activities for the month
 - Membership
 - Stewardship
 - Rental income
 - Administration
 - Building repairs and maintenance
 - Issues of concern
- Preparation for congregational meetings including creation of presentation
- Maintenance of policies and procedures documents on the website
- Calendaring for major congregational events

Leadership Development Committee

- Attend all meetings
- consult with LDC members on possible nominees to various leadership positions.

Committee Work

I attend meetings and/or provide direct support to the following groups and committees.

- Caring Team. Attend all meetings. Provide the team with information about members and friends in need of support.
- Stewardship Team. (see stewardship in my report)
- Connections Committee (see connections committee in my report)

Other Activities

- Sunset Park Unitarian Universalist (see SPUU report). Provided support as needed. Attended many services.
- Sacred Studies. lead a book discussion on Man's Search For Meaning (February 12, 2023)
- Covenant Group. Recruited and supported facilitators for Fall 2022 and Winter/Spring 2023 sessions of Living Your Faith a covenant group that I wrote.
- Business Manager Search Committee. Attend meetings and support committee throughout the process. (See more in the Board report.)
- General Assembly 2022. Attended the conference in Portland, Oregon. 0
- Article II discussion groups. Co-led, with 2023 GA delegates, opportunities for our congregation to learn more about proposed changes to the UUA by-laws. The second group was specifically for young adults.
- Brooklyn Pride: registered First Unitarian and attended the parade in Park Slope
- UniFair: Supported organizing team. Attended event, worked as office administrator with Wendy Russell
- Auction: Supported organizing team. Attended event, worked with clean-up team.

Administration

Thanks to our wonderful office manager, Wendy Russell, office administration is running efficiently with minimal oversight. Wendy and I have a collegial, collaborative relationship and I rely on her to handle most aspects of the "back office" on her own schedule.

I applied for and received a water charge abatement from the City of New York. This abatement is estimated to save the congregation approximately \$6,000 annually.

I meet weekly with our building staff. We go over the calendar for the following week, discuss any unusual set-up requirements for Sunday, and make sure we have proper coverage for our renters.

Conclusion

I stand in awe of the dedication and goodwill of the people of this congregation. Serving this community has been the highlight of my professional life. I look forward to the challenges, successes, joys, and even the sorrows to come.

Thank you to my wonderful colleagues, Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons, who allows good people the freedom to do the work that they are called to do. Meagan Henry, Adam Podd, Wendy Russell and my facilities team, Kevin Brunson and Bobby Blackman. To our intern minister, Tasha Brownfield, hale and farewell. You will always be welcome in my guest room.

To the board of Trustees and all of the wonderful people who lead, thank you for everything you do from a place of love.

ADAM PODD
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

This has been my 9th program year as Music Director at First Unitarian. I'm proud of the music we've made this year, and excited by the direction and evolution of our music program.

This year our staff implemented a new flow to the worship service, including some new elements and changes to the sequence and transitions, while still maintaining some of the "usual" elements. The new changes put a focus on congregational participation, and natural transitions between the various elements of worship, to create an experience that feels communal.

Our music team (or "family" as I usually call it) remains strong and continues to grow. Our amazing, mostly volunteer choir is truly the centerpiece of our vibrant music program. These joyful and dedicated singers show up each week with an enormous amount of generosity, trust, and musicality. We continue to grow -- in numbers, yes, but noticeably in spirit, and in open-heartedness - singing more expressively and joyfully, sometimes from our beloved sheet music, and sometimes from our hearts. As their leader, this increase in heart-centered, paperless music making has been a thrill to behold as we explore more opportunities to find our way out of our scores, out of our heads, and into our bodies. I attribute our new Gathering Music sequence to providing the platform for this kind of singing, and I, for one, love it.

We are fortunate to retain our four "official" section-leaders: Kiena, Brandon, Candice, and Dennis - who are familiar faces and voices to anyone who regularly attends worship. Beyond her duties as choir section-leader, Kiena Williams has also lent her gift as a conductor, occasionally running rehearsals for the choir, and leading congregational singing during worship. We've also continued to see and hear from additional music leaders in our community. Wendy Russell (First U's office manager) is a gifted singer, and has sung with the choir, special solos, and for church fundraisers throughout the year. Mark Farnum and Emily Gaggiano are incredible musicians who compete (and win) in national competitions with their own professional ensemble, and it just-so-happens they are members of our community here. Emily plays piano should I be absent on a Sunday, and both often join the choir, fill in as needed when one of our regular section leaders is absent, and sing solos for our worship services. Sophia Papoulis was introduced to First U on Palm Sunday in 2022, hired as an "extra" conductor to help us present the special music that day. Since then, she has begun regularly attending services and singing with the choir. She continues to be hired as needed to provide additional conducting, music direction, section leader subbing, and support for our program, including conducting at this

past year's Christmas Eve and Palm Sunday services. I am extremely grateful to have this outstanding team of volunteers and professionals that are so life-giving to our music program, to one another, and to me.

We continue our tradition of monthly jazz services, with a full band on the second Sunday of each month (October through June), 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. These services are well received by our congregation, and on average, attendance for Jazz Sundays is 25% higher than other Sundays.

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 I've created especially for the occasions.

Starting in January, Meagan and I piloted a new monthly Vespers service on Thursday nights, providing a contemplative space that draws upon a different feel than a typical Sunday morning service. These services have been emotional, communal, and somewhat indescribable. Over the course of an hour or so, we breath, sing, pray, and light candles together. It has created truly healing and peaceful energy each time we've come together.

TASHA BROWNFIELD
INTERN MINISTER

Overview

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. Serving as First Unitarian's Intern Minister this past year, during my last year of seminary, has been a blessed opportunity for growth, learning, and acceptance. I was welcomed with open arms when I started with you all in August of 2021, still under COVID isolation and Zoom worship. 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 of my first year, a time filled with mourning and fear, you've stood firm by me to allow me to explore the new theology of Pantheistic Mysticism. In the year since then, I have been inspired by your trust in one another and seeing a new way of worship blossom at First Unitarian.

In my second and last year, I learned to have faith in the broader Unitarian Universalist movement because of First Unitarian. If the community that First Unitarian has is something I can carry forward to the broader community and world, I am in the right faith for my calling. Thank You To Garnett Losak, Adam Podd, Meagan Henry, Kevin Brunson, Wendy Russell, Sophie Major, Bobby Blackman, and, of course, my supervisor Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons: working with you has shown me what communicative and cooperative staff can do for the betterment of a congregation.

Rev. Ana, your inclusive leadership, where everyone had a voice at staff meetings, does not often happen in the world. 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 to 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 transformed my ministry and pushed me to improve my sermons. I continually 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 needed 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 for the past two years I have had with you all.

