

# The First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee

A Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Established 1842

# ANNUAL REPORT

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# ANNUAL REPORT

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION:

2016-2017 Operating Budget:	\$994,078
Adult Members:	763
Church School Enrollment:	207
Contributing Households:	638

## MEMBER:

- Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)
- MidAmerica Region, UUA (MAR)
- Common Ground of Southeastern Wisconsin
- Southeastern Wisconsin Unitarian
- Universalist Council (SEWUUC)
- Interchange, Inc.
- Interfaith Council of Greater Milwaukee
- Milwaukee Inner-City Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAH)

## CHURCH STAFF:

### SENIOR MINISTER

The Reverend Jennifer Nordstrom

### ASSOCIATE MINISTER

The Reverend Dena McPhetres

### DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION

Jean Johnson

### DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Beryl Aschenberg

### YOUTH PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Deb Solis

### MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR

Cheri Taylor

### COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Angelica Dudenhoefer

### OFFICE ASSISTANT

Tracy Smith

## CHURCH STAFF CONTINUED:

### LEAD MUSIC DIRECTOR

Alissa Rhode

### RESIDENT ARTIST

Jack Forbes Wilson

### CHOIR DIRECTOR

Tristan Strelitzer

### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Erin Wantoch (November 16—present)

Kari Stenitzer (June—October, 2016)

### NURSERY COORDINATOR

Lindsey Porter

### PRESCHOOL COORDINATOR

Mariah Groshek

### FACILITIES MANAGER

Ed McGraw

### FACILITIES ASSISTANTS

Jim Spice/Paul Moriarity

### FACILITIES MAINTENANCE WORKER

Art Sims

# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

## Continuing our Transition

*"There is Nothing So Stable as Change" ... Bob Dylan*

This congregational year has been an exciting experience, from welcoming our new Sr. Minister, the Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, on August 1, 2016 to her installation on April 30, 2017. We celebrated our 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with wonderful acknowledgments of our history as well as engaged in a fundraising campaign that ensures our future. Our community has learned about living our mission as a large congregation, embodying:

### ***Nurture the Spirit, Engage the Mind and Inspire Action.***

What you may not have been aware of is the increased focus your Board of Trustees has placed on data-driven decision making and policy governance. While this started with last year's adoption of our new mission statement, we also adopted a new functional structure for the staff as well as clarifying the difference between Board Committees (called by the Board of Trustees), Staff-Led Teams (led by a staff member), and Member Led-Ministries (led and formed by congregants in response to identified need/desire on a specific topic/interest). Our Ends also reflect the larger ***What is the difference*** of our longer-term goals. To summarize our current Ends: By the end of 2018, the First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee will:

- A. Be operating at a sustainable net budget surplus.
- B. Be a more diverse congregation, whose members embrace differences and welcome the challenges they present, as a means to create a resilient spiritual community.
- C. Have enthusiastically and smoothly welcomed a newly beloved Senior Minister whose mission, style, skill and personality match the goals and desires of the congregation of First Church, thus ensuring a happy and productive match in which both parties feel at home.
- D. Have increased our visible engagement as a congregation with people of diverse viewpoints on important issues in the greater Milwaukee community.

Obviously we have made some progress on our Ends adopted in October 2015. We have enthusiastically welcomed our new Senior Minister. Through the work of our congregation and staff on many facets of racial justice, we have visibly engaged in the Black Lives Matter movement as well as on Latin/ immigrant issues. Hopefully, this will increase the diversity of our congregations as well. The Stewardship Council, the Income Opportunities Committee, and the Finance Committee have created a predictive fiscal model that allows for long-term budget forecasting while manipulating a number of variables; creating a tool to be used in real time to allow for better command of an ever-changing monetary landscape. This has allowed us to realize, all things being equal, that our target date for having a sustainable net budget surplus is 2023, unfortunately not 2018.

First Church is well on its way to leading our community as well as our faith on issues of diversity, justice, and equality while safeguarding our congregation for the next 175 years. The Board of Trustees and the congregation will be engaged in creating First Church's vision in 2017-2018, which will result in updated Ends in early 2018.

I look forward to working with you on these important matters.

Joyfully,

Julie Bock, Congregational President 2016-2017

# 2015-16 ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

## Overview

In its oversight of the financial condition of the church, the Finance Committee:

- Monitors financial performance to determine if it is in compliance with the budgeted performance
- Analyzes financial data and develops alternatives and strategies when necessary
- Prepares the budget for each new fiscal year
- Serves as a resource for the various committees and the Board concerning financial matters

The Finance Committee closely monitors the financial results of our church and keeps the Board of Trustees and the congregation informed of any significant developments. We generate projections to help forecast the financial condition of the church over the near and long term and to assist with the formation and maintenance of a balanced budget. We develop strategies to help improve the financial status of the church as needed, while trying to fulfill the diverse goals established for the church and meeting the needs of the various committees, groups and members of the congregation.

I would like to thank the committee members: Tom Briscoe, Mark Bishop, Gordon Mueller, Noreen Gilbertsen and Buzz Wickman, and the staff liaisons, Jean Johnson and Cheri Taylor for their many hours of hard work and valued input. Without their dedicated involvement, this committee could not accomplish its important responsibilities.

## July 1, 2015 — June 30, 2016 Operating Results

The fiscal year was a challenging one with both operating income and operating expenses below budget. The financial results are summarized below (rounded \$'s):

• Total Operating income variance from budget	-\$39,173
• Total Operating expense variance from budget	\$5,023
• Stated Overall Net Variance	-\$34,150

The main factors leading to the income shortfall were:

• Decreased pledge contributions	-\$34,605
• Less than expected Feast for Funds revenue	-6,985
• Investment losses	-22,920
• Nearly full apartment occupancy offset	15,600

The main factors contributing to the expense variance were:

• Health Insurance expense was over budget	-\$11,575
• Salaries/wages over budget due to staff turnover	-\$6,298
• Building expenses were less than anticipated	\$3,940
• Committee expenses were less than expected	\$11,527

Despite the less than favorable income and expense variances, we avoided incurring any debt to support operations. Further, we began development of a financial model which will lead to sustainability (i. e. no net income deficits) in the coming years.

## June 30, 2016 Balance Sheet

Total net assets decreased by \$240,264 since June 2015 due mostly from:

- Coverage of the 2015-16 net income deficit - \$160,785
- Capital maintenance expenditures - \$31,708
- Decline in Memorial Trust Fund value due to market losses - \$32,562

The Finance Committee decided for several reasons to move First Church's working bank accounts from BMO Harris to Associated Bank, and the transition is now complete.

The committee also ordered an audit of the church's financial records and procedures to assure that we are conducting all financial business in the best possible way, and to provide the new Senior Minister with a solid foundation on which to help us move to complete financial sustainability. The results of the audit recommended a few minor adjustments in our invoice and payment practices, but also affirmed that we are operating in a responsible manner in managing our income, expenses and assets according to accepted accounting principles.

Alan Jaberg, Noreen Gilbertsen  
Finance Committee Co-Chairs

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## Investment Report

### 2015—16 Church Year

During the year the Finance Committee and the Board of Trustees did not change its risk tolerance with the expectation that approximately 60% of our investments should be made in CD's covered by the US Government FDIC or comparable credit union insurance. The balance of our funds is invested in the UUA Common Endowment Fund (which is managed to approximate 60% bonds and 40% equities) consisting of the Memorial Trust Fund and a General Fund. The church funds are invested with the current value as follows on 6/30/2016:

Memorial Trust Fund	UUA CEF	\$ 301,785
General Fund	UUA CEF	\$ 225,050
General Fund	BMO Money Market & Cash	\$ 149,677
General Fund	Landmark Credit Union	\$ 103,340
General Fund	Brewery Credit Union	\$ 102,794
General Fund	Associated Bank Market & Cash	\$ 24,766
General Fund	Oikocredit	\$ 10,616
General Fund	Miscellaneous assets	\$ 4,721
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 922,749</b>

The UUA Common Endowment Fund has a return on investment of -9.2% for the YTD and 4.6%/year for the last 3 years; Landmark CU of 1% fixed for 2 years, and Brewery CU of 0.9% for 2 years. Money Market rates at BMO vary but are low, around 0.15%.

# **FIRST CHURCH 2015-2016 INCOME & EXPENSE HIGH LEVEL SUMMARY**

ITEM	Budget	Actual	Variance	
	'15 - '16	'15 - '16	Amount	%
Contributions				
Pledges	701,270	666,665	(34,605)	-5%
Other Contributions	32,100	43,280	11,180	35%
Total Contributions	733,370	709,944	(23,426)	-3%
Activity Income				
Feast for Funds	25,000	18,015	(6,985)	-28%
R E Fees	10,000	7,650	(2,350)	-24%
Other Sources	14,300	18,557	4,257	30%
Total Activity Income	49,300	44,222	(5,078)	-10%
Investment Income	20,000	16,651	(3,349)	-17%
Apartment Income Net of Expenses	15,850	31,450	15,600	98%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>818,520</b>	<b>802,267</b>	<b>(16,253)</b>	<b>-2%</b>
Human Resources				
Salaries & Wages	469,907	476,205	6,298	1%
Minister Housing Allowance	88,043	84,105	(3,938)	-4%
Professional Expenses	25,863	19,353	(6,510)	-25%
Insurance - Health	54,644	66,219	11,575	21%
Retirement Savings - all staff	36,185	38,420	2,235	6%
Payroll Taxes	27,328	26,866	(462)	-2%
Other	10,300	10,625	325	3%
Total Human Resources	712,270	721,792	9,522	1%
Budgeted Contributions	32,881	38,560	5,679	17%
Building Expenses	76,520	72,580	(3,940)	-5%
Basic Operations	65,159	62,772	(2,387)	-4%
Religious Education	6,800	6,796	(4)	0%
Committees	33,825	22,298	(11,527)	-34%
Extra Operations				
Capital Maintenance	38,398	34,037	(4,361)	-11%
Transfer from Fund Balance	(38,398)	(34,037)	4,361	-11%
Other	29,200	26,834	(2,366)	-8%
Total Extra Operations	29,200	26,834	(2,366)	-8%
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>956,655</b>	<b>951,632</b>	<b>(5,023)</b>	<b>-1%</b>
<b>INCOME NET OF OPERATIONS</b>	<b>(138,135)</b>	<b>(149,365)</b>	<b>(11,230)</b>	<b>8%</b>
Gain/Loss on Investment	11,500	(11,420)	(22,920)	-199%
<b>NET INCOME</b>	<b>(126,635)</b>	<b>(160,785)</b>	<b>(34,150)</b>	<b>27%</b>

## First Church Balance Sheet Year Over Year

		06/30/15	06/30/16
<b>Current Assets</b>			
10000	Cash in Bank - BMO	45,060	65,180
10001	Cash in Bank - Associated	0	24,665
10300	Scrip Business Savings - BMO	16,983	2,075
10301	Scrip Business Savings - Associated	0	101
10400	Money Manager Account - BMO	138,287	82,422
10401	Money Manager Account - Assoc	0	100
10600	Apartment Working Capital	1,000	1,000
10800	Accounts Receivable	24,854	0
10900	Prepaid Expenses	2,320	3,620
	<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>228,504</b>	<b>179,164</b>
<b>Investments</b>			
19000	Memorial Trust Fund - UUCEF	334,347	301,785
19500	Oikocredit USA	10,616	10,616
20200	CD - Brewery Credit Union	101,975	102,794
20500	CD - Landmark Credit Union	251,101	103,340
20600	UU Common Endowment Fund	236,470	225,050
	<b>Total Investments</b>	<b>934,508</b>	<b>743,584</b>
	<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>1,163,012</b>	<b>922,748</b>
<b>Current Liabilities</b>			
22000	Deferred Pledges	19,905	19,243
22400	Wish List	0	900
22500	Apartment Security Deposit	8,987	4,474
22700	YRUU Account	2,250	1,438
22750	YRUU Mission Trip Savings	5,599	5,377
24000	Pension Deductions Payable	31	1,986
24050	Prepaid RE Fees	2,625	2,203
24060	Prepaid Silent Retreat	3,635	470
24300	Accounts Payable	29,803	22,165
24600	Sabbatical Accrual	20,000	20,000
	<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>92,835</b>	<b>78,255</b>
<b>Restricted Funds</b>			
37800	Morter Fund- Donor Restricted	84,319	84,319
38200	Memorial Trust Fund	334,347	301,785
	<b>Total Restricted Funds</b>	<b>418,666</b>	<b>386,104</b>
<b>Designated Funds</b>			
38100	Capital Maintenance Reserve	114,417	82,079
	<b>Total Designated Funds</b>	<b>114,417</b>	<b>82,079</b>
<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>			
39005	Unrestricted Fund Balance	339,270	233,033
	Net Income	(106,238)	(160,785)
39010	McLaughlin Bequest	304,062	304,062
	<b>Total Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>537,094</b>	<b>376,310</b>
	<b>Total Fund Balance</b>	<b>1,070,177</b>	<b>844,493</b>
	<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Fund Balance</b>	<b>1,163,012</b>	<b>922,748</b>

# NOTES TO THE BALANCE SHEET

June 30, 2016

## Restricted (by donor) Funds

**Morter Fund:** This fund was established in accordance with a bequest of a former member. The funds are designated to sponsor seminars on individual responsibility.

