

FIRST UNITARIAN  
CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY  
**BR**  **KLYN**  
A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

# Welcome Book

2025-2026



Tuesday, July 01, 2025

# Welcome to First Unitarian

## Statement of Purpose

*The First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn is a joyful, caring,  
religious community that inspires and empowers people to*

*Grow spiritually,*

*Care for one another, and*

*Work for social justice and stewardship of the earth.*

*Adopted by the Congregation, May 17, 2015*

## About Us

Welcome to The First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn. We were founded in 1833 and have been worshipping in our historic Gothic revival sanctuary since 1844.

We are located on Pierrepont Street between Monroe Place and Clinton Street in Brooklyn Heights. We can be reached by Subway (2, 3, 4, 5, R to Court St. Borough Hall; 2, 3 to Clark Street; A to High Street; F to Jay Street). Street parking is generally available in the neighborhood on Sunday mornings.

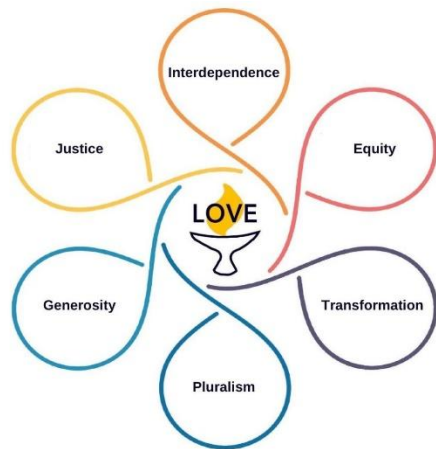
We worship together on Sunday mornings at 11:00AM. From mid-June through Labor Day, services are held in the McKinney Chapel next door to the main church. These services are lay-led.

We welcome families of all types and sizes and offer a comprehensive lifespan religious education program for all, from childhood through adulthood (see more under religious education).

We are one of five Unitarian Universalist congregations in New York City and over one thousand throughout North America. We are affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and are part of the Central East Regional Group (CERG). (more information: [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org))

Our congregations practice congregational polity (self-governance). Authority and responsibility are vested in the membership of the congregation.

# ***Unitarian Universalist Values and Covenant***



## **Interdependence**

We honor the interdependent web of all existence. With reverence for the great web of life and with humility, we acknowledge our place in it.

We covenant to protect Earth and all beings from exploitation. We will create and nurture sustainable relationships of care and respect, mutuality and justice. We will work to repair harm and damaged relationships.

## **Pluralism**

We celebrate that we are all sacred beings, diverse in culture, experience, and theology.

We covenant to learn from one another in our free and responsible search for truth and meaning. We embrace our differences and commonalities with Love, curiosity, and respect.

## **Justice**

We work to be diverse multicultural Beloved Communities where all thrive.

We covenant to dismantle racism and all forms of systemic oppression. We support the use of inclusive democratic processes to make decisions within our congregations, our Association, and society at large.

## **Transformation**

We adapt to the changing world.

We covenant to collectively transform and grow spiritually and ethically. Openness to change is fundamental to our Unitarian and Universalist heritages, never complete and never perfect.

## **Generosity**

We cultivate a spirit of gratitude and hope.

We covenant to freely and compassionately share our faith, presence, and resources. Our generosity connects us to one another in relationships of interdependence and mutuality.

## **Equity**

We declare that every person has the right to flourish with inherent dignity and worthiness.

We covenant to use our time, wisdom, attention, and money to build and sustain fully accessible and inclusive communities.

## ***Inspirations***

Direct experiences of transcending mystery and wonder are primary sources of Unitarian Universalist inspiration. These experiences open our hearts, renew our spirits, and transform our lives. We draw upon, and are inspired by, sacred, secular, and scientific understandings that help us make meaning and live into our values. These sources ground us and sustain us in ordinary, difficult, and joyous times. We respect the histories, contexts, and cultures in which these sources were created and are currently practiced. Grateful for the experiences that move us, aware of the religious ancestries we inherit, and enlivened by the diversity which enriches our faith, we are called to ever deepen and expand our wisdom.

## ***Inclusion***

Systems of power, privilege, and oppression have traditionally created barriers for persons and groups with particular identities, ages, abilities, and histories. We pledge to replace such barriers with ever-widening circles of solidarity and mutual respect. We strive to be an Association of congregations that truly welcome all persons who share our values. We commit to being an Association of congregations that empowers and enhances everyone's participation, especially those with historically marginalized identities.