Worship

I've been responsible for preaching and leading Sunday worship five times this year and will lead one more service on May 28th. In addition, I've served as a lay worship leader approximately once a month. In the winter of 2022, I led and curated a Winter Solstice Celebration to honor the Earth-Centered Faiths within Unitarian Universalism. A highlight of my year was getting to host an all-ages service with my sea turtle sermon. Another highlight was giving lay leader reflections on various topics: the island of misfit toys, ecstatic dancing, and mushrooms! 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 was leading prayers for Sunday worship. On top of sharing prayers during the six sermons for the year, I have offered prayers on two additional weeks, for a total of eight times. I also helped with a Wisdom Story, helped curate the flash paper ritual for Easter, and helped in other small ways when something needed to be done. I am grateful for the staff entrusting my exploration in so many different roles during in my time at First Unitarian.

Caring Ministry Team

The Caring Ministry team at Frist Unitarian has been a keystone 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 with 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 have served as the Lay Chapel Minister for fifteen weeks this year so far and managed and scheduled the additional weeks with qualified people from the Caring Ministry Team. Leading the Caring Ministry Team has been a phenomenal learning experience. Thank you to everyone who has participated in the Caring Ministry Team. I've been inspired by your inventiveness, attentiveness to your community needs, grace towards one another, and commitment to serve. You have done phenomenal work for those First Unitarians, and I am proud to lead you for the past two years.

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.

This year I led five of these sessions. Additionally, I tried out Sigils and Tea in the fall of 2022, where I taught participants how to make symbols that hold power. For Palm Sunday, I hosted a screening of the documentary *Fantastic Fungi*. Congregants gathered for the film, discussion, and an optional nature walk with me in the park. All three earth-centered spiritual development and educational opportunities have been well received and attended. 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.

Truly, thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

Governance Committees

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

What, the year is over? How did that happen? It happened because we are a very busy congregation. The amazing services are the flowers that attract the busy bees who make the honey. You, the congregation and the staff, have accomplished so much this year, spiritually, physically, technically, we almost forgot about the pandemic. Thank you!

We are nearly back to pre-pandemic numbers on Sundays. Twenty-one members joined us this year, bringing the total number of members to a robust 280. Some of these members are part of a vibrant young adult ministry. Thank you to the Connections committee! Most recently, we did away with vaccinations being required for entry. We welcome those who have rejoined us.

We have made some major decisions and progress on fixing the roof (on which a tree had been growing), the facade, the spires, the rose window and more. Jon Carroll (Facilities Committee Chair) and Lee Pardee (Treasurer) will address that further in their reports. We added solar panels to the 48 Monroe building, and air conditioning to the chapel. Thank you to the Facilities Committee and the Green Team, with chair Jan Thompson, for their continuous hard work. The Facilities Management Committee (FCM) includes John Carroll (chair), Kevin Brunson, Isuru Seneviratne, Tom Check, Liz Davis, Matt Castle, and Judith Sedaitis (board liaison).

To that end, at the second Congregational meeting, held on March 5, the members voted to approve a revolving line of credit for up to \$1.6 million to finance the repairs to the sanctuary façade, windows, and spires, said revolving line of credit to be paid off within ten years and reported on to the congregation at each annual meeting. We thank the Finance Committee, which includes Lee Pardee, Lake Wise, David Andrew, John Carroll (the FCM liaison) and Lisa Pacenza, the board liaison, for organizing this plan.

Treasurer Lee Pardee, who replaced Pat Steele in the fall, secured a \$30,000 matching grant for building repairs from New York Landmarks Conservancy. First U has raised close to \$6,000 with funds coming from a chamber music concert in September, a meet-and-greet with First U's neighbors and a wonderful show from Tyrone Davis. Thank you to Tyrone Davis, Jr., Garnett Losak, and Lee Pardee, and all the generous First U volunteers who made these amazing events happen.

We are hiring an executive building manager, because believe it or not, Garnett Losak, the Director of Congregational Life, cannot do it all. Increases in rental income (largely from

Imagine Daycare as well as event and apartment rentals) and building projects managed by the staff have made this additional staff person necessary, as we have been understaffed for way too long.

To that end we have a search committee, with Jenny Goldin, Paul Freitag, and Monica Murphy, to find suitable candidates.

A mid-week monthly vespers service has been added, led by music director Adam Podd and Director of Religious Education, Meagan Henry. We hope to make this quarterly in the fall.

Speaking of Meagan, she is slated to be ordained in the fall and will add the role of assistant minister beginning this summer. Wendy Russell will take a bigger role with Meagan in religious education. We thank Tasha Brownfield for joining us as Interim Minister and wish her well in her next stage.

We held a mini UniFair in December, which raised about \$2,500. We already have chairs for next year's UniFair and look forward to the return of the White Elephant Sale.

Our winter appeal this year was earmarked for our Immigrant Solidarity efforts and raised \$1,475

We also held our spring auction gala, "Growing Together," on May 6, which was a delightful evening, with delicious vegan entries by member and chef Anita Shepherd. We raised approximately \$4,700 and owe heaps of thanks to Judith Sedaitis for chairing both UniFair and the auction. We couldn't have this event without all the volunteers from the congregation and the staff. We appreciate you!

The Board voted to accept a donation from Lee Pardee to fund her Sunset Park UU Congregation (SPUU) for a period of at least three months and to approve limited staff administrative support. Congrats to Lee for her contribution to the spirit of growth! (See more in the SPUU report).

This year's board:

Class of '23

Jenny Goldin, Megan Munroe, Winnie Zwick (who replaced Matt Robinson)

Class of '24

Mary Huhn (co-president), Judith Sedaitis (standing committee), Jay Sheth

Class of '25

Robin Bossert, Beth Evans, Lisa Pacenza

Moderator: Patrick Gunn

Treasurer: Lee Pardee, replaced Patrick Steele

Clerk: Elees Woods

We wish Elees Woods the best of life in Tucson and thank her for being our clerk for two years. We are grateful to Jenny Goldin, Megan Munroe, Winnie Zwick, and Matt Robinson, who resigned, for their hard work as First U trustees and leaders.

Committee/ Board liaison

- Caring - Jay Sheth
- Tech - Jay Sheth
- Facilities - Judith Sedaitis
- Finance - Lisa Pacenza
- Women's Leadership Alliance - Lisa Pacenza
- Green Team - Robin Bossert
- Stewardship - Robin Bossert
- Weaving Social Justice - Robin Bossert
- Immigrant Solidarity - Winnie Zwick
- Share the Plate - Winnie Zwick
- Leadership Development - Mary Huhn
- Connections - Beth Evans
- Religious Education - Beth Evans
- Caring Ministry - Megan Munroe
- Queer Caucus-Rainbow - Jenny Goldin

It's been a joy serving on the board as your co-presidents. Now, onward to next year!