## Memorial Trust Fund:

This fund contains unspecified bequests. Money placed in the fund can be expended or borrowed against only by a super majority of the congregation. The Finance Committee manages it. A fixed percentage of the fund's assets provide quarterly income to the church's operations.

## Designated (by Board) Funds

**Capital Maintenance Reserve:** This fund contains unrestricted bequest and donations that the Board designated for capital improvements.

## Unrestricted Funds

**Unrestricted Fund Balance:** This fund is the amount retained after payment of expenses or the allocation to designated funds. It increases during fiscal years in which there is an operating surplus and decreases during years in which there is an operating deficit. For fiscal security, the Board has adopted a policy of maintaining a balance in this fund that is equal to or greater than 15% of the operating expenses for the most recent fiscal year. If the balance drops below this 15% level, the restoration of the fund becomes a fiscal priority.

**McLaughlin Bequest:** This fund is the remaining unrestricted bequest balance that has not been designated for other purposes by the Board.



# INCOME OPPORTUNITY COMMITTEE

Our Board of Trustees is focused on strategies to increase revenues of First Church to insure its long-term sustainability. The IOC works with the Senior Minister and recommends to the Board each year an ongoing income plan, including fundraising and other revenue targets, so the Church attains and maintains a balanced budget and can carry out programs and ministries desired by the congregation.

During the 2016-17 church year, the IOC engaged in a number of activities to that end. Most importantly, the IOC envisioned and articulated that our 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, along with the arrival of our new Senior Minister, were “income opportunities” that the Church needed to leverage. These one-time historical events created a yearlong opportunity to raise funds and increase income for the Church’s long-term sustainability. Under the leadership of the Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom and Board member Dale Skaggs, a committed fundraising team facilitated a highly successful 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary campaign that inspired wide membership participation!

In addition, the Committee gathered 10 years of historical data to better understand trends in the Church’s income streams, increases and decreases in pledges, operational and capital expenses, and changes in membership. This data was thoroughly reviewed with our new Senior Minister and thereby provided the opportunity for all church leaders to be aligned and pursue a sustainable path going forward.

Another key accomplishment was the creation of a new tool called “the predictive model.” This was done in collaboration with the Finance Committee and led to the ability of the Board and staff to understand the mix and timing of income streams, whether it be annual pledges, investments, special fund drives or bequests. One of the most important pieces of information gleaned from utilizing this tool is how critical annual pledges are to funding the operations of the Church. The model enables the Board, Ministers and staff to predict the income that will be needed year to year to cover expenses, pursue mission driven activities and maintain a healthy fund balance for financial sustainability.

In January, the IOC and the Board hosted an “Our Financial Future” session to share information with members who have requested more transparency around the Church’s finances. We provided an overview of how our finances work and shared the new Predictive Model tool with the 60 members who attended. The Board intends to make this informational session an annual event.

In the upcoming church year, the IOC will continue to focus on revenue strategies that support our mission to *Nurture the Spirit. Engage the Mind. Inspire Action.* — Sally Lewis and Holly Patzer, Co-Chairs

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# PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The members of the Personnel Committee for 2016-2017 included Russ Langford, Damon Dorsey, Sarah Stehly, and the chair, Nancy Spransy. The committee met with Senior Minister, the Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, who is chief of staff. The committee reviewed and advised on a proposed US Department of Labor change to overtime reporting and pay. The change did not go into effect.

The committee has advised Jennifer on staff issues and medical leave policy issues. The Personnel Policies are currently under review.

Russ Langford and Damon Dorsey are leaving the committee. Their work is greatly appreciated! We welcome Cheryl Maranto and Amanda Panciera who are joining the committee.

## 175TH ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE

By Pete Koneazny and Jim Marten



Image by Reminisce Studio

On August 18, 1841, in the Milwaukee Courier, “Those Citizens of Milwaukee friendly to the organization of a Unitarian congregation” were invited to gather “at early candlelight” at a downtown Milwaukee building. Our official creation took place eight months later, in April of 1842.

Our 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration began August 19 with an indoor picnic and an “early candlelight” vespers service that was also the Rev. Jennifer’s first time in the pulpit as our new Senior Minister. On October 9 we explored our 19<sup>th</sup> century intellectual and spiritual roots through a Morter Lecture delivered by biographer Megan Marshall on “Fullness of Being: Margaret Fuller and Transcendental ‘Self Dependence.’”

Committee co-chair and Marquette University history professor, Jim Marten, tackled various facets of our history, along with some odds and ends, in a seven part blog published on the First Church website throughout the year. Jim also presented the September 25 Sunday Forum, on the social justice themes in our history. On February 12, Kim Schutte Holbrook spoke on the legacy of her ancestors, William and Caroline Metcalf, 50 year members who were significant in the planning and funding of our beloved historic building, completed in 1892. Also on February 12 we honored our history in a music and poetry service planned by Jim Marten, Music Director Alissa Rhode and the Rev. Dena McPhetres and others. On April 30, we celebrated our official founding, in conjunction with the Rev. Jennifer’s installation, featuring proclamations presented by Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, and State Senator Chris Larson. Finally, on May 9, the Milwaukee Historical Society honored First Church as among the historically

significant Milwaukee institutions celebrating milestone years.

175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary tee-shirts and Jim Marten’s First Church blog articles in printed form will continue to be available in the Common Room.

## IRMA MORTER ANNUAL LECTURE

By Lorraine Jacobs

The Irma Morter Lecture Fund Committee was formed to ensure continuity in organizing an annual lecture, honoring the wishes of Irma Morter. In 2000, Ms. Morter provided funds through her estate for the purpose of “formulating a series of lectures on Individual Responsibility,” defined as the intention of offering our best selves to others. Irma Morter was an active member of First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee until her death. Growing up in Milwaukee, she loved nature, was very independent, enjoyed philosophy and conversations. First Unitarian Society became, and remained, her spiritual home throughout her adult years.

In partnership with the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee planning committee, a lecture by Megan Marshall, author of “Margaret Fuller; A New American Life,” was held on Sunday, October 9, 2016. Margaret Fuller, the subject of Ms. Marshall’s book, was a passionate and adventurous woman of the early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Her life and friendships stirred the same intellectual currents which inspired a small but active group of Americans to create an outpost of Unitarian progressivism in frontier Milwaukee in the mid-1800’s.

The Irma Morter Lecture Fund Committee has scheduled the next lecture for Fall of 2017.

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE

By Jo Ann Bishop

The Nominating Committee, is charged with nominating members for the Standing Committees of the Board. These committees include: Board of Trustees, Nominating Committee, Income Opportunities, Personnel Committee and Finance Chair.

A year ago, the members of Nominating Committee joined members of the Membership and Stewardship Committees and the Board of Trustees for training on how to conduct one-on-one relational meetings with members of the congregation. This year the six members of Nominating Committee conducted approximately 80 one-on-one meetings. We found this process to be very valuable in uncovering talents and interests of members and hearing their thoughts on lay leadership. In an unofficial process, we shared names of members who were willing to be referred and whose interests we thought could be of service to the Membership Development Coordinator Cheri Taylor and the Director of Administration Jean Johnson so they could take advantage of our findings as well. Nominating Committee considers these meetings helpful and essential for our work and intends to continue the practice.

Nominating Committee recognized the need for leadership development in the congregation in order to support and encourage members who are considering leadership roles. We recommend that the official leadership development program that has been on hiatus be restored to foster expanded participation in leadership among congregants.

Nominating Committee members this year in addition to myself were: Diana Altstadt, John Fitak, Gordie Mueller, Bronze Quinton, Patricia Witt and Jean Johnson staff liaison. We offer deep gratitude to those many generous and talented members who have responded to the call of leadership.

## DENOMINATIONAL AFFAIRS

By Bruce Wiggins

### General Assembly in New Orleans, LA

- First Church was designated 16 delegates, and for the first time, we will be able to cast our full 16 votes as delegates can vote absentee without attending GA. Bruce Wiggins, Terry Wiggins, Janet Nortrom, Brook Worzella-Best, Tree Moore, Nancy Pajewski, Juanita Mast, and Jean Durnford will attend as delegates in person. Tree and Janet are recipients of scholarships from First Church, Tree as a first-time attendee.
- The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Rev. Dena McPhetres, and Beryl Aschenberg will also attend.
- A highlight will be the election of a new UUA President, the first female executive with 3 women running.

### Regional Assembly (RA) in Oak Brook, IL

- We were allocated 16 member delegates this year. Five members attended as delegates: Bruce Wiggins, Jessie Moffat, Denise Cawley, Michelle Naples, and Dale Skaggs. Jessie and Denise were recipients of scholarships as first-time attendees.
- A highlight this year was the UUA President candidates' forum.

### Southeast Wisconsin Unitarian Universalist Congregations (SEWUUC)

- SEWUUC enables UU representation on the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee (IFCGM), on whose Steering Committee First Church member Dianna Dentino serves.
- Terry Wiggins represents UUs on the Steering Committee of the Interfaith Earth Network, an IFCGM program.
- The Fruit and Nut Sale raised funds to purchase radio ads for UUism on WUWM and WPR.

### First Church Financial Contribution to the Denomination

- \$10,644 budgeted and paid for UUA pledges (25% of requested "Fair Share" by UUA based on percent of budget)
- \$4,937 budgeted for MidAmerica region pledges (27% of requested "Fair Share" by UUA based on \$25/member)
- \$1,200 for SEWUUC contribution (full contribution based on \$1.50/member of congregation)

# ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES: May 22, 2016

Congregation President Dale Skaggs called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. after a congregational quorum was achieved. Alexis Fielek, Don Weimer, and Scot Henry acted as Recording Secretary.

**Remarks from the President:** Dale Skaggs led with all singing “Spirit of Life” followed by his reading words from Wendell Berry. Dale recognized two significant events of the year: creating and approving a new mission statement and successfully calling a senior minister. The Interim Transition Team and the Senior Minister Search Committee were recognized for their efforts, and the staff was also thanked for their work.

Dale described the new organization structure of committees and member-led initiatives, and how no groups are being removed. We are instead changing how the groups relate to the Board and staff. He also mentioned the creation of the new Income Opportunity Committee.

Finally, Dale thanked the Trustees for their service.

**Nominating Committee:** On behalf of the Nominating Committee, Kathy Rivera presented the new responsibility for the committee. They are responsible for seeking nominees for the Board, the Treasurer, Nominating Committee, Finance Committee, Personnel Committee, and Income Opportunity Committee. They are no longer responsible for seeking nominees for other committees which allows focusing on lay leadership and cultivating members as leaders.

Kathy moved to approve Kirstin Anglea, Maria Dorsey, and Michelle Naples for three (3) year terms on the Board of Trustees, and the motion passed unanimously.

Kathy moved to approve Diana Altstadt and Patricia Witt for three (3) year terms on the Nominating Committee, and the motion passed unanimously.

The names of the 2016-2017 committee chairs recently appointed by the Board were distributed to the membership as a handout with the Annual Report.

**Financial Condition Report:** Gordie Mueller of the Finance Committee presented the financial condition report on behalf of the committee Chair, Al Jaberg, who could not be present.

The report was prefaced with a general explanation of what type of information balance sheets and income statements contain.

The church balance sheet was described as strong which means almost all of the church assets are liquid, there are no outstanding debts, we own the church building which is well-maintained, and the only liability is accounts payable which is an amount equivalent to about 5-10% of church assets.