## ***Freedom of belief***

Congregational freedom and the individual's right of conscience are central to our Unitarian Universalist heritage.

Congregations may establish statements of purpose, covenants, and bonds of union so long as they do not require that members adhere to a particular creed.

## **First Unitarian 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

## Staff Directory

**Rev. Micah Ma**, Interim Senior Minister  
Micah@firstubrooklyn.org  
Rev. Micah will join us on August 1, 2024  
Office hours TBA

**Rev. Meagan Henry**, Assistant Minister  
Education & Pastoral Care  
meagan@firstubrooklyn.org  
Office Hours, Tu - Th, 10AM-4PM  
Or by appointment

**Adam Podd**, Director of Music  
adam@firstubrooklyn.org  
Office Hours, by appointment

**Garnett Losak**, Director of Congregational  
Life  
garnett@firstubrooklyn.org, 646-456-4027  
Office Hours., Tu, Th, 10AM-4PM or by  
appointment. Garnett's days off are Fri &  
Sat.

**Renee Strickland**, Executive Manager  
Building and Events,  
renee@firstubrooklyn.org, office hours, Tu -

Th, 10AM-4PM and by appointment,  
Renee's days off are Sunday and Monday

**Wendy Russell**, Office  
Manager/Bookkeeper/RE Assistant  
wendy@firstubrooklyn.org, 718-624-5466  
Office Hours  
Su 1-4PM, T, Th 10AM-4PM or by  
appointment, Wendy's Days off are Fri & Sat

**Rachel Schmitt**, Youth Coordinator  
rachel@firstubrooklyn.org  
Office hours, Sunday and by appointment

**William Barrow**, Building Engineer,  
william@firstubrooklyn.org

**Bobby Blackman**, Sexton  
bobby@firstubrooklyn.org

Yvonne Garrett, Intern Minister  
Yvonne@firstubrooklyn.org

Business Address:

48 Monroe Place

Brooklyn, NY 11201

Phone: 718-624-5466, Email: info@firstubrooklyn.org, Website: www.firstubrooklyn.org

Facebook: First Unitarian Universalist Society in Brooklyn

Instagram: Firstubrooklyn, YouTube: First Unitarian Brooklyn

Please Note: Most staff will work from home one or two days a week. We are available by email or cell phone on all workdays. The office is closed on Fridays. We recommend calling ahead of time before visiting the office. Appointments are strongly recommended.

## **Board of Trustees & Officers 2023-2024**

“Our chief want is someone who will inspire us to be what we know we could be.” – *Ralph Waldo Emerson, Unitarian Minister*

The Board of Trustees is the congregation’s primary governing body. The Board is made up of 9 voting members of the congregation who serve three-year terms. Three members roll off and three members roll on every year. Trustees are elected by the congregation from a slate presented by the Leadership Development Committee (formerly the nominating committee) at the Annual Meeting held on the third Sunday in May. The Board elects its own president. The Clerk of the Society is elected by the congregation for a one-year term. The Clerk keeps Board and congregational meeting minutes and has additional administrative responsibilities as needed throughout the year. The Treasurer is appointed by the Board. The Treasurer ensures that fiscal policy is followed. The moderator facilitates congregational meetings and is elected by the congregation.

### **Class of 2026**

**Michele Ascione (she/her)** has been a member of First U for just about 30 years and has been a Religious Education teacher and a member of the Religious Education Council – even serving as chair for some time - for almost all of those years. She may have even been YOUR RE teacher! She was one of the congregation’s first RE volunteers to get trained for the ground-breaking OWL curriculum for grades K-8. In addition, she has served short stints on the Nominating Committee and the Staff Interest Committee. Michele is proud to have marched and rallied with the congregation, participated in immigrant solidarity activities, coordinated activities at family retreats at Murray Grove, volunteered for UniFair, played parts in numerous Winter festivals (notably playing “The Grinch” two winters in a row), narrated a revised Purim Spiel, and performed two roles in the first congregational theater performances of *Mother Wove the Morning*. Originally joining in order to raise her children with an open-minded religious education, Michele has found a supportive community and an outlet for some of her talents that she has come to cherish.