Robin Bossert and Mary Huhn

Co-presidents

First Unitarian Board of Trustees.

DEACONS

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

Deacons are nominated by the Deacons and voted upon by the congregation at a congregational meeting.

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

The Deacons have been meeting on Zoom and through telephone conversations and email.

The Good Friday Commemorative Communion is a unique and solemn worship service which honors individuals of all faiths who have sacrificed themselves on behalf of others. The in-person service on April 7, was also live streamed and was undertaken by the Deacons. The co-celebrants were Rev. Michael Crumpler and Megan Henry, Director of Education and Family Ministry, and candidate for ordination.

As is customary, following the service the celebrants and Deacons and their spouses enjoyed conversation and a glass of their choice.

With permission from the family of the deceased, the Deacons stand ready to greet and usher at memorials and assist as requested. They did so for the memorial of Kathy Sonderman on June 4, 2022.

Constance Newsom, Senior Deacon

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The 2022-2023 program year has been a very busy year for the Facilities Committee. Much of our work this year was devoted to the restoration of the Sanctuary's façade, windows, and spires—an immense project in its scope, complexity, and importance for the future of First Unitarian. Our committee is grateful for the support of the many members and friends of the congregation who have supported our work this year by making contributions, attending fundraising events, and coming to learn about the project at congregational meetings. We would also like to thank Director of Facilities Kevin Brunson for all he does to ensure that our buildings are well maintained.

Despite the attention that our committee has had to focus on the façade work, an array of other exciting projects related to our buildings have moved forward this year, some directed by the Facilities Committee and some by others.

Projects

At the last annual meeting in May 2022, the congregation approved \$109,200 for the part of the facade work that was planned for May through November. Those funds allowed us to move forward with the facade repair by installing the supported scaffolding that gave contractors direct access to the facade. The scaffolding rests partly on the Sanctuary roof, so we engaged an engineer from Old Structures Engineering to assess the condition of the roof and make sure it could safely hold the weight of the scaffolding. The engineer found the roof beams to be adequate for carrying the additional load but recommended that we reinforce the ends of certain beams with grout and metal brackets, which was completed by Excellent Contracting LLC in November 2022. Shortly thereafter, Arsenal Scaffold installed the supported scaffold that reaches the top of the spires.

In January 2023, Angel Ayon and Lori Arnold of AYON Studio, the architecture firm we engaged for the façade inspection, inspected each stone on the flat lower portion of the façade (the ashlar) by sounding them with a rubber mallet. They marked them according to the following criteria, mutually agreed upon by committee members and the architect: hollow or cracked stones would be designated for repair, while stones without these flaws would be left unmarked as “good” and would not need repair. After examining each stone, they found 72% of the stone below the roofline to be good, leaving 28% in need of repair. Our committee subsequently conducted a competitive bidding process for the ashlar and in April 2023 asked the Board of Trustees to award this portion of the work to Excellent Contracting LLC for \$471,500.

At the time of this report, our committee was still in the process of bidding out work on the spires, which will include replacing the top part of the spires, most of the ornamentation down the sides of the spires, and some ornamentation below the roofline. We are carefully considering whether to replicate these elements in cast stone (a kind of concrete) or GFRP (a kind of fiberglass), which each have their own advantages and drawbacks but would both be much more durable than the material they are replacing.

This project also includes the three large windows on the front of the Sanctuary. During the initial façade inspection, architect Angel Ayon found that the wooden tracery (frames) of these windows had been severely damaged by the elements. Committee member Matt Castle has adeptly managed this part of the project, starting by identifying Walter B. Melvin Architects to give a more detailed assessment of the condition of the windows for \$9,250. They recommended bracing the windows to stop them from shifting back and forth in the wind as they are currently doing as this damages the tracery further. They also recommended stripping away the current coat of paint, removing any damaged portions of the wooden tracery, and replacing those portions with new wood. In April 2023 our committee selected M&A Projects Restoration Inc. to brace the three windows for \$78,300 and Femenella Associates to complete the whole tracery repair for an additional \$150,000.

Besides the façade project, our committee and the whole congregation were excited to see the mini-split HVAC system come online in summer 2022. This environmentally-friendly heating and cooling system, one of the goals of the 2021-2022 capital campaign, provides welcome cool air in the summer for the Chapel and Frances White Room. The system was installed by Palone Bros. for a cost of \$57,100. The work also required an upgrade to our electrical infrastructure, which was done by Triple T Electric Inc. for \$9,537.50.

We are also proud to report the recent installation of solar panels on the roof of 48 Monroe, a project led by a team of Green Team and Facilities Committee members (Director of Facilities Kevin Brunson, John Carroll, Tom Check, Isuru Seneviratne, and Jan Thompson). The panels were installed by Kamtech Solar for a net cost of \$20,570 after the NYSERDA rebate. Over the next four years, the solar panels will also qualify First Unitarian for \$4,114 in NYC property tax abatements. In preparation for this work, we engaged R&R Restorations, Inc. to replace the roof of 48 Monroe for \$47,000 so that it will be in good condition throughout the life of the solar panels.

At the time of this writing, the Fire Safety Team, which includes Robin Bossert, Patrick Gunn, and Kevin Brunson, was close to selecting a contractor to install a new fire detection system that will include a combination of smoke, heat, and beam detectors and will provide much more comprehensive coverage than our current system. They hope to have this system installed by fall 2023.

Events

We kicked off the program year as usual with a volunteer work day in September 2022. Congregants braved the rainy weather to dig out the rear play yard, haul out dirt, and pour in gravel in preparation for the installation of the condenser units for the new Chapel HVAC system. We are looking forward to leading another work day on May 13. These work days have always been a great way to build a sense of camaraderie among congregants while also saving our congregation money.

September 2022 also saw a benefit concert (not organized by our committee) to raise funds for the façade work. This concert featured performances by The Brooklyn Art Song Society, The Brooklyn Chamber Music Society and The Noel Pointer Foundation, all of whom rent space at First Unitarian. In addition to being a lovely evening, the event raised a net amount of \$3,350 for the façade work.

In February 2023, the Facilities Committee held a congregational forum jointly with the Finance Committee to inform congregants about the details of the façade work and the Finance Committee's plan to fund the work. This forum was well attended by congregants both in person and online. We are thankful to Jay Lawrence for spearheading the installation of our live streaming system and for hosting this meeting's virtual attendees,

allowing us to answer questions from congregants over Zoom and ensure that the meeting was inclusive to all.