The income statement was described as an area where we experience problems. Our income shortfall is greater than \$100,000. In 2014 we had a surplus of \$40,000, but since then, contribution income has dropped \$30,000. Other sources of the shortfall include the reversing of austere cuts from earlier years, \$75,000 ministerial transition expenses, increased cost of health insurance, and an extra pay period in the next fiscal year. Gordie added that pledge increases of 2.5% each year would largely eliminate the shortfall.

Finally, Gordie thanked the members of the Finance Committee.

**Stewardship Committee Report:** Committee Chair Tim Greene presented results for the past year. Feast for Funds brought in \$19,000, the new “wish list” request brought in \$4000, and the pledge drive with the theme “Reflect, Renew, Rejoice” has brought in over \$700,000 with over 90% of pledges in. Tim thanked the members of the Stewardship Committee and the congregation for their work and contributions.

**175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration:** Peter Koneazny reported on plans for the upcoming year. To coincide closely with the date of the forming of the congregation in 1841, there will be a celebration event in August 2016. A final celebration will take place in 2017.

**Interim Transition Team:** Stacey Koenen recapped the past two years of transition which included a better understanding of our congregation’s history, better understanding of our identity, and drafting of three mission statements of which one was selected by the congregation.

**Senior Minister Search Committee:** Committee co-chairs Nancy Pajewski and Elizabeth Lentini began by thanking the congregation for its patience and support through the process. Several statistics of the search were presented which included:

- 57 congregations were in search.
- 75 ministers were in search.
- We were the only large congregation (750 or more members) seeking a senior minister.
- We received 13 applications (the most of any congregation not on either coast).
- 6 ministers were interviewed.
- 4 ministers were selected for pre-candidating weekends.
- 16 congregations are going into a second round of searching.

Regarding our successful calling of the Reverend Jennifer Nordstrom and her experience, it was noted that we as a congregation will be molding her at the same time she is leading us.

Nancy and Elizabeth thanked staff, volunteers, congregational groups, and individuals. They specifically thanked JoAnn Bishop and Kathy Rivera for organizing Candidating Week. Finally, Nancy and Elizabeth thanked the members of the Senior Minister Search Committee.

**Associate Minister Report:** The Rev. Dena McPhetres shared her gratitude for the vitality of this community, its thoughtfulness, thoroughness, dedication, talent and love.

She expressed thanks to the staff, search committee, their spouses and partners, the Board, and specifically President Dale Skaggs.

Dena reminded us that, looking ahead, we should remember that church is all about relationship. Our future with the Reverend Jennifer is “all about entering well” and “is all about love.”

**Approval of Minutes of 2015 Annual Meeting:** Motion by Terry Wiggins, Seconded by Sonya Fitak. Motion passed.

#### **New Business:**

- Christian Becker moved that we include Nicole Sweeney’s article regarding the Black People Matter curriculum in the annual report. Seconded by Linda Mistele. Motion passed.
- Bruce Wiggins requested that the dues to the UUA be increased so we can move to being a Fair Share congregation. He also gave a reminder that General Assembly is coming up, and all should consider attending.
- Terry and Bruce Wiggins presented the Rev. Dena with the book “Lifting Our Voices”, and advised that they will be inscribed with a dedication from Bruce and Terry. A book will also be presented to the Rev. Jennifer.
- Nancy Spransy encouraged the congregation to include First Church in their estate plans.
- Linda Mistele asked if we have reserves that we owe the UUA. Gordie Mueller responded that we have never had a debt to the UUA. He clarified that we have not been able to meet the recommended Fair Share amount, but are working to close the gap.
- Cheri Briscoe asked how Fair Share is determined. Gordie replied that for a church of this size, it is a percentage of the church’s income.

Jessie Moffat encouraged others to attend Midwest Leadership School in order to build lay leadership, and expressed hope that the church would continue to support it.

Dale Skaggs thanked his wife Lynda Lambert for her support, and ended with a quote from Carl Sagan.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

# 2016-17 CHURCH LEADERSHIP

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND OFFICERS

**PRESIDENT**  
Julie Bock  
**VICE PRESIDENT**  
Don Weimer  
**SECRETARY**  
Michelle Naples  
**TREASURER**  
Tom Briscoe

## BOARD MEMBERS

Sally Lewis  
Dale Skaggs  
Holly Patzer  
Pete Koneazny  
Kirstin Anglea  
Maria Dorsey

## COMMITTEES, COORDINATORS, AND GROUPS

**AUDIO**  
Mike Paulson

**BOOK SALES**  
Beth Monhollen

**BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP**  
Chris Linder

**BUDDHIST STUDY GROUP:  
GATHERING WATERS SANGHA**  
Steve & Jeanne Lowry

**BUILDING & GROUNDS**  
Russ Drewry

**CHALICE CIRCLE STEERING COMMITTEE**  
John McNally

**CHANCEL CHOIR**  
Tristan Strelitzer

**CHILD CARE**  
Sonya Fitak

**CHILDREN'S RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**  
John Fitak

**CHRONOLOGICALLY GIFTED (TCG)**  
Sharon DePue

**CIRCLE SUPPERS**  
Sam Mueller

**COFFEE, CHRISTMAS**  
Kay Eller

**COFFEE, SUNDAY**  
**9:00:** TBA  
**11:00:** TBA

**COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY — ASSOCIATE  
MINISTER**  
Candice Haight

**COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY — SENIOR  
MINISTER**  
Jeff Percy

**DENOMINATIONAL AFFAIRS**  
Bruce Wiggins

**FEAST FOR FUNDS**  
Jane Peterson

**FINANCE**  
Al Jaberg

**FFUUN: Forties & Fifties UU Network**  
Scot Henry  
Diana Altstadt

**FIRST FRIDAY FILMS**  
Bernice Popelka

**FLOWERS**  
Tracy Smith

**FORUM**  
Lorraine Jacobs

**GALLERY**  
Alisha Koneazny

**HERITAGE SOCIETY**  
Lisa Koneazny

**HISTORY/ARCHIVES**  
Linda Presto

**INCOME OPPORTUNITY**  
Holly Patzer

**IT COMMITTEE**  
Allan Ries  
Sally Lewis

**LEADERSHIP ENHANCEMENT**  
TBA

**MEMBERSHIP**  
Beth Monhollen

**MORTER LECTURE**  
Lorraine Jacobs

**NOMINATING**  
Jo Ann Bishop

**PAGAN CELEBRATIONS**  
Kathleen Miezio  
Nick DaVia

**PASTORAL CARE ASSOCIATES  
COORDINATOR**  
Pete Neuwald

**PASTORAL CARE PROVIDERS  
COORDINATOR**  
Heather Hansen

**PERSONNEL**  
Nancy Spransy

**PLEDGE DRIVE TEAM**  
Tim Greene  
Lisa Koneazny

**PULPIT GUEST COMMITTEE**  
Jane Cliff

**SCRIP SALES**

Cheri Taylor

**SPIRITUAL RETREAT COMMITTEE**

Beth Bender  
Chris Aiken

**SPIRITUAL DIRECTIONS GROUP**

Diane Horne  
Candice Haight

**STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL**

Tim Greene  
Lisa Koneazny

**SWANS (Seasoned Women Are Naturally Social)**

Barbara Collignon  
Jeanne Durnford

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS UNDER FORTY DOING ACTIVITIES (UUUFDA)**

Susie Seidelman  
Yalanda Ludtka

**USHERS**

**9:00:** Jesse Hagen  
David Bancroft  
**11:00:** Tom LeBel  
Terry Hansen

**UU PARENTING GROUP**

Stacey Thieme  
Sarah Richards

**UU+ STUDY GROUP**

Nancy Pajewski

**WOMANSPRIT**

Janet Nortrom

**YOUTH STEERING COMMITTEE**

Nick DaVia (adult)  
Rylan McNally (youth)

**SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL\***

Bruce Wiggins

**BLACK LIVES MATTER**

Mary Devitt

**COMMUNITY BUILDING**

Diana Aldstadt  
Tom LeBel

**EARTH JUSTICE MINISTRY**

Mark Gill  
Terry Wiggins

**ESCALATING INEQUALITY**

Nancy Pajewski

**IMMIGRATION ISSUES**

Lorraine Jacobs  
Kitty Willkomm

**SHARE THE PLATE**

Bob Monahan  
Nancy Spransy

**OUTSIDE FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS****COMMON GROUND**

Jerry Fredrickson

**INTERCHANGE**

Bryna Goeckner  
Beth Bruch

**INTERFAITH CONFERENCE OF GREATER MILWAUKEE**

Dianna Dentino

**MICAH (Milwaukee Inner-city Congregations Allied for Hope)**

Pete Koneazny  
Bob Monahan

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SERVICE COMMITTEE**

TBA

**OTHER LEADERS****CHALICE CIRCLE FACILITATORS:**

Nancy Spransy, Coach  
Jeanne Durnford  
Alexis Fielek  
Juanita Mast  
Robert Szymanski  
Sue Trafton

**PASTORAL CARE ASSOCIATES:**

Anjum Alden  
Kirstin Anglea  
Michele Burke  
Jim Carse  
Deb Monthei Manske  
Gordon Mueller  
Pete Neuwald  
Janet Nortrom  
Laurie Petersen  
Jane Peterson  
Kathy Rivera  
Jan Van Schaik

**We would also like to thank some of the people who, week in and week out, do so much for the First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee:**

- Our Office Volunteers — for Chanticleer and Order of Service Assembly
- The MANY, MANY volunteers who make our Religious Education program possible
- Our dedicated and talented choir members
- Collection counters

# 2016-2017 Sermon Schedule

## SUMMER

### MAY 29

"Healing Disconnection"  
The Rev. Alan Taylor

### JUNE 5

"Rainbow Theology"  
The Rev. Dena McPhetres

### JUNE 12

"The Burdens of Being Right"  
Robert Szymanski

### JUNE 19

"Making Peace With Parents"  
The Rev. Dena McPhetres

### JUNE 26

"This is How We Do Things Around  
Here - Or Is it?"  
Kirstin Anglea

### JULY 3

"Civility and Democracy"  
The Rev. Sarah Oelberg

### JULY 10

"The Sacred Necessity of Grieving"  
Tree Moore

### JULY 17

"Elephant Wisdom"  
Bruce Wiggins & Mark Gill

### JULY 24

"Possessing the Secret of Joy"  
The Rev. Joyce Palmer

### JULY 31

"A Wondrous Love, A Saving Love"  
The Rev. Karen Quinlan

### AUGUST 7

"Chants/Chance Service III"  
The Rev. Dena McPhetres

### AUGUST 14

"The Hand That First Held Mine"  
The Rev. Kent Mayfield

### AUGUST 21

"The Home We Never Knew We Had"  
The Rev. Dena McPhetres

### AUGUST 28

"For Such a Time As This. Or Not. Who  
Knows?"  
Misha Sanders

### SEPTEMBER 4

"Making Mistakes in a Perfectionist  
World"  
The Rev. Dena McPhetres

## 2016-2017 Church Year

### SEPTEMBER 11

Ingathering Sunday  
"What do we risk to enter covenant?"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

### SEPTEMBER 18

"The Covenant of Life"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

### SEPTEMBER 25

"What Is Revealed in the Breaking?"  
Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

### OCTOBER 2

"Understanding Illness"  
The Rev. Dena McPhetres  
Pastoral Care Recognition Sunday

### OCTOBER 9

"Asking the Atlas: Where Does It  
Hurt?"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

### OCTOBER 16

"Are You Willing to Be Healed?"  
The Rev. Dena McPhetres

### OCTOBER 23

United Nations Sunday  
"Liberté, égalité, fraternité: Liberty,  
Equality, and Fraternity"  
Bruce Knotts, Director of Unitarian  
Universalist United Nations Office

### OCTOBER 30

"The 'Magic' of Ritual, the Science of  
Healing"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

### NOVEMBER 6

"Writing the Future's Story Today"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

### NOVEMBER 13

"Life Guiding Stories"

The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

### NOVEMBER 20

"Stories of Gratitude"  
Multi-Generational Thanksgiving Ser-  
vice  
The Rev. Dena McPhetres and Jennifer  
Nordstrom  
Beryl Aschenberg, Director of Reli-  
gious Education

### NOVEMBER 27

Pulpit Guest, TBA

### DECEMBER 4

"Becoming Present: the Fire Within"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

### DECEMBER 11

"Presence in This City, at This Time"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom



# 2016-2017 Sermon Schedule

## **DECEMBER 14**

Blue Christmas Vespers  
The Rev. Dena McPhetres

## **DECEMBER 18**

"On-The-Spot Christmas Pageant"  
Beryl Aschenberg, Director of Religious Education

## **DECEMBER 24**

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom and The Rev. Dena McPhetres  
Beryl Aschenberg, Director of Religious Education

## **DECEMBER 25**

NO SERVICES. HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

## **JANUARY 1**

"Setting Our Intentions"  
The Rev. Dena McPhetres

## **JANUARY 8**

"Waking the Prophet Within"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

## **JANUARY 15**

"Staying Awake: Movements Towards Wholeness"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

## **JANUARY 22**

"Intersectional Self-Care"  
Pastor Danny Givens, Jr.