**Barbara Bornmann (she/her)** is grateful to have found a spiritual home at the Unitarian Universalist church in 2021. As a relative newcomer, Barbara has been active in church life and serves on the Weaving Social Justice committee, as a Lay Pastoral Counselor for the Care Committee, and as a member of the choir enjoying great music and camaraderie of choir members. Driven by a spiritual commitment to healing through the arts, Barbara has worked for 30 years in Healthcare specializing in mental and behavioral health for persons with Developmental Disabilities, and persons struggling with Serious Mental Illness. A former supervisor and director of therapeutic rehabilitation in hospital settings, Barbara continues to research and author articles on best practice in providing creative approaches to healing. Currently, Barbara works as a Licensed Creative Arts Therapist with Correctional Health Services serving persons with serious mental illness detained on Rikers Island.

**Jake Powell (Co-President) (they/them)** has been an active member of First Unitarian since 2018. At First U, Jake is a contributing member of the Immigrant Solidarity Committee as



well as the Queer Caucus and Young Adult Ministry. Having grown up in a United Church of Christ congregation in their hometown of Casper, WY, joining First U felt just right.

In their work Jake focuses on hiring and HR for non-profits, currently working at Bloomberg Philanthropies after stints at The Trevor Project, the 92nd Street Y, and the Perelman Performing Arts Center. Over the years Jake has also spent time volunteering with ACT UP New York, the Ali Forney Center, and the Democratic Socialists of America. After 6 years in Cobble Hill, Jake recently moved to Flatbush with their partner. In their free time Jake enjoys reading, running, gluten-free baking, and trying to pick up Chinese.

**Vicki Antonini (she/her)** began attending First Unitarian in November of 2017 when she was looking for a spiritual home after the US Presidential Election result. She has been a lifelong Unitarian Universalist in spirit but didn't realize there was a name for what she believed until she heard about it in 2016. She signed the membership book in the spring of 2018 and is honored to serve as a Trustee for the place that has been such a source of comfort and affirmation in the last six years. During her time at First Unitarian she has volunteered for Unifair, Folk and Feast (formerly known as Jazz and Pie), various fundraisers including our recent fundraiser for Anera, and likes to pitch in whenever and however she can. She has enjoyed Adult Religious Education experiences including The History of Unitarian Universalism with Intern Minister Kevin Jagoe, the Shmita workshop series and varied book discussions including *No Other Gods* with Rev. Ana, The Artist's Way and more, including a current Chalice Circle group. She was a member of Rev. Karen Madrone's Internship Committee and currently serves as member of Intern Minister Rachel Schmitt's Internship Committee. She previously served as Co-Chair of the Weaving Social Justice Committee and currently serves as Secretary for the Women's Leadership Alliance. A lifelong public school educator, Vicki is currently in transition after a 29 year career with the NYC Public School system, having served as an English teacher, literacy coach, and high school assistant principal and principal.

**Anne Calder (she/her)** began attending First Unitarian in 2014, when she was seeking community and recalled her grandparents' commitment to their Unitarian congregation. She pledged her membership in 2019, and since has been serving on the Green Team. Over the years, she has enjoyed greeting churchgoers at the door, dropping into Craft Ministry meetings, and volunteering in the kitchen when opportunities arise.

Anne has her own residential interior design firm, which she's working to grow. In her spare time, she enjoys cooking, gardening, crochet and hiking.

**Mark Weiss (he/him)** and his wife Eva Rogals have been members of First U since March, 2012. He has served as a Coming of Age mentor and hosted children's activities at many holiday parties. Their son Max (22), and daughter, Abigail (14 in May), have been active in the Religious Education program. Max participated through Youth Group, and Abigail is currently in Coming of Age.

Mark is excited to serve First Unitarian on the board, most of all because of the impact it has had on his life. First U gave Mark and his wife, Eva Rogals-Weiss, the gift of raising their children in an unconditionally supportive community of values aligned with their own. And it has led him to "finally embrace my own path toward faith and participation in a spiritual community". Mark brings a breadth of work experience to the role, as both a senior manager and lead contributor in startups and established

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companies, with particular skills in software development, data analysis and motivating teams to complete challenging projects by working together.