In April 2023, committee members attended an open-house fundraising event organized by Lee Pardee and Garnett Losak. The goal of this event was to engage with residents of the immediate area by inviting them into the Sanctuary, telling them about the façade repair work, and encouraging them to support the project. Attendees enjoyed beautiful music performed by Music Director Adam Podd and Office Manager Wendy Russell. City Council Member Lincoln Restler came and spoke passionately about his fond memories of First Unitarian.

Committee Members

We are excited to welcome Isuru Seneviratne onto the Facilities Committee this year. John Carroll (Chair), Matt Castle, Tom Check, Liz Davis, and Judith Sedaitis (Board liaison) continue to serve on the committee. Catalina Bertani and Sarah Seehafer completed their terms on the committee this year; we are thankful for all of their contributions during their time with us.

John Carroll, Chair

FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Committee welcomed new members John Carroll (Facilities Committee Liaison), Dirk Elting, and Lisa Pacenza (Board Liaison). David Andrew and Lake Wise continued as members, and Lee Pardee continued as a member, but in her new role as Treasurer of the Congregation.

This year started off on an extremely positive note. The Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) Operating Budget ended up \$76,500 under budget, which meant that we took only 54% of our planned sustainable draw from the general endowment. Coming in under budget is extremely unusual and extremely welcome in our challenging economic environment and this smaller draw helps to offset years in which we have exceeded our sustainable draw.

The FY22 capital budget also came in substantially – \$54,000 – under budget, primarily due to two large projects (new fire alarm system, new organ console) not moving forward during the year.

Lee Pardee, with the assistance of Office Manager Wendy Russell and First Unitarian's accountant, made some accounting adjustments to make several accounts more easily tracked and reported.

The committee continued its regular work of monitoring revenue and expenses monthly and reviewing the congregation's books in detail each quarter. For the first nine months of this fiscal year, revenues and expenses have been almost exactly on target. The last quarter of the fiscal year, however, is crucial for meeting year end pledge and fundraising goals. In addition, a number of expenses come in at the end of the year. But still, we are optimistic that the operating budget will come in about even.

Capital expenditures are currently balanced, but well below what was budgeted. This is largely because the façade project was on hold over the winter due to: 1) weather, 2) the need for a financing plan, and 3) delays in contracting out this complex project. Facilities liaison John Carroll informed the committee monthly on the status of the various aspects of the façade repair project, including latest estimates on timeframes and costs. The total cost of the project is anticipated to be approximately \$1.5 million.

In October 2022, First Unitarian received a \$30,000 matching grant from the New York Landmarks Conservancy. We have raised close to \$6000 of the match so far – half from a fundraiser put on by three of our regular arts renters – the Brooklyn Chamber Music Society, the Brooklyn Art Song Society, and the Noel Pointer Foundation – and half from a performance of *The Lesson*, a one-person show written and performed by First Unitarian member Tyrone Davis. The rest of the match must be raised by October 31, 2023.

Our endowment has gone through a rocky year. By September 2022 it had lost 20% of its value – about \$1,000,000 – since its peak in December 2021. As of March 2023, however, the endowment had gained back about half of that amount. The stock market continues to be volatile, so the committee, in consultation with our financial advisor at Boston Trust Walden, proposed a plan for financing the \$1.5 million façade project – half from the general endowment and half from a line of credit. The Board of Trustees agreed with this plan, and at a congregational meeting on March 5, 2023, the congregation voted overwhelmingly to endorse it.

The capital reserve fund, created in FY21, continues to fund capital projects other than the façade repair such as an environmentally sound HVAC system in the Chapel and Frances White Room and a new roof and solar panels on 48 Monroe Place. Members who generously pledged to the fund in FY21-22 are still fulfilling their pledges, and the fund still has nearly \$450,000.

In FY23 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
- Conducted monthly reviews of the congregation's financial reports.

- Completed quarterly reviews of the congregation's accounts for the fourth quarter of FY22 and the first three quarters of FY23. 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 FY24 operating 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.
- Worked with the Board of Trustees and Facilities Management Committee to draft FY24 capital budget to finance the façade repair and continue other important capital projects to maintain our facilities in good working order.
- Conducted one online and one in-person congregational budget forum prior to the annual meeting.

Many thanks to this year's committee members.

If you are a member of the congregation who is interested in joining the Finance Committee, please contact Treasurer Lee Pardee, leepardee54@gmail.com.

Lee Pardee, Treasurer, for the Finance Committee Members: Lisa Pacenza (Board Liaison), John Carroll (Facilities Committee Liaison), Lake Wise, and David Andrew

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

“The duties of the Leadership Development Committee shall be to (i) 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. (ii) propose the names of at least one qualified and available Member of the Society for: (i) each position on the Board of Trustees to be filled at the next Annual Membership Meeting; (ii) each position as a delegate for the upcoming General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association...; (iii) each position on the Leadership Development Committee to be filled at the next Annual Membership Meeting; (iv) Clerk; and (v) Moderator. (FUUB Bylaws, section 5.3(d).”

For the 2022-23 year, the members of the LDC were: Cara Haft (Chair), Sam McKelvie, Colleen Olson, Dawn Elane Reed, and Michele Weisman. Significant support was provided

to the committee by Garnett Losak (Director of Congregational Life) and Mary Huhn (Board Liaison). Cara Haft and Sam McKelvie will conclude their terms after the Annual Meeting.

Nominations

Candidate to complete the term of Matt Robinson, ending 6/23:

Winnie Zwick, nominated by the LDC and appointed by the Board, October 2022.

Nominations for the 2023 General Assembly (GA)

Delegates were elected at the Congregational Meeting on March 5, 2023:

Catalina Bertani, Diane Crothers, Michael DeSantis, Julie Elting, Beth Evans, Lisa Pacenza

GA will be held in Pittsburgh, PA this year. All of the delegates have chosen to attend in person. Through the generosity of the Women's Leadership Alliance, all delegates' registration fees will be fully funded.

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

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

Candidate slate for election at the Annual Meeting, May 21, 2023

Bios and pictures of nominee slates have been announced on the congregation's website.

Board of Trustees, Class of 2026 (three-year term)

(replacing retiring Trustees Jennifer Goldin, Megan Munroe, and Winnie Zwick)

- Michele Ascione
- Barbara Boardman
- Jake Powell

Clerk of the Society: Maggie Norris, replacing Elees Woods

Moderator: Patrick Gunn (second one-year term)

Leadership Development Committee (two-year terms)

- Mandy Rinzel
- Yuri Weber

Colleen Olson, Dawn Elane Reed, and Michele Weisman will continue to serve on the LDC for the second year of their two-year terms.