## **JANUARY 29**

"Prophetic Community: Remembering the Future Together"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

## **FEBRUARY 5**

"What Makes Us a 'We'?"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

## **FEBRUARY 12**

"Beams Of Hope: Turning Points in First Church History"  
The Rev. Dena McPhetres

## **FEBRUARY 19**

"What Makes Me an 'I'?"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom and Beryl Aschenberg, Director of Religious Education

## **FEBRUARY 26**

Annual Youth Service  
"A UU Youth's Guide to the Media"

## **MARCH 5**

"Risking Vulnerability"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

## **MARCH 12**

"Leap of Faith"  
The Rev. Christina Leone-Tracy, Pulpit Guest

## **MARCH 19**

"Risk as a Growth Practice"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

## **MARCH 26**

"The Risk of Faith"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

## **APRIL 2**

"The Beautiful Not Yet: Allowing Transformation"  
The Rev. Dena McPhetres

## **APRIL 9**

"Sailing Through the Air: Transformation's Loss and Freedom"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

## **APRIL 16**

"There Is Simply to Begin: The Life That is Becoming"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

## **APRIL 23**

"Can We Bee the Change?"  
Earth Day Sunday  
The Rev. Dena McPhetres

## **APRIL 30**

Installation of our Senior Minister, the Reverend Jennifer Nordstrom  
at Immanuel Presbyterian Church at 4:00 p.m.

## **MAY 7**

"Embodying Our Values"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

## **MAY 14**

"The Body's Truths"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom  
Mother's Day Service with Child Dedication

## **MAY 21**

"Embraced By This Community"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

## **MAY 28**

"It's Not All Karma: Theodicy and Grace"  
The Rev. Dr. Adam Robersmith

## **JUNE 4**

"Communal Joy: Flower Communion"  
The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom  
Flower Communion

# Wheel of Life

May 10, 2016—May 30, 2017

## New Members

### Fall 2016

Arciszewski, Andrea  
Becker, John  
Dahlstrum, Thyra  
Broman, Erika  
Buelow, Michelle  
Ermenc, Elizabeth (BJ)  
Geenen, Patricia  
Geenen, Paul  
Herringa, Joel  
Ludtke, Jason A.  
Ludtke, Yalanda  
Maker, Laura  
Piele, Linda  
Seidelman, Susie

### Spring 2017

Considine, Suzie  
Gottschalk, Erica  
Knaebe, Katie  
Law, James  
Woehrer, Jolynn

## Weddings

Paul Schwartz & Maia Ferrella  
Officiated by Schuyler Vogel  
Michael Montalto & Julia Victor  
Officiated by Sarah Oelberg  
David Starry & Kathryn Staats  
Officiated by Linda Hansen

## High School Seniors

Mary Ann Aiken  
Henry Delllutri  
Emma Duffy  
Annalise Lozier  
Rylan McNally  
Joe Neumann  
Erik Noble-Macherey

## Dedications of Parents and Children

### November 2016

Charles Henry Hagen  
Theodore Haobo Li Dunham Becker  
Avenlee Rose Kneeland  
William Jay Weston  
Hazel Kuiper Quinton  
Kaylin Marie Hilgeman  
Gianna Evelyn Cannon-Krzynski  
Lillian Desmond Ford

### May 2017

Lillian Desmond Ford  
Gianna Evelyn Cannon-Krzynski

## Memorial Services

Maria Moore  
Lu Krug  
Joy Botts  
David Ryser  
Albert Glenn Siemsen

**See Addendum on last  
page.**

## Heritage Society

Paula Anderson  
Judy Anderson  
Christian Becker  
Jo Ann Bishop  
Mark Bishop  
Joy Botts  
Rod Botts  
Cheri Briscoe  
Tom Briscoe  
Susanne Carter  
Paul Carter  
Susan Comstock  
Steven Culver  
Jill Erickson  
James Ford  
Judith Ford

Jerry Fredrickson  
Scot Henry  
Elizabeth Irwin Moore  
Nelson Kading  
Adele Kaferly  
Linda Katz  
Mike Katz  
Andrew Kennedy  
Lisa Koneazny  
Pete Koneazny  
Lucille Krug  
Hank Kulesza  
Lynda Lambert  
Michael Lewis  
Sally Lewis  
Loren Leys

Christine Linder  
Katherine Marrs  
Patricia McFarland  
Sally Miles Heuer  
Robert Moore  
Mike Newman  
Ellyn Newman  
Janet Nortrom  
Marlowe Nortrom  
Mimi Notestein  
Patrick Patterson  
Barbara Patterson  
Tom Radoszewski  
Michael Radtke  
Lisa Radtke  
Kathy Rivera

Patricia Scharmach  
Max Scharmach  
Dale Skaggs  
Nancy Spransy  
Robert Szymanski  
Christopher Vernon  
Melinda Vernon  
Don Weimer  
Lois Wesener  
Bruce Wiggins  
Terry Wiggins  
Edwin Wiley  
Bettie Zillman

# Staff Reports

## MINISTRY

### Senior Minister

This has been a joyful and historic year at First Church. We are a vibrant and growing congregation, and this 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our founding is also the beginning of a new chapter, with me joining you as your Senior Minister.

#### 175 Years at the First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee

We celebrated our 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary throughout the church year. We began with a picnic and candlelight vespers service on August 19, 2016, when, 175 years ago, the first Milwaukeeans interested in forming a Unitarian society gathered 'at early candlelight.' In October this year, author Megan Marshal joined us to deliver an Irma Morter lecture reflecting on the time of our founding through the lens of Margaret Fuller, a Unitarian leader in the mid-1800s. In February, member and historian Jim Marten and Associate Minister Dena McPhetres led a worship service on the 175-year history of our congregation. Our 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Campaign team worked with the congregation to raise over \$200,000 in honor of this historic year. In worship in April, we explored what could happen next in our historic congregation. There, we received a proclamation from Mayor Barrett and the city of Milwaukee declaring April 30, 2017 "First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee Day." State Senator and church member Chris Larson presented a citation of commendation from the State of Wisconsin thanking First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee for 175 years of service to the community, and congratulation us on our anniversary.

#### My First Year Serving as Your Senior Minister

It has been an honor and a joy to begin serving as your Senior Minister. It has been a year full of firsts, learning a new system and people. I am deeply grateful for your compassion, generosity, and patience as we learn one another and build a shared ministry together. In the first year, I have chosen to focus on four priorities:

- 1) Worship
- 2) Leading the Staff Team
- 3) Relationship with the Board of Trustees

#### 4) Stewardship

Worship this year has been exciting, rewarding, and full. We followed monthly worship themes and joined the Unitarian Universalist theme-based Soul Matters Sharing Circle. I developed a new Worship Associates' program that invites more collaboration from our lay worship leaders, broadens the perspectives included in worship, and creates a more multi-vocal worship experience for the congregation. Worship attendance is up by about 15% compared to last year.

The Staff Team is a core component of leadership in any large congregation. This year we have been working on team dynamics, work load, and capacity. We have had a number of staff transitions this year, giving us the opportunity to analyze the structure and responsibilities of each position and make adjustments to fit the system. We are lucky to have so much talent and dedication on the staff team, and I look forward to continuing to work with the staff to maximize their leadership and service to the congregation.

It has been a joy to work with such a competent group of leaders on the Board of Trustees. This year we explored the role of the Board in governing a large congregation, and analyzed the policies and procedures. The Board decided to develop a more comprehensive policy framework for governing and to embark on a congregational process of crafting five-year goals, called "Ends." This work will begin in earnest next church year.

This has been a very successful year for the congregation's stewardship. We have met or surpassed all the stewardship goals for the year, and are on track for a sustainable financial future. The Income Opportunities Committee, working with the Finance Committee, created a 'predictive model' for our financial future. Together with them and the Board, I have developed a seven year plan for steadily increasing our operating income and holding our expenses down. The very successful 175<sup>th</sup> Campaign and the successful pledge drive this year put us steadily on a path towards sustainability.

#### Senior Minister's Committee on Ministry

The Senior Minister Committee on Ministry (CoM)

broadened the scope of its purpose to be more in line with the UUA principles of a contemporary CoM. While the Committee will still provide a conduit of feedback from the congregation to the Senior Minister, it also will collaborate with the Senior Minister to overview and assess the broader ministries of First Church.

To that end, the CoM recommended and the Board of Trustees approved that the First Church Bylaws be amended to reflect the following CoM purposes:

- Addressing the question of whether First Church ministries are accomplishing and advancing the First Church mission
- Acting as a think tank for the big picture of First Church ministry
- Assisting the Senior Minister in determining the most effective strategies to carry out the goals of the congregation

The CoM is not a policy-making body, but rather is available for counsel and feedback to the Senior Minister in regards to the ministry of the church.

### **Installation**

On Sunday, April 30, the congregation formally installed me as your Senior Minister in a joyous ceremony at Immanuel Presbyterian Church. About 450 of us gathered to ceremonially recognize our relationship and make promises to each other. After the worship service, we headed across the street to the Astor Hotel for a reception and celebration of the congregation's 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Many hands helped make this beautiful celebration possible, including the celebrants who came from near and far, the staff, the Installation Committee, especially co-chairs Jo Ann Bishop and Susie Persch, the Ministerial Search Committee, who brought us all together in the first place, and the congregation for the call, the ceremony, and the journey of shared ministry on which we are traveling together!

- The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

## **Associate Minister**

I write this just days before our new Senior Minister's Installation Service when we will joyously and solemnly make promises to journey together in shared ministry into the next era of First Church. The past year has been a whirlwind, including my service during the "bridge period" between Senior Ministers and the exciting beginning of ministry with Jennifer. The 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our congregation's founding was a meaningful context in which to embark upon a new beginning.

Updates on my four focus areas include:

### **Pastoral Care**

A caring listening presence was provided by our ten Pastoral Care Associates to 54 members of our church community as they faced significant life events and difficult transitions, including illness, accidents, surgeries, death of a loved one, chemo, job loss, separation and divorce, hospice, homebound elders and the stress of caregiving. Pete Neuwald served his third year as PCA Coordinator and Laurie Petersen, as Lead Trainer, supported the team with continuing education and our first annual retreat. Jennifer and I are deeply grateful to this staff-led team. It is only by working together that we are able to care for our community so well.

A team of 21 church members served as Pastoral Care Providers, bringing meals and providing rides for short-term needs. Only ten rides were requested and half of those fulfilled. Sixteen individuals or families requested meals and all were fulfilled, including multiple meals to some members.

Heather Hansen, with back-up from Stacy Koenen, served her second year coordinating the Providers. Members express great appreciation for the kindness of a warm meal upon return from the hospital, after the birth or adoption of a baby, during hospice care or difficult medical treatments.

Two new pastoral care ministries were added this year. The Chronologically Gifted Group formed a Memorial Service Reception team, providing simple yet elegant food and beverages for receptions in the Leenhouts Common Room after a memorial service, upon the family's request. This ministry both supports a grieving family at a vulnerable time and allows members to give back to the community.

The Shawl Ministry began in February, with a group of a dozen enthusiastic knitters and crocheters creating soft and beautiful shawls and lap robes to comfort members going through difficult life transitions. Although we cannot take away another's suffering, we can show our care through the gentle embrace of the shawl, which serves as a visible symbol of the love of our community, especially when the person is not able to attend services and activities here.