## **Class of 2028**

**Julie Elting** is a Colorado native but lived in Hawaii for 20 years before relocating to Brooklyn in 2018. The move to New York was an intentional choice that took 50 years to turn into reality. Professionally, Julie has been a registered nurse (RN) for 39 years and an Advanced Practice RN since 2008. Her clinical focus is on community-based maternal/child health with certificates in lactation and perinatal palliative care. She is an associate professor of nursing at Long Island University - Brooklyn where I teach research, policy, and theory. Personally, Julie and her husband, Dirk, have been married for 39 years. They have three kids, Devin (lives in Queens), Maria (Oregon), and Russell (Hawaii). Julie has been associated with the Unitarian Universalists since the early 1990s and was active in Religious Education, stewardship, and the parking committee at her congregation in Hawaii. She and Dirk joined First U in 2019 and have volunteered at various events including UniFair and the auctions. Her leadership roles include the Women's Leadership Alliance (secretary, current president) and Share the Plate (chair for 4 years).

**Luke Messina** has been a member at First Unitarian since 2018. He has been active in many facets of congregational life including helping to plan events, provide support, and foster community.

Luke has been particularly active with First Unitarian's queer and young adult groups. This includes helping plan past appearances at Brooklyn Pride and contributing to two summer Pride services.

Since August of 2024, he has co-chaired the Connections Committee. During his time as co-chair the committee has helped launch affinity groups, formalize processes for welcoming/outreach work, and hosted a movie screening. In March of 2025, Luke began facilitating a Queer Spirituality group. He believes our congregation is a unique and special place, and is dedicated to serving our shared community in any way he can.

Luke lives in South Brooklyn and works in voting rights and accessibility for the city government.

**Amanda Nietzel** is a longtime NYC resident with a passion for community. As a member of the First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn, Amanda hopes to support all the great works happening in our congregation. Amanda co-chaired (with Mariasara Alcott) last year's very successful UniFair. She joined First Unitarian in January 2021.

Amanda's professional skills include editorial, leadership, project management, and technology development. She brings her empathetic nature to all her projects and collaborations.

## **Moderator**

**James Goward (he/him)** has been a member of First Unitarian for over 11 years. A Massachusetts native, Jim has called New York City home for 34 years. He is a lawyer who has worked at the N.Y.P.D, as a public defender at the Legal Aid Society, and is currently a prosecutor in the Bronx. He has served

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as the president of co-op boards for two successive buildings that he and his family have lived in. He enjoys playing music, roller blading and reading, (favorite authors include David Foster Wallace, James Joyce, and Stephen King).

### **Clerk of the Society**

Sarah Morgan has been a member of First Unitarian since 2009 and previously served as the Clerk in 2015. She works for the Natural Resources Defense Council and lives in Hastings-on-Hudson with her husband, Jack, and their two kids, Cyril and Lewis who are both registered in our Sunday School.

## **Deacons**

10 longtime members serve the congregation as deacons – experienced elders. A Deacon is elected by the congregation for life or until resignation

Bob Bero	Laurel Lesio
Tom Check	Edwin Lord
Liz Davis	Connie Newsom (senior deacon)
Beth Evans	Lee Pardee
Patrick Gunn	Nancy Wolf

## **Supporting First Unitarian**

**“It’s not how much we give, but how much we put into giving.”  
— Mother Teresa**

First Unitarian is completely self-supporting. Our revenue comes from building rentals, a draw from our endowment, and donations from members and friends. The last represents approximately one third of our operating income.

We gratefully accept monetary gifts of any size in support of our mission and purpose. Checks can be written to First Unitarian and dropped into the Sunday offering or mailed to the church office. Donations can also be made by credit card or bank transfer on our website ([www.fuub.org](http://www.fuub.org)) or by text (347-735-5264). Cash offerings made through the Sunday plate are shared equally with a justice making organization (see Share the Plate).

In the late winter, First Unitarian holds its annual financial stewardship campaign. At this time, we ask our members and friends to pledge (promise) to make a financial donation to the congregation in the next fiscal year (July 1 – June 30). Pledges allow the

finance committee and board of trustees to make responsible budgetary decisions. Pledges are accepted throughout the year. Contact Garnett Losak (garnett@firsttubrooklyn.org).

## **Worship and Music**

Worship services include congregational singing and performed music, candle lighting, prayers, a story for all ages, and a sermon. Often there are additional elements depending on the theme for the day. The sermon will usually be delivered by our senior minister. The senior minister is away one Sunday a month. On those occasions, Meagan Henry will preach. Occasionally our intern minister or a guest speaker may lead worship.

Unitarian Universalists draw from many different inspirations. We believe that there is truth to be learned from the world's great works of art including poetry, philosophy, and liturgical texts from all faiths. Our music program, too, draws from many different disciplines. On any given Sunday, we may hear world music, jazz, classical, pop, or show tunes, accompanied by a range of instruments including our historic pipe organ.