Leadership Development Committee 2022-23 Activities

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. This work again took up the majority of the time of the committee. In addition, significant efforts were put into identifying potential members to other committees in need of additional membership: Share the Plate, Finance, and Stewardship. - Cara Haft, Chair

Program Groups & Committees

FUNDRAISERS
UNIFAIR & SPRING AUCTION

Spring Auction: Growing Together

The theme for this year's Auction held on Saturday May 6th, was "Growing Together". We sold 48 tickets to the auction this year, probably a bit less than last year. But, we had more items up for the live auction (18 vs. 14), mostly because of the greater number of physical items, such as two chalices and a painting of a chalice, both of which generated a healthy bidding competition. Other live items were the traditional standards: desserts, candy-making, and three tours led by congregation members.

The Silent auction had at least 40 items, including many consultations, dinners, and about 10 certificates that Eleanor Traubman collected from businesses around her Brooklyn community.

Chef, Anita Shepard, made 3 vegan appetizers and one dessert that were all amazing to look at as well as to taste. Sean Sellers made decorations before the event and Catalina Bertani made a tree grown on our back wall. Judith Sedaitis organized an energetic crew of volunteers and donors needed to pull it all off. Wendy Russell and Garnett made it happen!

The total revenue in 2023 was \$6,000, less than the \$7,207.00 from the year before. But the lower costs this year should make the net revenue roughly equivalent. Plus, the fun and laughter engendered by our two auctioneers, new member, Abe Levine and professional actor, Pat Lawrence, was priceless. Many of our newer members met other congregants and all enjoyed themselves.

Submitted by Judith Sedaitis, Trustee

UniFair 2022

As has been our tradition, UniFair was held on December 3rd, the first Saturday of the month.

The end of the year brought renewed pandemic worries as a new variant of the Covid 19 virus emerged. Coupled with the difficulty of finding a point person(s) to head up the UniFair planning effort meant that the Board was asked by Garnett to step in if we wanted even a pared down event.

It was decided that we focus on baked goods only by getting donations from congregants. Judith organized a team around Vonda Brunsting to bake the famous First U fruitcakes, but we cut the recipe in half, when we should have baked 50 or so instead of 25 loaves. They were all gone an hour or so after UniFair opened. At the last minute, Liz Davis stepped up to organize the jewelry section. Sean Sellers provided a wreath making workshop over two evenings prior to the UniFair and eventually drew enough volunteers, including Catalina Bertani, who made some marvelous wreaths. Almost all of them were sold. Many volunteers showed up to help set up and staff the tables. Garnett made a big pot of soup that was greatly appreciated by all.

The fact that there was no white elephant section, with the scaffolding obscuring the presentation of the wreaths, and grim, rainy weather all accounted for a scant showing of costumers. The event shut down by 1 pm, an hour short of the publicized closing time. Net revenue for UniFair was \$2,500.

Submitted by Judith Sedaitis, Trustee

GARDEN COMMITTEE

The garden committee, led this past year by Catalina Bertani and Nancy Wolf, hosted a Spring clean-up/garden mulching event and a fall clean-up day. This mostly informal committee works hard to maintain and beautify the Church gardens along Monroe Place and Pierpont St. We created a watering schedule to keep the young magnolia tree and other plants alive while they are forced to survive under scaffolding for the near future. Bobby and Kevin lend able hands to help with the garden but the main responsibility for special projects, workdays, weeding, watering, planting, tree pruning, and planning in the garden lie squarely with the congregation. We welcome any and all volunteers for these satisfying but physically demanding tasks. Please contact Catalina Bertani at tanrara@gmail.com if

gardening is one of your passions and you'd like to join us. Special thanks this past year to Lee Pardee, Sarah Seehafer, Colleen Olson, Judith Sedaitis, Matt Castle, and Devin Judge-Lord for their hours of dedicated labor in our garden.

Catalina Bertani, Chair

GREEN TEAM

Overview

The Green Team, established by congregational vote at the First Unitarian 2019 Annual Meeting, has been working towards Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) certification of our congregation as a "Green Sanctuary," in keeping with the 7th Principle: "Respect for the Interconnected Web of which we are a part."

The Green Team also encourages congregants to actively engage in building a just livable society and encourages sustainability throughout our building and congregational practices.

Projects

Sustainable Electricity, Heating and Cooling

The Green Team presented initial research on solar panels for 48 Monroe at the October 2020 Board Meeting, and proposed to source First U's electrical power through a community solar co-op.

We are happy to say that as of March 2023 we have added an 11-panel solar array to 48 Monroe that should pay for itself in about 15 years. As of May 2023, we are still working to get it online. We worked with architect Andrew Wright and facilities team member Tom Check to make the array a reality. (See the facilities report for further details)

Beyond offering the best price, Sunpower Maxeon's supply chain was deemed to have the least exposure to forced labor, a practice inconsistent with the First Principle of Unitarian Universalism (affirm and promote "The inherent worth and dignity of every person.")

Note: Kevin Brunson, our Facilities Director is concerned that the initial drawings we approved do not provide sufficient room to access and maintain the Air Condenser unit . This needs to be rectified before final payment when we go online.

This solar array is to produce 20% of 48 Monroe's electricity needs, and 7% of First U's total -- all carbon-free. Additional electric needs will be supplemented by power purchased from ConEd. About 93% of Brooklyn's grid electricity is fossil-powered.

We are currently signing a contract with Green Street Power community solar array. While this project's low-carbon characteristics are sold to another party, we would be helping decarbonize New York City..

The Green Team (Isuru S / Jan T) also researched and helped to install a mini-split HVAC system with the help of Tom Check which came online in summer 2022. This \$77,000 environmentally friendly heating and cooling investment provided welcome cool air in the summer for the Chapel and Frances White Room. (See the facilities report for more details.)

Note: We are concerned it will mainly be used to cool the chapel / FWR in the summer, since it was not used this winter at all as far as we know. We would like to see these rooms heated in these using the mini split, which should reduce associated emissions by about a quarter.

Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Mitigation Pathways Report 2023 - Green Team member Isuru Seneviratne has completed an extensive detailed report on the emissions of the First U campus and how to reduce them. This report, synthesizing the work done by many at First U and beyond, was conducted as partial fulfillment of Isuru's Master's in Sustainability.

The following steps were recommended

- Secure the 'Queens 1' community solar contract with Green Street for 50 Monroe to lower electricity costs, and end the current contract with Energy Plus, which should save over \$7,000 per year.
- Switch to LED lighting (which could save another \$4,000 on top) and automated controls to reduce campus-wide electricity usage, with guidance from ConEd on available incentives);
- Fix the dedicated sub-meter for Church & Frances White Room mini-split to ensure data collection of cooling energy usage; and use savings from above measures to fund space heating using this equipment during winter 2023/2024
- Improve insulation of the building envelope to reduce heating needs.