### **Small Groups**

We have eleven active Affinity Groups this year including Book Discussion, Gathering Waters Sangha, Chancel Choir, The Chronologically Gifted, FFUUN, Pagan Celebrations, SWANS, UU Parenting, and WomanSpirit. Two new groups

were created, the UU+ Study Group and Unitarian Universalists Under Forty Doing Activities or UUUFDA for short! These are member-led ministries, groups that gather around shared interests or demographics to find friends and deeper belonging here. Affinity Groups are open to everyone to come and go as they wish.

Membership Development Coordinator Cheri Taylor and I work to support and guide our Small Group Ministry program, which is a staff-led team called Chalice Circles. These are groups of 8 to 10 people who covenant to gather twice a month, engaging in deep conversations about topics of personal and spiritual significance. I work closely with our Chalice Circle Facilitators and their Coach Nancy Spransy.

Due to declining enrollment over the past several years, we decided to put new registrations for Chalice Circles on hiatus for next church year. Our current four Chalice Circles are invited to continue for one more year. Next winter, I'll gather a new team to re-vision our small group ministry and explore options that may include Theme Circles to complement and deepen members' and friends' experience of the monthly Worship Themes.

### **Social Justice**

We were fortunate to welcome Bruce Wiggins as our new Social Justice Council chairperson this year. Bruce brings a depth of experience in church life, justice work, and a broader view of UUism from many years of participation in General and Regional Assemblies. He also serves as our Denominational Affairs Coordinator, bringing our attention to UUA justice initiatives. The Social Justice Council serves as an umbrella organization of lay leaders who engage our congregation in member-led ministries of service, learning and action, addressing many compelling and urgent justice needs in our city and world while building relationships in the community.

Our Social Justice Council adopted four goals for the year:

- Explore a "ministry of accompaniment" in our hyper-segregated city.
- Improve communications with the congregation about social justice activities.
- Work with youth on social justice concerns.
- Explore social justice as spiritual development.

Notably, the Immigration Issues Action Group embarked on a discernment process this spring to guide the congregation to explore and discern whether to become a Sanctuary Church.

We have fifteen different justice initiatives open to everyone to participate—you are welcome to join in at any time at any level! The Social Justice member-led ministry reports are included elsewhere in the Annual Report. New ideas for justice activities are always welcome. Contact Bruce Wiggins or me for help and consultation.

### **Summer Services**

Our doors are open with one worship service at 10:00 a.m. throughout the summer, which continues to be a vital ministry of our "year-round" church. We held 15 summer services in 2016, including six clergy guests, five services from me and four member-led services.

Average attendance was 131 adults, a decline of 21 people. I hold the honor of leading worship for both the highest and lowest attendance last summer! I work closely with the Pulpit Guest staff-led team to plan and coordinate summer services. In addition, I provide one-to-one coaching for each member who leads a service, giving them advice and support as they write their sermon and craft the worship service. Many guests come looking for a spiritual home during the summer. I am grateful that our members continue to provide a warm welcome with greeters, ushers, music, hospitality, Religious Education, child care and more.

### **Conclusion**

After eight years, I still feel a strong call to serve as your Associate Minister and look forward to the future with hope and trust. I am delighted to be working with our new Senior Minister and we are off to a great start. With deep gratitude for your support, I anticipate nourishing rest and renewal during my sabbatical August – December 2017. You are in good hands and will continue to thrive in my absence. I look forward to our reunion and re-engagement in January.

- The Rev. Dena McPhetres

# ADMINISTRATION

## Director of Administration

This year, First Church's 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we welcomed our new Senior Minister Jennifer Nordstrom! What an exciting and significant time to have the privilege of working on staff as we look forward to the next chapter of First Church's story. Much of my focus this year has been in support of this last phase of ministerial transition as well as managing staffing transitions and issues.

Reporting to the Senior Minister, I am responsible for administration of the church including the areas of financial management, strategic assistance, personnel, and facilities management. I manage these areas with a combination of talented staff, expert and dedicated volunteers, and contract services. During the multi-year Senior Minister Transition, I have had additional responsibilities for orienting and supporting our Interim Senior Minister, and now the new settled Senior Minister, as well as providing continuity to the Board of Trustees.

### Staff Team

My work this year focused on the arrival of our new Senior Minister Jennifer Nordstrom. But it also featured more adjustments to the administrative staff structure.

The process of the Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom and I getting to know each other began during candidating week in late April 2016. Welcoming our new leader (and my new supervisor) to First Church and helping her navigate our systems and processes is a high priority for me. We have gotten off to a good start with staff and Board "start-up" retreats, weekly whole staff meetings, establishing new cross-department staff teams and working together on projects. I think it has gone so well, it's hard to remember she's been our Senior Minister for less than a year.

August 2016, Communications Coordinator Mary Behler decided to return to private sector work. Jennifer and I quickly agreed that this was an opportunity to consider further restructuring of the two administrative positions: Communications Coordinator and Office Assistant. We studied the range of communications methods, the skills and time needed for each method, and the nature of the communications market. We determined that communications responsibilities of a more clerical nature should be assigned to the Office Assistant and the Communications Coordinator responsibilities

should focus on those requiring a more specialized skill set. Redistributing some of the Communications Coordinator responsibilities, we increased the Office Assistant to fulltime and decreased the Communications Coordinator to 70% time.

Happily, our wonderfully capable Office Assistant Tracy Smith was eager to increase her hours to fulltime – during the multiple-month gap in Communications Coordinator staffing and ultimately in a permanent capacity. Tracy has done a terrific job taking on the bulk of the work on the Chanticleer newsletter, weekly announcements and orders of service. She solidified the functionality of our relatively new church management software (ChMS is database + other special capabilities) and she continues to bring online additional member services and capabilities the ChMS can provide. She ably manages the facility scheduling calendar which organizes our busy church activities and is now available via the member portal MyFirstChurch. These are just a few highlights amongst the many services the Office Assistant position provides to the church programs and members.

After reviewing many strong Communications Coordinator applicants, Jennifer and I hired Angelica Dudenhoefer in late November. Angelica brings us marketing and communications expertise including a Masters degree in communication. She began by crossing-training to the Office Assistant position when Tracy was on medical leave for a few months. Angelica manages our social media program, oversees the production of the Chanticleer and announcements as well as all communications. She recently began some major projects to lift our communications program to a new level which will come to fruition in the coming months. These include developing detailed communications policies, developing relationships with church members with marketing/communications expertise to expand the reach of her work, implementing professional tools for design, social media and editing, and managing the redesign of our website which was converted to WordPress a short while ago.

Ed McGraw is in his third year as Facilities Manager at First Church. He is responsible for managing the complexities of our intensive building use, directing our friendly and capable Facilities Assistants Jim Spice and Paul Moriarity to assure we accommodate all program needs. With decades of large facilities management experience, Ed manages repairs and improvements of our facilities with the assistance of part-time Maintenance Worker Art Sims and the expertise of the talented Building and Grounds Staff-led Team. Ed has done a

great job managing numerous projects this year including: replacing our 40 year old dish sanitizing machine (parts no longer available!), working with Alissa and contractor to install the new hearing assistive systems in the sanctuary and Max Otto Hall, repairs to the sanctuary heating system, working with We Energies to re-route our gas lines, working with We-Energies and their subcontractors to repair our main electrical line which they damaged while doing utility work on Ogden Avenue last fall. Very importantly, with a long-range view of building management, Ed and the B&G Team completed an update of our facilities condition survey which is a planning tool with a 5-10 year outlook.

Finally, as the church's administrator for nearly 19 years, I have a long and broad overview of church operations. I am a key person to provide newer staff a larger context for our work, both "historical" perspective and systems dynamics.

### **Board of Trustees & Executive Team**

I am a member of the Executive Team of the Board of Trustees, attending monthly meetings of each body. My support of the Board includes institutional memory and continuity, providing operational perspectives to issues, and knowledge about First Church dynamics and norms.

I supported the Board, as well as the staff, in implementing the restructure of our church committees and groups to better fit our church's size. This is work that the Board and staff conceptualized last year with Interim Minister Elaine Peresluha. This year, we've implemented this new model and communicating the shift in relationships to the broader congregation has been important. Jennifer, Dena and I presented a Board BBBC program in early April to explore how this structure functions.

In addition, I supported the Board and staff with extra management issues after Elaine Peresluha's early departure last spring, including helping to organize the annual congregational meeting. I was again a steady presence during this "bridge" period until Jennifer arrived August 1.

### **Committees of the Board & Staff-Led Teams**

With our organizational restructure, I continue to work closely with two Committees of the Board: Finance and Nominating. I also collaborate with, and provide support for, the new Income Opportunity Committee. This year I provided information and messaging input for the successful inaugural "Our Financial Future" pro-

gram in late January.

A special project of note that I managed with support of the dedicated and talented Finance Committee is a comprehensive external audit and review of financial procedures which was completed in May-June 2016. An external audit is highly recommended when there is transition of senior ministers. We came through with flying colors; all is ship-shape.

The staff-led teams I am responsible for are: the IT Team, Sunday collection counters (Tracy works closely with them), Building and Grounds (as reported above, Ed leads them), and History/Archives.

The IT Team is comprised of expert and experienced members working in the information technology field who assist with various church projects. I "represent the client" at the table. Most of their work is done behind the scenes supporting the staff and our enterprise-level computing infrastructure. They also are tech support for staff, answering technical questions when they arise. This year we upgraded the Wi-Fi service, upgraded two PCs per our regular schedule, set up Jennifer's PC, and procured other equipment such as the all-in-one computer for member services. Equipment such as battery backups were also kept up to date. We removed outdated and unused equipment from storage areas and helped with staff transitions and absences.

Jennifer brought us the concept of staff teams that cross departments. I lead the staff finance team. Our project for this year is to closely track pledge payments, noting reasons for non-payment on a quarterly basis (e.g., loss of job, moved away). Responding to the quarterly data and the season, this team plans messaging that accompanies each monthly pledge statement.

Finally, with the guidance of a pro bono marketing and branding expert, I managed a process of developing a new logo and additional visual brand elements. Implementation of the new logo was delayed when we had staffing gaps, but Angelica and I plan to roll out the new look in late summer in time for Ingathering Sunday. It was a very exciting project and I'm anxious for the "big reveal" as we shape our brand more intentionally.

This has been another year filled with changes and transitions. It has been inspiring to reflect on First Church's amazing legacy. From that 175-year foundation, it is exciting to imagine together all the possibilities and potential the next years hold for the church with Jennifer's leadership. Let's move toward a shared vision for First Church with grace, holding each other with care.

Love to each of you on your journey,

Jean Johnson  
Director of Administration

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### Director of Religious Education

“The religious way is the deep way, the way that sees what physical eyes alone fail to see, the intangibles of the heart of every phenomenon. The religious way is the way that touches universal relationships; that goes high, wide and deep, that expands the feelings of kinship.” -Sophia Lyon Fahs

#### State of the Village

Religious education at First Unitarian Society has been robust this year. We’ve had significantly higher registration and participation, and my sense is that our children have been very responsive to our theme of “Unitarian Universalist Identity.” They seem to be feeling a sense of comfort within our home church as a place that they can count on to be there for their families, a place where they can explore what is important, where they can question, doubt, consider, and connect. They are discovering that they can make a difference in the world, both locally and globally. They are testing their beliefs.

We seem to have resolved the previous disproportion between participants of the two RE sessions. I credit this to the re-scheduling of the eighth grade *Our Whole Lives* class at the 11:00 a.m. RE session rather than holding it at a time when the rest of the church is empty. We now have a greater balance between the two morning RE programs, giving us classes that are neither too large nor too small, thus providing a much better learning environment for our children. The one exception to this is the 9:00 a.m. 6-8 Grade class, which continues to struggle with consistent attendance. The Youth Group is once again thriving, however. It is such a joy to witness the relationships that have developed as our Young Religious Unitarian Universalist (YRUU) group grew in both size and depth.

#### Educating towards Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, and Multi-Culturalism

The CRE committee chose to continue to focus energy this year addressing racial stratification and injustice. Once again, I engaged Patrick Mulvey in lifting up this important work as we strengthened the *Black People Matter* (BPM) curriculum that was introduced in 2016:

changing some lesson plans, adding new resources, and putting into play some of the new understandings we had come to in the past year regarding the work of anti-racism, anti-oppression and multiculturalism. The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom collaborated on a deeper training for our twenty-two BPM volunteers, and Reggie Jackson of *America’s Black Holocaust Museum* joined us to provide context to our training with a presentation on the historical underpinnings of systemic racism in Milwaukee and the United States. Black People Matter was offered over the course of two Sundays in January in RE, with thematically corresponding sermons in the Sanctuary. I was excited to share over 50 copies of this curriculum with my UU colleagues this year, and look forward to a network of possibility when ideas are shared across the denominational network of religious educators.