Most people dress casually for worship, but if you prefer to "dress up", feel free.

Worship is followed by coffee, tea, and fellowship in the church basement, also known as the undercroft.

For more information about worship contact Rev. Micah Ma, For more information about music contact Adam Podd

## **Lifespan Religious Education**

We offer comprehensive lifespan religious education. Children from pre-k through 6<sup>th</sup> grade attend Sunday school classes two to three Sundays per month. One Sunday a month children stay in the Sanctuary with their families for an all-generations service. Middle school children alternate between Our Whole Lives (OWL) sexuality programming and Coming of Age. Children 5 and older attend the first part of the worship service and are sung out to their classes after the Wisdom Story. High School Youth meet with their advisors after worship and design their own programming. Children aged two and under are welcome in our professionally staffed nursery. For the safety of all, children and youth must be registered (see our website, [www.firsttubrooklyn.org/home/religious-education](http://www.firsttubrooklyn.org/home/religious-education)).

Throughout the year, we offer faith development classes and programs for adults. Some classes meet on Sunday afternoons, others meet during the week, generally in the evenings. Past programs have included Our Whole Lives adult sexuality, credo workshops, Ethics for UU's and UU Theology. Many classes required advance registration, some allow for drop-ins.

For more information about Religious Education, contact Meagan Henry

## Discover More About First Unitarian and Unitarian Universalism

Unitarian Universalist Association  
[www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org)

First Unitarian Weekly E-News: To  
subscribe,  
[garnett@firstubrooklyn.org](mailto:garnett@firstubrooklyn.org)

First Unitarian Website:  
[www.firstubrooklyn.org](http://www.firstubrooklyn.org)

Facebook: First Unitarian  
Universalist in Brooklyn

Instagram: Firstubrooklyn

YouTube: First Unitarian Brooklyn

## Membership

“Our society is pluralistic. We who accept the privilege of membership in that society agree to respect the people's right to live by their own religious precepts.” – Lewis B. Smedes

Joining a spiritual community can be one of life's most rewarding experiences. When you become a member of First Unitarian, you will find a community of people who work together to create a better world inside and outside our walls. You will discover deep and sustained friendships that are based on common goals and you will have companionship in your spiritual journey. Members in good standing are entitled to:

- ☞ free or low-cost rites of passage, including weddings, memorial services, and baby blessings (see member policies on our website)
- ☞ serve on the Board of Trustees and other committees and groups that guide the future of our congregation
- ☞ serve as Lay Worship Leaders
- ☞ vote at congregational meetings
- ☞ reduced fees on adult religious education classes

- ☞ The joy of knowing that you are not alone in your spiritual journey

If you have been attending worship services at First U for a while and feel a commitment to our community and are in agreement with our Right Relations Covenant and Purpose Statement, you may be ready to complete an Intent to Join Form. Once completed, you will be connected with a canvasser who will help you to determine an appropriate financial commitment. At that point, you will be ready to sign our historic membership book and become a voting member of the congregation. While not required, prospective members are encouraged to meet with Rev. Micah, Rev. Meagan, or Garnett Losak. Appointments can be made by calling the Church Office (718-624-5466) or emailing each person directly.

**Intent to Join Forms** and our **Right Relations Covenant** can be found on our website ([www.firstubrooklyn.org/home/community/membership](http://www.firstubrooklyn.org/home/community/membership)). Paper copies are available from Garnett Losak. Garnett is also available to answer any questions you may have.

## A Quick and Easy Guide to Membership

In most cases, we suggest attending worship services for at least 3 months before taking the steps below. Exceptions are made for people transferring their membership from other UU congregation or who have lifelong UU experience.

Our by-laws require that members of the congregation be at least 18 years of age or 16 years of age if they have attended our youth program. Members must complete an *annual* family pledge form in order to retain their voting status. Adult children of member families who are not full time students or who are over 21 years of age are required to complete their own pledge form in order to retain their membership.

The following outlines the steps to membership.