Green Sanctuary Certification

We are still in the process of completing this. To be certified, congregations are required to complete projects in 4 areas: sustainable living, religious education, worship, and environmental justice. Our congregation has already been doing this work for many years.

The Climate Action Google Group - This mode of email communication continues to be a place we can reach out to interested congregants regarding climate justice activities- it started in Jan 2019, it currently has 84 subscribers who share information and actions. We welcome more participation beyond the Green Team member postings.

Events & Worship

A New Tree Grows in Brooklyn

Earth Day Eve reforestation event on Fri, April 21st in the chapel- featuring short films and speakers from The Nature Conservancy (Sergio Moncada Leiva), speaking about the coalition work they do to increase urban tree canopy as part of Forests for All NYC and The American Chestnut Foundation (Nico Nantsis) speaking about their work to bring back the American Chestnut Tree which was largely lost to blight. The event was rounded out by fantastic vegan Middle Eastern food and a raffle with terrific prizes. We split the door between the two organizations and sent them a check for \$132.50 each. This event was led by Jay Sheth and Jan Thompson with help from all green team members.

The Lorax Play

Performed by the youth for the Earth Day Sunday youth service, organized by Isuru Seneviratne, Sean Sellers, and Meagan Henry.

Chestnut tree planting in Prospect Park

Organized by Jay Sheth/Bob Levine and led by Chestnut expert Bart Chezar.

Submitted by Jan Thompson, chair

Committee Members: Robin Bossert, Anne Calder, Lee Ilan, Robert Levine, Mary Most, Colleen Olsen, Isuru Seneviratne, Jayesh Sheth, Nancy Wolf

IMMIGRANT SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

Last fall witnessed a sudden influx of migrants from Venezuela to New York City via Texas. Currently 37,500 migrants are living in shelter housing provided by the City of New York.

The Immigrant Solidarity Committee mobilized the Congregation's in-depth support to four families totaling twelve people:

- Overnight housing at First Unitarian to a few of the families as they first arrived in New York City.
- Two collections of clothing and toiletries shortly after the families' arrival.
- Hosting an education session after a worship service in October with Heather Vickery, Director of Congregational Activism at the UUSC, to inform us of ways to support migrants.
- Together with the RE Council, including the three children and two infants in the Santa Party and giving them holiday presents.
- Organizing a cooking class for two of the adults to show congregants how to make arepas and hallacas (traditional Venezuelan Christmas food), and selling them to Congregants, after a worship service in mid-December.
- Connecting the families with medical and dental care.
- Facilitating their access to legal assistance and helping them compile documentation for asylum applications in a bewildering immigration process:
 - Connecting a mother and child with a *pro bono* attorney who helped her write and file a compelling asylum application. (Migrants are only eligible to file an asylum application within the first year of their arrival in the US, and only become eligible to apply for a work permit five months after filing for asylum.)
 - Connecting a father and mother with a *pro bono* attorney who is helping them file an asylum application now.
 - Paid an immigration attorney to represent a young woman in her successful and time-sensitive petition to the Family Court and Immigration for a special immigration status, which she needed to complete before her 21st birthday last month.
 - Connecting two other families with *pro bono* immigration clinics to help with their asylum applications – while maintaining the option to engage a paid attorney if needed to complete their applications by their deadlines this summer.

At the same time, in our long-term partnership with the Queer Detainees Empowerment Project, the Committee has:

- Maintained our long-time support of a trans Mexican woman who is now financially independent and who was successfully granted asylum in January.
- Subsidized the rent of a queer HIV+ Argentinian man for whom life in the City shelter system would not be a safe option, and who will first be eligible to apply for a work permit in August.

The Committee deeply appreciates the Congregation's generous financial donations throughout the year, including the Summer Share the Plate, the Year-End Appeal and two Go-Fund-Me drives, that made this support possible – it's made a crucial difference to the families in their pivotal first year in the US, and it truly puts our faith into action.

And now the Committee is glad to invite the Congregation to a Summer Fiesta on Saturday June 3 from 7:00 to 10:00 – a dance for all ages – un baile para todas las edades. This is a festive all-generations dance party, a fundraiser for this work, and another opportunity to meet the families we're working with.

Tom Check for the Immigrant Solidarity Committee

MEDITATION CIRCLE

In January Elizabeth Demaray and Marci Lucia revived First Unitarian's Meditation Circle. The group had formerly met for many years until the Pandemic. The Circle began anew on Sunday, January 8th at 10AM before the first regular Sunday service of the New Year. Thirteen folks attended the first meeting, none of whom, besides Elizabeth and Marci, had been part of the earlier group.

Since January, the Meditation Circle has met before Service every Sunday. We have incorporated participants with diverse backgrounds in meditation, including several who had never meditated before joining our Circle. We regularly expect between five and eight participants each week. New participants continue to join us, attracted by the announcement in the weekly e-newsletter. Originally, we met in the Green Room, but when Religious Education staff needed the adjacent room to prepare for classes we moved up to the Teen Room.

Those of us who sit together on Sundays in the Meditation Circle are grateful for the opportunity to come together for this purpose in our spiritual home. Participants have conveyed that our Circle serves as a source of support and encouragement for them in their individual meditation practices, and also prepares them to fully engage in Sunday Services.

Marci Lucia, facilitator

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Thank you to our wonderful Council: Michele Ascione, June Wohlhorn, Erin Hopkins, and Board Liaison Beth Evans. Teamwork with you is always joyful.

Thank you to Meagan Henry for your inspiring leadership and Phylisa St Fleur and Sophie Major for all your hard work this year!

This year marked our first full time in-person RE program. It was thrilling to be able to offer Children's Chapel, Multi-generational services, Children's Choir, OWL classes for both K/1 and Junior High, and Elementary Classes. We also hosted a few parent discussion groups and a service project making packets for people experiencing homelessness. It was good to be back together, growing in community once again.

We had our usual amazing holiday celebrations- starting with a ghoulish Halloween, a merry Holiday party, a lovely Palm Sunday/Easter celebration. We plan a fun end of year RE/Teacher Appreciation for June 4th.

This year's Holiday Pageant was ELF - starring Yuri Weber as Buddy. We started a new tradition of a congregational "snow" ball fight (using paper).

We are so grateful for our teacher volunteers:

- OWL Junior High: Deirdre Lord, Abby Soule, Mark Rinzel, Kirsten DeFur, Merril Csuri
- Youth Group Advisors: Winnie Zwick, Sean Sellers, Merril Csuri
- Elementary Teachers: Eva Rogals Weiss, Rachel Cole, Michele Ascione, Marci Lucia
- Elementary OWL : Peter Engel, Abby Soule, Amanda White
- Children's Choir Director: Bert Eisenstadt

We are really looking forward to next year! We will have a large group of Coming of Age Youth and a Family Retreat planned for November 10-12 at Murray Grove.