Additionally:

- Picture books used in RE Classes and Lessons were examined and curated for inclusion of People of Color and multicultural themes/ perspectives.
- RE children will be joining the adults in the Sanctuary on May 7 as part of the Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism’s call for solidarity through a White Supremacy Teach-In within our UU churches. Additional time will be spent in the classrooms and youth group exploring this topic.

#### Children Welcomed in Services

This year we continued the practice of having children in the service three out of four Sundays per month, as was instituted in the previous church year. On those days, adults, youth, and children began worship together in the sanctuary. Children and youth left after the “Time for all Ages” to attend their religious education classes. As the Rev. Jennifer noted in one of her early Chanticleer columns, “When we teach our children they are welcome in the church, that they are valuable members of the church who are expected to be a part of the community, they learn to believe it. The future of liberal religion lies in integrating children and families into the fabric of the congregation, so those children grow up knowing the church is their place.”

#### Other Religious Education for Children and Youth :

**First Sundays** Themes included: Homelessness and Compassion (Good Neighbor toiletry bags created); Giving Tree and Mitten Tree collection (gifts wrapped and winter wear donated to Pathfinders; Relationships-Friendship Day (the children created valentines for peo-



ple in our congregation); Standing on the side of Love with Immigrants and Refugees (children sent over 100 postcards to elected officials regarding their feelings about how America “welcomes the stranger” into our country) and Teacher Appreciation Day (making gifts for our RE teachers).

**Our 2016 Multigenerational Holiday Service** was an “On-The-Spot Pageant,” narrated for the first time by the Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom. The weather was sub-zero, which I’m sure contributed to slighter attendance than usual, but have no fear, we plan to repeat this pageant next year!

**RE Stewardship Challenge for Children and Youth** Our 175th Special Gifts Campaign "Ignite the Future" marked the first time in recent years that specifically invited young people to contribute a financial gift. (\$1.75 or \$17.50 were suggested targets). Contributions garnered them a gold commemoration pin, as well as their name on the First Church poster listing generous donors.

**Share the Plate:** The children & youth selected, by majority vote, the *Kids Matter, Inc.* organization as the Share the Plate recipient for May 2017.

**Inclusion Buddies:** Four adults answered the mid-year call to offer one-to-one attention, guidance, and connection to an 11:00 a.m. RE class, allowing for a positive experience for more children and best strategies for engaging all.

**High School Seniors** were invited to participate in a new program called “Hearts on Fire” which allowed them to more fully explore their theology and values with our Ministers, DRE, and Youth Program Coordinator. Five participants have chosen to share their truth at the annual RE Sunday Services held on May 21, 2017. We send them forth with love, and hope they have an enduring sense of First Church as a spiritual home they can return to at any time. (Please see “Wheel of Life” page for names.)

**Kari Stenitzer** departed from the position of RE Administrative Assistant to pursue graduate work in October 2016. **Erin Wantoch** joined the staff in that role in November 2016.

## RE Gratitude and Stats

**How many people does it take to run our Children and Youth RE program?** This year, it took 19 Teachers, nine Youth Advisors, 58 Class Assistants, 19 committee members, and 2.2 FTE hours divided among five staff. Thanks to all who gave generously of their talents and time in helping to create vibrant and engaging programming throughout the year. I am especially grateful to John Fitak, the CRE Committee chair, outgoing members Cecelia Groshek (youth rep) Amy Machgan, and Katie Maedke Hall, and continuing members Lynda Cipov, Kevin Driscoll, Laura Ehlers, and Becky Hollman. Additionally, a shout out to our hard working RE staff who give so much of themselves to this work: Mariah Groshek, Lindsey Porter, Deb Solis, and Erin Wantoch.

For those of you who appreciate metrics, see below for look at RE registration and attendance:

### Looking to the Year Ahead:

I believe that our strong and loving faith community is positioned well to create lifelong memories and commitment for people of all ages. Here are some of the changes you can expect for 2017-2018:

- **The first Sundays of each month will no longer be devoted to multi-aged class gatherings.** Some of the projects done on First Sundays in the past will morph into either classroom activities or coffee hour activities that invite participation from the whole congregation.
- **Children and Youth in K5-12<sup>th</sup> grade will be joining the adults in the sanctuary every Sunday,** either for a short “Time for All Ages” or for Multigenerational Services.
- **RE parents and other volunteers will have the opportunity to take ownership** of full projects such as our annual Mitten Tree, Holiday Gift Giving, Teacher Appreciation, Good Neighbor bags, Share the Plate RE Voting, and more.
- **Our vision for Adult Faith Development is metamorphosing.** This summer, a group of select members will gather to discuss the meaning of “faith,” the process of faith formation, the needs of adult

2016-17	2015-16	2014-15	Comparisons taken on averages through the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday of April
207	163	204	Number of registered children and youth
93	78	89	Average attendance

learners, desired outcomes of an ADF program at First Church, and best possible modalities. It is going to be an exciting time of discovery as we move forward in creating a plan.

### **Professional Development:**

This year I celebrated my 25<sup>th</sup> year as a Unitarian Universalist Religious Educator, and “walked the stage” to receive UUA Credentialing recognition at the 2016 General Assembly in Columbus, Ohio. In addition to GA, I participated in the following development opportunities:

- Mosaic Makers Conference: Leading Vital Multicultural Congregations (August 2016)
- LREDA National Fall Conference: Bringing a Spiritual Dimension to Tough Topics: Money, Death, Race and Sex (October 2016)
- LREDA Large add-on: Bias, Prejudice & Stereotypes – What “Colorblindness” Prevents Us from Seeing (October 2016)
- CMwD LREDA Winter Symposium: Technology for the Religious Educator AND Adapting Curricula to Changing Needs (November 2016)
- America’s Black Holocaust Museum Founder’s Day Event (February 2017)
- Racial Justice: The Courage to Act Workshop (March 2017) MidAmerica Regional Assembly presentation by Eboo Patel (April 2017)
- Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, Multiculturalism Staff Team Member (ongoing)

### **Conclusion**

Way back in 1839, Unitarian Minister William Ellery Channing wrote that “the great end in religious instruction... is to awaken the soul, to excite and cherish spiritual life.” I believe that the great challenge and promise of our lifespan R.E. programming is just that: to awaken our souls, our sense of life in all its wonder and wisdom, curiosity and questioning, excitement and tranquility; to elicit and treasure our spiritual lives, our awareness of values and our search for deeper meaning. It is a privilege to be on this journey with you.

In faith, with love,  
Beryl Aschenberg, DRE

## **Youth Program Coordinator**

The Youth Program Coordinator (YPC) reports directly

to the Director of Religious Education (DRE) and is responsible for the planning and coordinating of programs for youth in eighth grade Our Whole Lives (OWL) and grades 9-12 by working with adult advisors, the Youth Steering Committee, staff, and parents. In addition, the YPC is responsible for coordinating the week-long Habitat for Humanity Mission Trip, managing communications between all adult volunteers for grades 9-12, planning and scheduling all activities for grades 9-12, coordinating the annual Youth Service, and communicating with youth and parents.

As a part-time, 18 hour/week staff position, this has been my third year assuming these responsibilities and I must say that each year brings me more joy and satisfaction knowing that I can make such a positive difference in the lives of our youth at First Church.

### **Our Whole Lives (OWL: 8<sup>th</sup> grade)**

Our Whole Lives is a lifespan sexuality education UUA curriculum. In the First Church RE program, OWL is focused on 8<sup>th</sup> grade youth. This past year, we conducted OWL classes on Sunday mornings from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. from September through May with 15 youth participants graduating. Thank you to our outstanding and dedicated team of OWL facilitators this past year: Jacqi Akert, Dianne Link, John Fitak, Beth Monhollen and Bob Mohanan. We may be seeking two new additional members to our OWL facilitator team next year—one male and one female.

### **Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU: 9-12 grades)**

Due to lower participation numbers in youth group this past year, our separate 9<sup>th</sup> grade youth Pillars program is now on hiatus until the time is needed to offer this program again. Our 9<sup>th</sup> graders joined our 10-12<sup>th</sup> grade youth in our YRUU Sunday morning classroom from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. for heartfelt discussions chosen by the youth and led by both youth and youth advisors.

In July 2016, we sent 11 youth and three adult advisors on our annual mission trip to work for Habitat for Humanity in Battle Creek, Michigan. Thank you to our 2016 Mission trip advisors: Carl DeLeo, Russell Drewry and Jean Crandall-Jacobs. In July 2017, we will be sending 10 youth and three advisors (Russell Drewry, John Fitak and Alisha Koneazny) back to the Battle Creek Area Habitat for Humanity.

Our YRUU youth continue to be inspirational and dynamic. The annual Youth Service (February 26) “A UU Youth’s Guide to the Media” focused on how the media

influences their lives both positively and negatively. That service raised \$614.00 for both Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin and our Mission Trip Fund. Additional Mission Trip fundraisers included a fall talent show (\$889.00) and the annual Mother's Day Gourmet Dessert Auction.

Highlights of this year included:

- A youth led Forum program (November 2016)
- Three lock-in's with themes of UNICEF (October 2016), "Lessons of Loss" (January 2017) and an OWL theme of Relationships/Gender Issues (March 2017)
- Our youth connected for the second year with a local organization, Inhabit, which provided us the opportunity to work on a house in the Sherman Park neighborhood in need of basement cleaning and reorganizing. (March 2017)
- In April, we gathered to determine if our current YRUU youth group meeting time of 9:00 a.m. was working for our teens and their families. Those present at this meeting mostly spoke on advocacy for keeping the meeting time the same for next year.
- Every Saturday in May our youth are joining our Earth Justice Ministry adult group to work in Cudahy Nature Preserve to remove the invasive weed "garlic mustard" as part of the volunteer Weed-Out program sponsored by the Milwaukee County Parks System.
- In the Summer of 2017, we are inviting our grade 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade youth to join us for a once a month service with our theme being "Connecting to Different Forms of Worship".
- We offered a new four-part series this year for our graduating high school seniors called "Hearts on Fire," which provided them opportunities to reflect on topics of good & evil, the meaning of life & death, humanity & salvation and UU identity in developing their Credo Statements under the direction of our Senior Minister, Associate Minister, Director of Religious Education and myself.

### **Young Adults (18-23 year olds)**

Another new development this year is the formation of a young adult group for ages 18-23 calling themselves "Friends for Thought". A small group of YRUU Alumni and UW-Milwaukee students were involved in the planning of their first meeting scheduled for June 17. Their mission is to bring together like minded young

adults ages 18-23 for friendship, fellowship and community building. They plan to meet quarterly and hope to unite young adults whom we have been missing from our faith community and those searching for a spiritual home to nurture their spirit, engage their mind and inspire their action.

### **Leadership**

The Youth Steering Committee (YSC) consists of adults and high school youth that oversee the senior high Religious Education program. Members are: Rylan McNally, Kaetryn Koneazny, Mallory Bree, Ehlona Walker, Emma Duffy, Nyanna Krajewski, Celie Koneazny, Vincent DeLeo, Nicholas DaVia, Matthew Finco and Lisa Noble.

Youth are given the opportunity to take lead in planning and facilitating several class discussions and activities. Advisors found this a great way to empower youth in shaping their leadership skills and fostering a deeper commitment to Sunday-morning classes. Thank you to our caring, supportive YRUU advisor team: Connie Craig, Matthew Finco, Jean Crandall-Jacobs and Bizzy Schultz.

Youth continued past traditions including: an outstanding Youth Service, several lock-ins, the Gourmet Dessert Auction, and selling yummy bagels with the addition of a gluten free option of rice crispy treats on Sunday mornings.

We were able to send two youth to the Midwest Leadership School (MWLS) in Beloit in July 2016: Kaetryn Koneazny and Ehlona Walker. At this time, the YSC has nominated three youth to attend the MWLS in July 2017.

In August 2017, one of our youth, Ehlona Walker will be attending the week long Thrive West Leadership School for Youth and Young Adults of Color in Bellevue, Washington.