Required steps to be done in order

1. Complete an Intent to Join form. By signing this form, you agree to abide by our Purpose Statement and Right Relations Covenant (For an Intent to Join Form, contact Garnett Losak)
2. Meet with a canvasser and complete a pledge
3. Sign the membership book, to be arranged by the Director of Congregational Life

Optional, but strongly recommended (pick any 1, 2, 3 or 4)

- Meet with a member of our clergy
- Meet with Garnett Losak, Director of Congregational Life
- Attend a newcomer's orientation (offered monthly following worship)
- Take the Pathways class (offered several times a year, registration required, please watch the weekly e-news for information. We recommend that Pathways be taken within one year of signing the membership book)

For more information about membership, contact Garnett Losak ([garnett@firstubrooklyn.org](mailto:garnett@firstubrooklyn.org))

## Getting Involved

**“When you do nothing you feel overwhelmed and powerless. But when you get involved you feel the sense of hope and accomplishment that comes from knowing you are working to make things better.” - Maya Angelou**

A lot happens on Sunday morning to make our worship and fellowship experience meaningful. From the first handshake at the front door of the Sanctuary, to a friendly conversation at the welcome table, our volunteers ensure that our Sundays are warm, welcoming, and accessible.

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Here are some ways you can be part of the Sunday experience.

### **Ushers & Greeters**

We often hear that our congregation is warm and friendly. Visitors and newcomers get their very first impression of our congregation from the greeting they receive at the front door. Ushers are available to help people find their way to classrooms and restrooms, provide a strong arm to those who need help with stairs and answer any questions that come up. No experience is necessary, only the ability to smile and arrive by 10:30AM. Contact: Lee Pardee (leepardee54@gmail.com) or sign-up to volunteer through the link in the weekly e-news.

### **Religious Education Teachers & Volunteers**

RE volunteers frequently tell us that they learn as much as they teach. Teaching Sunday school can be one of the most rewarding ways to participate in congregational life. Teachers generally volunteer for only 2 Sundays a month, so they are able to attend worship services regularly. Contact: Meagan Henry (meagan@firstubrooklyn.org)

### **Choir & Music**

The choir is open to anyone who enjoys singing. A commitment to attend regularly is required. Professional and amateur musicians are also welcome to lend their talents on Sunday mornings. Contact: Adam Podd (adam@firstubrooklyn.org)

### **Soup Ministry**

Many weeks we provide a delicious and inexpensive lunch through our soup ministry. Volunteers make or prepare soup and occasionally supply sandwich fixings. Costs are reimbursed from the kitty and the profit supports our fellowship hour. Providing lunch allows congregants to stay for afternoon activities. Contact: Garnett Losak (garnett@firstubrooklyn.org)

### **Share the Plate**

Each month, First Unitarian donates 50% of its Sunday cash offering to a justice making organization. Nominations for beneficiaries from members and friends of the congregation are welcome. An on-line nomination form and Share the Plate policy can be found on our website. Contact: Parrish Turner (parrishturner@gmail.com).

### **Lighting the Chalice**

Everyone is welcome to take a turn lighting the chalice at the start of our worship services. Children and their families are especially encouraged to participate. If you would like to light the chalice, just ask. Contact: Garnett Losak (garnett@firstubrooklyn.org)

## **Activities and Programs for Newcomers**

Newcomers are encouraged to complete a welcome card, available in the pews on Sundays or at the welcome table during coffee hour. These cards help us to connect you with the programs that interest you. Contact: Garnett Losak ([garnett@firstubrooklyn.org](mailto:garnett@firstubrooklyn.org))

**Fellowship Hour** – We know that being in a room full of strangers can be stressful, but we hope that you will take advantage of this opportunity to enjoy a cup of coffee, meet new friends, and peruse our connections table. Connections table hosts are available to help you find your way.

**Newcomer Orientations** – Every month from October through May following worship and at least once in the summer, we offer this introduction to Unitarian Universalist history and theology and our congregation. This is a drop-in meeting. All are welcome. Contact: Garnett Losak ([garnett@firstubrooklyn.org](mailto:garnett@firstubrooklyn.org))

**Young Adult Ministry** – We have an active YAM program that includes a monthly brunch, a monthly spiritual discussion, social events, and outings. Watch the e-news for more information.