We miss those families who moved away during the pandemic. We celebrate the families that re-joined our in-person programming. We are delighted by new families who have come to be a part of our community this year.

Becky Huffman, Chair, Religious Education Council

SHARE THE PLATE COMMITTEE

The Share the Plate Committee (STP) is charged with soliciting beneficiary nominations from the congregation and selecting qualified organizations to receive half of the offertory collection each month. A directive from the Board of Trustees in 2021 did not make it to the STP committee until December 2022 (last page) which states that at least 5 recipients be systemic change organizations. However, the percentage designation was met between May 2022-April 2023..

Goals for 2022-23 year

1. Need 4 new members, chair will stay on - MET
 - In June 2022, terms for all members ended. Julie Elting stayed on to provide leadership and continuity. In October, the other four new members were identified by the Board and the full committee met in Zoom.
 - The board representative switched from Beth Evans to Winnie Zwick in fall 2022.
 - Julie Elting has been on committee and chair/co-chair for 3 years and is stepping down to committee member for the coming year. The new chair for 2023-24 has not been chosen.
2. Zoom meeting where roles of chair & members better defined - MET
 - At first meeting in October 2022
 - Documents and spreadsheet shared with members
3. Create a meeting schedule - MET
 - All meetings on Zoom on the last Sunday evening of the month. When the meeting could not be held, discussion and voting was held by email.
4. Notify members their nominations were received and chosen - MET
 - Chair had intermittently done this the previous year
 - Beginning January 2023 it has been done consistently by member Eliza Frecon.
5. Follow up with recipients to provide testimonial - NOT MET
 - However, we included the nominator's name to the Order of Service (if applicable). Positive feedback from some congregants to the chair.
 - When thank you messages from recipient organizations were received they were read during the service. The congregation seemed to appreciate this when it happened.
6. Increase visibility about nomination process within congregation - MET
 - A statement was written by chair and edited by the FUUB office which is included in both the Order of Service and Weekly E-News. Nominations increased significantly given the committee more options.

UU = UU Mission; SC = Systemic change; DS = Direct Service

Month	Recipient	Type	Amount
May 2022	New York Women's Foundation	SC	1582.98

June 2022	Coalition for the Homeless	SC	1443.05
July/Aug 2022	FUUB Immigrant Solidarity Committee	UU	1522.01
September 2022	Minister's Fund	UU	1323.19
October 2022	Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund	SC	1577.94
November 2022	Shinnecock Kelp Farmers (Greenwave)	SC	1246.83
December 2022	UU Service Committee	UU	1739.53
January 2023	FEDADSE (Fédération Des Associations Pour Le Développement Du Sud Est)	SC	1902.26
February 2023	CHIPS (Community Help in Park Slope)	DS	1354.00
March 2023	Brigid Alliance	DS	1905.03
April 2023	Big Creek People In Action/FUUB Youth Group	UU	1558.38

Additionally, special collection days requested by the Board:			
Month	Recipient	Type	Amount
Oct 30th, 2022 (5th Sunday)	All Faiths Food Bank - Sarasota Florida Hurricane Ian - Chair wrote statement but did not email it to FUUB office for Order of Service change so did not happen		

<p>Feb 12th, 2023</p> <p>(5th Sunday passed on through April so all recipients still had 4 Sundays)</p>	<p>The Global Fund for Human Rights</p> <p>Earthquake Relief - Turkey/Syria</p>	<p>DS</p>	<p>605</p>
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SUNSET PARK UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATIONAL
 CONGREGACIÓN UNITARIA UNIVERSALISTA DE SUNSET PARK

There must be more than 300 Unitarian Universalists in Brooklyn.

That was a thought that had been in Lee Pardee’s mind for many years. When she suddenly inherited some money, she realized she could finally find out. Thinking that potential UUs in different neighborhoods might need congregations in different locations and with different styles, she set out to create a bilingual Spanish-English congregation in Sunset Park, a bilingual Spanish-English Brooklyn neighborhood where she lives.

She started with Sunday evening picnics in Sunset Park itself over the summer of 2022 and then, through someone who attended one of the picnics, she found a progressive Lutheran church nearby that agreed to rent her a small chapel for worship services.

The first indoor service was held on Sunday evening, February 5, and eight people, including three children, showed up. Services have continued weekly since then with two pianists and two guitarists taking turns providing music. A professional translator helps to make much of the service bilingual. As of April 30, the congregation had about 15 regular attendees, including five children. Each service is followed by a vegetarian dinner and fellowship.

First Unitarian has provided substantial support for this new congregation. All payments for rent, musicians, translator, supplies, and food are handled by the First U office (for a fee). Religious Educators Meagan Henry, Becky Huffman, and Michele Ascione have provided guidance on wisdom stories, and Adam Podd helped to connect Lee to musicians. Several of First Unitarian’s lay worship leaders have delivered their homilies a second time at Sunset Park. And the congregation uses the same welcome song as First U, but singing it once in Spanish and once in English each week.

Worship services will continue through Sunday June 18 when there will be a two-week break while Lee attends General Assembly and visits family. After that there will be Sunday

evening picnics in the park over the rest of the summer. Indoor worship services will resume after Labor Day. Stay tuned to see how the congregation develops.

Many thanks to the Board of Trustees for their support and to Garnett Losak and Wendy Russell for all their ideas and help.

Lee Pardee, Organizer of Sunset Park Unitarian Universalist Congregation

WEAVING SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Weaving for Justice group took a break through the fall of 2022, after planning and executing Juneteenth in June of 2022. Robert Harper, our previous chair, is now unable to be active and Rita Pearl announced she was stepping back from her long-time leadership, though she will stay with the group.

Thanks to the interest and leadership of Meagan Henry, Director of Education and Family Ministry, the group again convened, this time by Zoom in February of 2023 and has met each month since that time. Active members are Rita and Derek Pearl, Michael White, Judith Sedaitis, Barbara Bornmann and Nancy Wolf. Others have expressed interest. Robin Bossert, our Board Liaison, has also met with us.

We are reaching out to our previous list of those interested in Weaving's work and have begun to host our information table each Sunday. Old members and new possible members are signing up.

Weaving is planning this year's Juneteenth Service, to be held in the Sanctuary on June 18th. There will be an invited speaker and many appropriate elements for the service are being put in place. The split-the-plate donation for the month of June will be for Replace Aging People in Prison (RAPP), a group which we have been supporting. RAPP's work will be a theme of Juneteenth. The service will be followed by a picnic in the Chapel and front patio and Members of the Congregation will be encouraged to bring food.