Two of our youth, Celie Koneazny and Ehlona Walker attended two, four hour leader training sessions for our second year of Black People Matter Curriculum in January. They then led two youth discussions on white privilege, white supremacy, anti-racism and anti-oppression topics for our youth group.

### **Professional Development**

For me, professional development this past year included the following:

- Mosaic Makers Conference in St. Paul, MN (August 2016)

- America's Black Holocaust Museum Founder's Day Event (February 2017)
- Monthly Webinar series on Youth Ministry and competencies (Sept. 2016 through May 2017)
- Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression Multicultural Staff Team Member
- Racial Justice: The Courage to Act Workshop (April 2017)
- MidAmerica Regional Assembly presentation by Eboo Patel (April 2017)
- Seeking to attend a Renaissance Module on Youth Ministry in 2017-2018

In love,  
 Deb Solis  
 Youth Program Coordinator

## **Communications Coordinator**

This is my first year and for many of you, this may be your first impression of me. So, I thought I'd introduce myself so that you can trust that I'm up for the important task of creating a voice for First Church and making sure it is heard. My name is Angelica Dudenhoefer and I'm honored to work here. I have over 8 years of communications experience and an undergrad and Master's Degree in the field. I have significant communications experience at large well know corporations, agencies, small businesses and non-profits. I also own my own communications company. More important than that, I have a clear vision for the communications program here at First Church and I'm dedicated to moving First Church and its mission forward. Now to what you really came here for, the Annual Report.

I started my Communications Coordinator position here at the end of 2016. I was not here for the entire church year so I will do my best to recap it for you.

I came into a position that had been vacant for 10 weeks. Please note that shortly after I started, our office assistant was on medical leave for approximately 2 months. This drastically limited my onboarding process. I had to take on administrative tasks and everyone was busy helping cover the gap. Unfortunately and for good reason, this meant that I was not given the proper onboarding. So my timeline was pushed back significantly. I've just recently been able to implement some of the changes I wanted to make in my first few months. On a positive note, our wonderful staff was able to work together and set priorities to cover for our absent team member. So, the experience was largely a

good one.

## **Social Media**

My predecessor did an amazing job of posting to social media more frequently. This is something that I continued. In addition, I focused on increasing the quality of the content and images that we use on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, our website and more.

In fact, I spend a lot of time on images. "But why?", you may ask. "It is the words that matter, right?" Well, consider this... Tweets with images receive about 150% more retweets and Facebook posts with images receive about 2.3 times more engagement. Image quality is also important, the better the image quality, the better the result. My goal is to create immensely engaging content that will allow us to form a community online that translates into the real world.

## **Facebook**

I'm seeing this goal take shape on our Facebook account. Since our team member was absent, I've only been able to put in place some of my ideas in the last month or so. It is working very well. At the time I'm writing this, our engagement is up by 107% over the last month (when I was unable to implement my strategy). One way I accomplished this was to communicate my goals to volunteers and train them to help with Facebook and other tasks.

These volunteers produce amazing content based on my guidance and their own ideas. In short, they free up my time. This allows me to create higher quality posts with that additional time. This would not be possible without them. See the graphs on the next page for a summary of our first weeks working together. All of our core areas have increased because of our team work.

## **Volunteers:**

It is my goal to guide volunteer teams that genuinely get something from our work together. Our exceptionally amazing volunteers include: Denise Cawley, Michelle Boehm, Miranda Kneeland, Adam Kneeland, Phil Martin, Mark Bender, Rikki Thompson, and Tom Radoszewski. There are several more that I'm working to establish relationships with.

I'm also working with volunteers to capture more of the great things we do here at First Church. We focus a lot on getting people to our events. I am now taking that one step further. I want to show what people get out of these experiences. I want people to know that they can experience enjoyment, meaning, community,

clarity and more by attending our wonderful events. I plan to share these meaningful moments through our various communications outlets. This process is in its infancy. The hope is that the work started this church year will lead to more engagement, fulfillment and community next church year.

## Website

When I first started, the number one comment I received is that our website was difficult to navigate. I aim to fix this. Last church year First Church moved from one website builder to another. There was little editing or updating done. This church year, I have been working with the staff to edit down the content and planning for a professional web designer to help make it more user friendly. This is a long hard process. Although we started this process this church year, it will continue into next year.

## Website Success

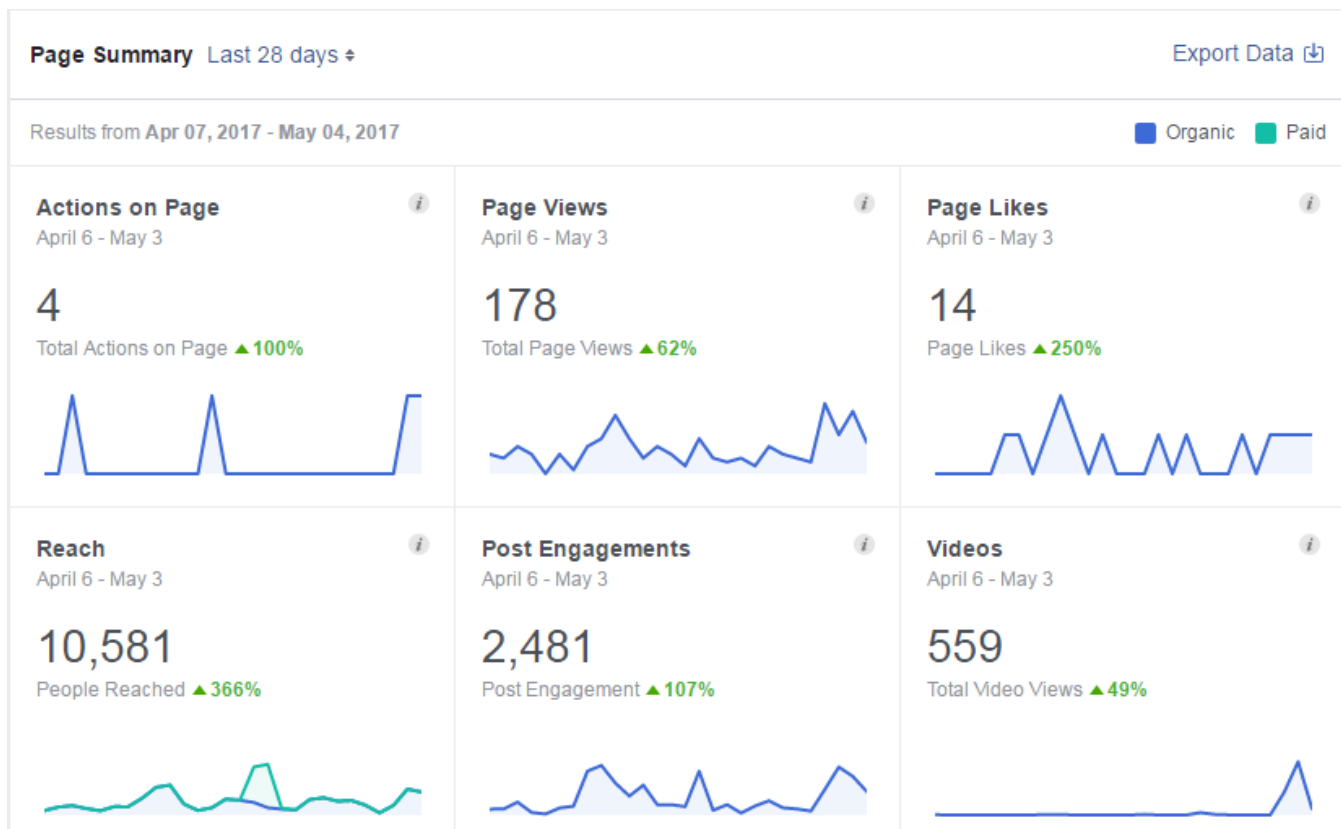
Last year, my predecessor was able to produce 2,400 pages views per month, an increase of 20%, which is quite an accomplishment. This year I was able to bring us to over 7,780 page views per month. In my expert opinion, this is largely due to the fact that I took the time to create a vision for the website based on years of experience. It involved many other aspects as well. Here are a few:

- Valuing others thoughts and ideas by listening to management, volunteers, lay leaders, etc.
- Increased image quality
- Having a strong concept of what we want to portray online and how to use each section of the website
- Getting to know our audience and their wants and needs
- Being more selective about what gets posted
- Increased expertise

These concepts and more worked together to achieve a total increase of over 224.16%. (Note: actual numbers are higher because they were calculated based on our top 10 traffic sources no all traffic sources).

## Other Communications Outlets

I used many of the same principles above to make strides in our other forms of communication. I applied my knowledge of marketing and communications to the Chanticleer, announcements, e-announcements and print materials. There is still room for improvement in updating the design and mobile aspects. I'll do this next year when we update the computer programs we are using. Still, I have made significant strides while



working within the limitations of our current programs.

One example of this is the Chanticleer newsletter. I was able to make it a lot easier to read by applying my knowledge of basic graphic design to the existing layout. Next year, after we upgrade the computer program I'll redo the design. This year, at least I was able to make meaningful improvements.

### **Logo**

We are also starting the process of rolling out our new logo. This year we are creating the action plan and deciding what to update first, etc. Next year, we will launch the new logo with the new website. The process we are starting this year will allow us to create a solid brand image for next year.

### **Other Successful Large Scale Projects and Campaigns not mentioned above**

- The Rev. Jennifer's Installation
- Conceptualized a Communication's Policy
- This Annual Report
- Journey to Membership Campaign
- Pledge Drive

### **Anti-racism, Anti-oppression and Multiculturalism**

I'm also a member of Anti-racism, Anti-oppression and Multiculturalism (ARAOMC) which is just one way First Church commits to the work of these issues. My goal is to offer my thoughts and ideas, to engage in discussion and in self-work. This will allow me to contribute to the group, our community and the world. I'm honored to be a part of ARAOMC and to work at a place that supports my ability to contribute to society on issues that are so personal to me.

Even though I've been here for a matter of months, I was able to make great progress for First Church's communications. Next year, I plan to do more. I'm excited to do more digital advertising, meet more people and engage in the community so that I can better serve the church.

You have a voice in this church and I want to hear it. If you have any ideas for social media, blogs, etc. Please send them my way.

Smiles and happiness,  
Angelica Dudenhoefer

## **MEMBERSHIP**

### **Membership Development Coordinator**

During the past program year, our congregation welcomed 33 new members! We celebrate this diverse group, which brings a wide range of vocations, interests, theologies and passions to our church community. Our members include those who are new to Unitarian Universalism, long-time members of congregations in other parts of the country, families with young children as well as retirees, and everyone in between. The congregation continues to grow, being enriched as new members bring their energy, engagement, and commitment to our church and to the UU values and principles.

Our membership ministry is led by Cheri Taylor, Membership Development Coordinator, working with the Reverend Jennifer Nordstrom and the Reverend Dena McPhetres, and a team including: Beth Monhollen, Dave Umhoefer, Terry Hansen, Nina Davis, Jim Carse, and Laura White.

Many began their journey to membership by participating in the Reverend Dena's summer UU 101 gatherings, where they had their questions answered in a relaxed and informal setting. The Journey to Membership classes were reshaped after Reverend Jennifer's arrival to allow the participants the opportunity to engage more deeply and intentionally into the topics related to membership and congregational life. The series emphasizes the three-fold path of the journey of the individual, the journey of First Church, and our journey together as a community.

The classes were held twice in 2016-2017: November and January. They are led by the Reverend Jennifer, the Reverend Dena, Cheri Taylor, and Beryl Aschenberg. The Journey to Membership facilitation team shares responsibilities for presenting information about Unitarian Universalism and our community.

This year, under the leadership of the Reverend Dena McPhetres, we subscribed to the "Faith Forward" program, which was designed by The First Unitarian Church of Dallas. This program is designed to foster the engagement of our community members from the stage of visitor to lay leader. Earlier this year, we recruited and trained eight facilitators: Robert Szymanski, Jeanne Durnford, Amanda Panciera, Terry Hansen, Pat Geenen, Paul Geenen, Michelle Boehm, and Melinda Vernon. The program provides curriculum for the following topics: introduction to our community, spiritual practice, UU history, and UU elevator speech. This spring, we launched the Inquirers Series, which is a "drop-in" weekly session that is offered each Sunday at 10:10 a.m. for visitors and friends. These sessions are led by our trained facilitators with a weekly guest speaker. The sessions are designed to provide an introduction to small group interaction in our community

intentionally designed for newcomers. The information shared and discussed can help participants learn about Unitarian Universalism and our community in a safe and welcoming environment.