**Adult Faith Formation Programs & Classes** – We offer programs and classes to help our members and friends move more deeply into spiritual exploration. Some programs are one-time-only. Others may include multiple sessions. Most are free, but occasionally there will be a small charge to cover the cost of supplies. Please watch the e-news and the announcements in the Order of Service for information about programs throughout the year. Contact: Meagan Henry ([meagan@firstubrooklyn.org](mailto:meagan@firstubrooklyn.org))

**Monday Group** – This group meets monthly at 11:00AM from September through June on Zoom. Discussion topics are chosen by members of the group and change from week to week. The group is especially welcoming to retirees and others with non-traditional work schedules. Contact: Garnett Losak ([garnett@firstubrooklyn.org](mailto:garnett@firstubrooklyn.org))

**Men's Group** – Once a month the men of our congregation meet after the worship service for discussion and fellowship on a range of topics. This is a drop in meeting. Everyone who identifies as a man is welcome to attend. Contact Spencer Brill ([spencerbrill@gmail.com](mailto:spencerbrill@gmail.com)) or Charles Lynch ([charleslynch263@gmail.com](mailto:charleslynch263@gmail.com))

**Women's Leadership Alliance (WLA)** – WLA is an independent organization within First Unitarian emphasizing the importance of women's issues and voices, supporting local and national groups who advocate for women's rights, providing educational and mentoring activities and supporting women as ministers. Contact Julie Elting ([drjelting@gmail.com](mailto:drjelting@gmail.com))

**Pathways: Deepening your Relationship to First Unitarian** – This 5-hour class is designed and strongly recommended for new members of the congregation and those who are interested in membership. Participants will prepare to become active, vibrant members of our community through exploration of their individual spiritual journeys and deeper understanding of UU history and theology. The class will include group activities and discussions, an optional tour of the building – even the dark, secret parts – and special guest appearances. This is also a



great opportunity to meet and fellowship with other new members and prospective new members of our community. Contact: Garnett Losak (garnett@firstubrooklyn.org)

## **Caring Ministry**

An important part of the life of any religious community is care of people in need. Our ministers provide pastoral counseling for members going through life transitions and losses. We also perform life cycle ceremonies for all rites of passage including weddings, baby blessings and memorial services held here in the church. Our lay Pastoral Associates reach out to provide practical assistance to those in crisis, struggling with health or physical challenges. To access pastoral care for yourself or a loved one, contact caring@firstubrooklyn.org. *For weddings, memorial services, or baby blessings, contact Renee Strickland (renee@firstubrooklyn.org).*

*Note: pastoral care and counseling is not a substitute for professional medical or psychological treatment.*

## **Our Building and History**

**“Beautiful places are almost alive! When you visit them, you can feel their breaths!” Mehmet Murat Ildan**

The First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn was established in 1833, by a group of merchant sea families who had been traveling across the river to attend worship services in Manhattan. The Gothic Revival Sanctuary was erected in 1844 by the Architect, Minard Lefever, who was one of the premier church architects of the time.

The (mostly Tiffany) stained glass windows were added from 1894 to 1909. The Parker Memorial Mosaic Angel was designed by Louis C. Tiffany in 1915 for the Unitarian Church of the Messiah in New York City and purchased in 1936.

Over the years, the congregation has owned and sold several properties. The current complex is made up of 4 connected buildings.

**48 Monroe Place Brownstone** – ground floor classrooms, office and two apartment rentals

**50 Monroe Place “Parish House”** – Monroe Place hallway, Frances White Room, large kindergarten classroom, library, minister’s and religious educator’s offices and sexton’s apartment

**Sanctuary** – large church building, undercroft and kitchen

**Chapel** – smaller worship space east of Sanctuary

The original Hutchings organ with over 1,000 pipes was installed in 1899 and completely rebuilt by Mann and Trupiani in 1999.

## How Do I Find...

**Church Office:** 48 Monroe Place, ring the bell, our office manager, Wendy Russell and our Director of Congregational Life, Garnett Losak work in this area. This space also houses office equipment (copy and folding machines) and supply storage

**Frances White Room (FWR)** from 50 Monroe Place at the end of the hall, used for meetings and classes

**Undercroft (Church Basement)** from the Sanctuary: Down the spiral staircase, From the 50 Monroe door: immediate right down small flight of stairs, used for coffee hour and other large events

**Library:** from the Sanctuary: facing the pulpit, small door to the left, used for meetings and classes

**Chapel:** enter on Pierrepont Street to the east of the Sanctuary (big church). The Chapel can also be accessed from the Undercroft and the Frances White Room. Multi-Purpose space and summer worship services.

**Kitchen:** from 50 Monroe: end of the hall right before double doors, down small flight of stairs

**Patio (sometimes referred to as the terrace):** Accessible from the office, used for social events and, in good weather, meetings or classes

**Eastman Room (large upstairs classroom):** immediately above the Frances White Room

**Green Room:** through the Eastman Room, mostly used for small meetings.

**Passthrough:** Small storage room between the Chapel and the Undercroft

**Sofia Fahs Room:** Small room near the kitchen off the Undercroft that is used for Religious Education storage and supplies

**3<sup>rd</sup> Floor:** Rev. Meagan's, Adam Podd's, and Rev. Micah's offices are on the third floor. Use the back staircase entered from the Monroe Place hallway or from the kitchen to the third floor.