Weaving's annual retreat will resume this year on Saturday, June 3rd, on the terrace off the 48 Monroe Place office. In case of rain, we will meet in in the Library. All are welcome and we will be sending special invitations to other committees and church leaders. At the retreat, we will plan our activities for the upcoming church year, starting in September. Among the plans will be a resumption of our social justice and social action forums, which are a long-standing tradition.

Nancy Wolf for Weaving Social Justice

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE

Abby Grosslein stepped down as president in early fall 2022 after two years in the role. The board and membership thank her very much for her service during such a difficult time with the impact of Covid-19. Without a president or vice president, Julie Elting, secretary, accepted the additional president position on the condition that WLA would function only as a grant-funding organization and that Lisa Pacenza stay on as treasurer. When this was decided, Nancy Witherell stepped into the Vice President role. Maggie Norris joined as a member at-large and our first meeting in this structure was in November 2022. To avoid over-burdening our already busy board members, we are moving ahead incrementally. We hope to sustain the most valued, and valuable, aspects of the organization and be responsible stewards of the endowment.

Achievements

1. Organizational
 - a. Shift emphasis to providing programmatic grants for events and activities that are run by, and for, WLA and FUUB members
 - b. Continue community and advocacy grants
 - c. Created structured request process and forms for personal development and program grants
 - d. Updated the Constitution and Bylaws for vote at general membership meeting in June 2023
 - e. Recruited new secretary Vicki Antonini beginning May 2023
 - f. Nominated 2 women for the Clara Barton Award and created structured tracking process
2. Financial
 - a. Remained below the 'prudent draw' of 4% of the endowment
 - b. Met request by FUUB Board of Trustees to increase our share of administration fees
 - c. Continued funding for RE Assistant
 - d. Provided grants for six FUUB GA delegates for June 2023
 - e. Funded 2 Clara Barton awards
 - f. Supported the Immigration Solidarity Committee for asylum seekers
 - g. Financed events including Spring Social Luncheon, Women's History Month, and arts programming

4/30/23	Plan FY 22-23	Actual	% of budget
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$ 14,500.00	\$ 9,882.79	68%
TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 14,500.00	\$ 13,569.00	94%

Julie Elting President/Secretary; Nancy Witherell VP;
 Lisa Pacenza Treasurer; Maggie Norris Member at-Large
 Report completed by Julie Elting

YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

I am a new member of the congregation and started attending services at the end of August 2022, so I am unable to speak on the Young Adult Ministry before that time. But from what I understand, the pandemic, people moving, and people transitioning to different life stages caused the Young Adult Ministry to decline so by the end of summer 2022 there was not an active Young Adult Ministry. By happenstance, a group of young adults all joined First Unitarian around the summer of 2022, and we decided we wanted a young adult group. Garnett Losak (a big shoutout to her, she has been extremely helpful) was very interested in the idea and suggested we hold a meeting. In October 2022, a planning meeting was attended by everyone interested in reviving a young adult group for people ages 18 to 35 (or anyone young at heart).

The key takeaways of the meeting were:

- To restart the young adult brunches.
- To start up a new group focused on spiritual growth, specifically on topics young adults might find relevant.
- To hold social events outside of a church setting.
- To create a Young Adult Ministry email and a WhatsApp group to keep people up to date with events and have a space to plan social activities.

It was decided the brunches would take place following the service on the second Sunday of each month. David Andrew and Michael DeSantis volunteered to be the leads and point people for the brunches.

It was decided the Young Adult Spiritual Discussion Group would take place the third Sunday of every month in the library after the service. Currently in the leadership chat for

the group we have Jocelyn Pages, Jacob Xavier, Michael DeSantis, Rachel Gomez, Sam Leal, Skylar Salerno, and Sofi Andrews.

Since the reviving of the Young Adult Ministry, we have had a couple of successful social outings organized by various members of the group. We plan on holding more social outings throughout the year, in addition to our regularly scheduled events.

- On October 30th after the service there was an outing to Green-Wood Cemetery.
- A holiday party took place on December 17th consisting of dinner and karaoke.
- A trip to the MET Cloisters happened on February 5th following the service.
- On March 25th there was an outing consisting of dinner and an escape room.

Mike Dore took the reins for overseeing the WhatsApp group and the Young Adult Ministry emails. He sends out the emails monthly.

So far this year we have spent under \$75 a month. Funds are distributed from the Congregational Life budget.

Overall, the young adults have responded well to the activities, so the prospects of the Young Adult Ministry are looking good. The WhatsApp group has proved to be a good space for keeping everyone up to date with events. Also, as time has passed, more people have been interested in helping lead the ministry. We try to implement any suggestions in a timely fashion and adjust the group to fit the needs of the people. This has proven especially true of the Young Adult Spiritual Discussion Group, as it is new so it took a couple of meetings to find an order and flow. The main consideration needed to sustain the Young Adult Ministry in the future is transferring leadership if someone is unable to lead anymore. So far that has not happened, but I am confident we have enough people willing to take the lead if needed.

Jocelyn Pages, for the Young Adult Ministry

Appendix

*Purpose Statement: The First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn is a joyful, loving, religious community that inspires and empowers people to Grow spiritually, Care for one another, and Work for social justice and stewardship of the earth
- Adopted by the Congregation - May 17, 2015*

Right Relations Covenant: We are mindful that, as individuals and members of this spiritual community, we are each accountable for our words, deeds, and behavior. Therefore, whenever we worship, work together, or relate to one another, we agree to follow the following behavior covenant. I will strive to:

- Respect and cherish diversities of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual and/or affectional orientation, identity/gender expression, age, ability, beliefs and ideas.
- Assume good intentions. Trust in and speak well of one another. Give the benefit of the doubt. Examine my own intentions.
- Foster an environment of compassion, generosity, fellowship, and creativity. Smile and be welcoming. Share in the responsibilities of congregational life. Actively support the congregation's activities, and pledge financial support.
- Express appreciation and gratitude for the rich variety of gifts and talents shared among us. Empower others.
- Speak the truth as I experience it with kindness, care, and respect.
- Make decisions democratically through agreed-upon processes. Promote fairness and decency. Speak out against injustice.
- Face others directly in agreement or disagreement. Act with respect and humility when I disagree with others.
- Be mindful that words and actions may cause unintended pain.
- Seek out understanding and wisdom in the presence of conflict. Resolve conflicts through intentional compromise and collaboration and, when necessary, request mediation. Understand that sometimes it is necessary to take "no" for an answer. Be forgiving.
- Practice self-care.
- Be open to hope.

Adopted by the Congregation - March 7, 2009

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