**The Teen Room** is also on this floor as well as an open space that is used as overflow office space, workspace for our youth coordinator and may be used for small meetings.

### A Message from Garnett Losak, Director of Congregational Life

I spend a lot of time thinking about why some people seem to connect to First Unitarian so quickly and so deeply and others struggle to find a place here, even to the point of drifting away. If I had the recipe for the secret sauce, I'd publish it because I know from discussions with membership professionals all over the country that this is the most confounding part of our job.

As I've thought about it, I began to realize that I've made some basic observations about what seems to work. So, here it goes...

- 1) Come to fellowship hour. I know this is very challenging for some people. There is nothing worse than feeling alone in a room full of people. And I admit that we're not always good at making everyone feel welcome in that big, loud, empty space. We're working on it though. Bite the bullet. It can be hard, I know, but the coffee (or tea) is free, there's often a pretty decent lunch, and you may just make a friend.
- 2) Volunteer to do something. Anything! I could make a comprehensive list, but it would take up too many pages. Here are three things that I think a relative newcomer can do.

- ④ Usher. This is the highest impact, lowest commitment volunteer job we have. Show up at 10:30 on Sunday morning, smile, hand out orders of service, be a welcoming presence. You're done by 11:30AM. (contact, Garnett Losak (garnett@firstubrooklyn.org) Added value: You get to hear the choir rehearse!
  - ④ Anything in the kitchen. There are often opportunities to prepare food, help with clean-up, even run the dishwasher. Kitchen work is social, it's contained, and it's appreciated.
  - ④ Light the chalice. I look for a chalice lighter (or lighters) every Sunday morning. If you want to participate in worship in this way, just ask. The job is yours. By the way, many children love to do this. We welcome families to light the chalice together.
- 3) Take a class. I hope everyone will attend a newcomers' orientation (first Sunday of every month), but I encourage you to sign up for any number of adult faith formation classes throughout the year. You'll learn something, meet new people, and connect with a minister or staff or lay leader.
  - 4) Read the weekly E-News and, "like" our Facebook page or follow us on Instagram. They are all packed full of information about what's going on at First U and how to get involved. If you're not a subscriber, let me know.
  - 5) Make an appointment to meet with any member of our staff. We are all eager to get to know you and listen to your story. Our contact information can be found in this booklet or on our website (www.fuub.org).
  - 6) Come to Worship!! I know this sounds obvious, but I can't stress it enough. There are so many activities that compete for our time and attention, especially on the weekends. But, just like anything else, if you get out of practice, you'll lose the skill. People who attend worship regularly (at least 2-3 times per month) will know more people and feel more at home. When you're not here, your absence will be felt. If you have children, regular attendance at Sunday school is the key to raising children who embody Unitarian Universalist values and become lifelong UU's. You'll know you're hooked if you seek out the local UU congregation when you're on vacation (I do).

The connections committee and I are committed to making the experience of each and every person who walks through our doors welcoming and spiritually rewarding so, if you're a relatively new member or a newcomer to First Unitarian, let me know how it's going for you. I really want to know.

In Service,

Garnett Losak  
garnett@firstubrooklyn.org  
646-456-4027

Tuesday, July 01, 2025

# FIRST UNITARIAN CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY BROOKLYN

A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

Mailing Address:

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[info@firstubrooklyn.org](mailto:info@firstubrooklyn.org)

**Whoever you are, Whomever you love,  
Wherever you are on your life journey,  
Whatever the color of your skin, or your country of origin,  
Whatever your gender or the source of your faith,  
You are Welcome Here.**

**Rev. Micah C. Ma**, Interim Senior Minister

**Rev. Meagan Henry**, Assistant Minister, Education & Pastoral Care

**Adam Podd**, Director of Music

**Garnett Losak**, Director of Congregational Life

**Renee Strickland**, Director of Facilities

**William Barrow**, Building Engineer

**Wendy Russell**, Office Manager/Bookkeeper/RE Assistant

**Rachel Schmitt**, Youth Coordinator

**Bobby Blackman**, Sexton

**Yvonne Garrett**, Intern Minister