In the coming year, the membership ministry will continue to expand on our session offerings of the "Faith Forward" program. We will also continue to search for ways to improve our structure and methods for engaging members and friends. We will also continue to work with the First Church Common Ground team to train members on the relational meeting format, and provide opportunities for members to meet new people using this methodology.

Sincere thanks and appreciation to all who have supported the membership ministry by helping with membership and Inquirers classes, serving as ushers and greeters and welcoming guests and visitors on Sunday mornings. We, indeed, deserve our reputation of being a congregation that is truly open, warm and welcoming to all.

### **Stewardship**

This past year has proven to be quite exciting and robust in regards to stewardship and fundraising! The Stewardship Council kicked off the year under its newly designed structure: acting as the Council overseeing the activities of the Heritage Society, the Pledge Drive, the Feast for Funds Auction, and Scrip Sales. The Council formally adopted the mission to "grow a vital and nurturing community by cultivating a culture of abundance, and encourage spiritual growth and development opportunities for deepening generosity."

Our Stewardship ministry is led by Cheri Taylor, Membership Development Coordinator, working with the Reverend Jennifer Nordstrom and a team including: Tim Greene, Lisa Koneazny, Tony Panciera, Beth Grimm, Tina Keppel, Sue and Tom Thaney, Ellen Krueger, Jane Peterson, Sally Heuer, Charlie Persch, Hari Iyer, Laurie Peterson, Tom Radoszewski, Don Jackson, Melinda and Kit Vernon, Jill Erickson, Mike Newman, and Chris Linder.

At the beginning of the year, Cheri Taylor and Reverend Jennifer organized a special team to help lead the 175<sup>th</sup> Special Gifts Campaign, Ignite the Future. This team included: Dale Skaggs, Susie and Charlie Persch, Scot Henry, and Gordon Mueller, Mark Bishop and Jo Ann Bishop. The original goal of this special gifts campaign was \$175,000. This team held a number of small and large group cultivation events to engage our members and friends in this special giving opportunity. The Pledge Drive Team and Stewardship Council continued this effort as part of the annual stewardship campaign. To date, over 200 households have participated with a commitment of \$206,415!

Our annual "Feast for Funds" auction proved to be extremely successful this year! The team decided to follow the trend of fundraising technology and purchase Gesture software which allowed auction participants to bid anywhere in the Leenhouts Common Room on auction dates, or from home or anywhere around the world, through their cell phone, tablet, or computer! This allowed for more participation, and an equal opportunity to participate and win auction items. This year's auction proved to be one of the biggest, with more dinners, gift certificates, special events, in-home gatherings, gift baskets, trips and even a raffle giveaway. We were able to engage leaders from our Youth Steering Committee to serve as volunteers to help members navigate the bidding software from either a cell phone or tablet to successfully participate. With the success of the auction, we were able to raise a total of \$28,192!

Cheri Taylor and the Reverend Jennifer worked with the UUA to get denominational support for our annual pledge campaign. Minister Vail Weller, Congregational Giving Director at the UUA, led a special presentation, "Generosity Is a Spiritual Matter" for the Board of Trustees, the Stewardship Council, the Pledge Drive Team, and staff in December. She also led us through a discussion to explore our own values relating to money, as they are linked to Unitarian Universalist principles. This work helped the Stewardship Council frame the conversations we wanted to have with members and pledging friends during the stewardship campaign.

The Stewardship Campaign's theme was "Why me? Why us? Why now?". The campaign began with a public covenant between the congregation and the Stewardship Council and Pledge Drive team, to help frame our work together during the campaign. The Pledge Drive team met with various small groups to discuss the annual stewardship campaign and the Reverend Jennifer's goal of increasing pledge income by 5%. The Pledge Drive team hosted an all-member stewardship gathering at the Tripoli Shrine where over 150 members gathered to listen to heartfelt stories from fellow members, fellowship, and participate in small group break outs over food and drinks. For three Sundays during the campaign, the congregation participated in writing rituals framed around the theme of the campaign and listened to testimonials by lay members during Sunday worship. As the campaign continues to reach out to the last 13% of outstanding pledges from members, we project total pledge income for the 2017-2018 year to be \$715,293, which puts us \$1,000 away from our goal!

Under the leadership of the Council's co-chair, Lisa Koneazny, the Heritage Society Team has been formed. This robust group of members is operating under a work



plan to review the UUA’s planned giving resources and has been in contact with other large UU congregations to gather information about their planned giving program. The goal is to organize a planned giving program that is successful and manageable with qualitative and quantitative measures. The team will continue their work over the next year to present a program that can roll out next church year.

Planning for next year’s Stewardship work will begin early in the coming church year. Tony Panciera and Tina Keppel will step in as the Stewardship Council chairs for the coming year and seek to broaden the team’s membership.

Many thanks go to all of our volunteers for their dedicated service and flexibility throughout the year. Their work allows us to realize our mission!

- Cheri Taylor



The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, The Rev. Dena McPhetres, Jean Johnson, Beryl Aschenberg, Cheri Taylor, Angelica Dudenhoefer, Tracy Smith, Ed McGraw, Alissa Rhode, Erin Wantoch, Jim Spice, Paul Moriarity, Art Sims, Tristan Strelitzer, Jack Forbes Wilson, Deb Solis Photos by Rikki Thompson



# Member-Led Ministries Reports

## Common Ground

At Common Ground, we develop solutions to our communities' toughest problems – together.

We identify issues, do our homework, take action and win. Some of our Issue Campaigns include:

- Rehabbing 84 homes to date in Sherman Park
- Working with the City of Milwaukee to add 3,000 jobs to the Youth Jobs Program
- Getting five of the world's largest banks to give \$31M to maintain and rehab fore-closed properties in Milwaukee
- Addressing the healthcare crisis by creating our own healthcare cooperative
- Working to make sure all of our children get a quality education

We build long term relationships with a wide range of people – business leaders, elected officials, school leaders, other community groups.

We are grateful to all of the many First Church Friends who contribute to support Common Ground. Your Common Ground Core Team: Rod DePue, Jerry Fredrickson, Larry Korlikowski, Kathy Rivera, Cathy Startt and Tom Thaney

## The Community Building Action

The Community Building Action group fulfilled its goal of hosting a community building workshop, which took place February 17-19, 2017. Nineteen First Church members and five community members participated. The pre-post survey showed very positive results from the participants, including a tremendous increase in the

sense of belonging within the group. Other anecdotal results were similar, including one woman who called the experience “transformative.” At this time, there is not a plan to offer more First Church specific workshops; however, the group was told about the option to do additional Community Building workshops. They were offered the opportunity to become a facilitator and told of plans to have a monthly “maintenance group” for all Milwaukee community builders.

## Denominational Affairs

I continue to be a representative on our Social Justice Council, bringing to our congregation denominational social justice (SJ) issues.

The major denominational SJ activity at First Church this year dealt with the Escalating Inequality Study Action Issue (SAI). In keeping with our denominational SAI procedures, our national Commission on Social Witness published a draft Statement of Conscience (SOC) in response to workshops and activities throughout the denomination over the past two years. Our Escalating Inequality Action Group submitted comments by the February 1 deadline. The revised draft SOC will be presented, debated, and voted up or down at General Assembly (June in New Orleans). Also continuing to be important within the Unitarian Universalist Association are Black Lives Matter, Black Lives of Unitarian Universalists (BLUU) and ARAOMC (Anti Racist, Anti Oppressive Multi Cultural) work. Four First Church

staff and four lay leaders attended a national Mosaic Makers Conference in August 2016. ~Bruce Wiggins

## Earth Justice Ministry

Earth Justice Ministry (EJM) focused on climate action and environmental justice in 2016-2017. Activities included:

- Put out scorecards on candidates for the 2016 Election
- Created an EJM brochure
- First Friday Films, “This Changes Everything” and “Cowspiracy”
- Menominee River Protectors Tour
- Dessert & Documentary Series (6 sessions) for Feast for Funds fund-raiser
- Forums: Mark Baden, Meteorologist; Wisconsin River Educational Film-A Stand-Up Effort, Jesse Hieb; No Bees, No Food, Charlie Koenen; Korinne Haefel, WI Green Building Council
- Milwaukee Commons Drinking Water Initiative, Coalition for More Responsible Transportation, Milwaukee Food Council (Environmental Justice Activities)
- Participated in Common Ground's Watershed Team
- Organized Discussion Course on Northwest Earth Institute's *A World of Health: Connecting People, Place, and Planet*
- Became a Climate Action Team of the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office
- Sought information on energy production, dollar and CO<sub>2</sub> savings of the church's solar panels

- Displayed EJM's actions at Interfaith Earth Network's "Renewing Hope" Anniversary Event
- "Awakening the Dreamer" Symposium
- Tour of Chiwaukee Prairie
- Invasive species pulling led by Ken Solis

### **Escalating Inequality Group**

The Escalating Inequality Group encouraged members to get involved in the 2016 election working or observing at the polls. We sponsored The Purpose Filled Purse as the recipient of proceeds from the Fair Trade Holiday Bazaar.

We held a series of speakers on "Leveling the Playing Field." Our topics began with Mark Rice from Ex-Prisoners Organizing explaining efforts to end crimeless revocation of parole and probation. Next, we heard from Nancy Yarbrough, founder of Purpose Filled Purse, and her legal and health care partners on awareness and prevention of human trafficking. The third speaker was Bob DeVita, first CEO of the Common Ground Healthcare Cooperative, discussing problems with replacing the Affordable Care Act. Finally, we learned about educational inequities from Dr. Corey Thompson and Dr. Molly Shiffler, both from Cardinal Stritch University, Andre Brown from Project Return, and Dr. Linda Mistele from New Concept. ~Nancy Pajewski

### **First Friday Films**

Seven films were presented this year. Documentaries on social justice issues included: climate change, escape from Mid-East brutality, honey bees as an important part of the web of life, the history of slavery, the history of women's rights, big business and

bottled water, and environmentally harmful practices in animal agriculture. The Committee also teamed up with the Forum Committee and Milwaukee Veteran's Memorial for a film, presentation, and continuing conversation on the problems returning war veterans experience.

### **The Forties and Fifties UU Network**

The Forties and Fifties UU Network (FFUUN) celebrates its fifth year in June 2017! The mission is to provide a bridge to newer church members and connect longer-term members to the broader First Unitarian Society community through a variety of activities around the city. Our gatherings draw 6 to 10 members. The following members have been actively involved in planning our events this year: Diana Altstadt, Michelle Naples, Scot Henry, and Laura White. This is the FFUUN we have had, in addition to the coffee hour conversations and dinners outside of our structured gatherings:

- Lunch at County Clare Irish Pub – July 24
- Kayak the Mighty Milwaukee River – September 11 - (scheduling issues resulted in this being lunch only!)
- Lunch at Maharaja – November 6
- Latino Carnival at Latino Arts – March 10
- MAM (MKE Art Museum) After Dark – April 21

### **Interchange Food Pantry**

In 2016, Interchange Food Pantry served about 9,000 guests. The pantry helps people who live in the neighborhood and many who do not have access to a pantry near their home. This work was possible in part due to financial

support from the First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee through the Christmas Eve offering and church pledge. Interchange was also the recipient of the Mitten Tree donations this year, distributing warm winter items to their guests in January.

### **Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee**

The mission of the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee is to uphold the dignity of every person and the solidarity of the human community. The Interfaith Conference has several programs, committees, activities and events. Some of the programs this past year included: an Interfaith Earth Network, a Committee for Interfaith Understanding, a Peace & International Issues Committee, a Restorative Justice Committee, an annual CROP Hunger Walk, an annual luncheon series in March, Amazing Faiths Dinner Dialogues in private homes, a series of talk-backs following the Milwaukee Reps production of *Disgraced*, and Interfaith's 44th Annual Luncheon in December 2016 featuring Jane Elder, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts & Letters. Ms. Elder's talk focused on fostering a nonpartisan, science based strategies and solutions to safeguard the Wisconsin's freshwater ecosystems and water supply for generations to come.

### **MICAH**

It was an active 2016-17 year for MICAH. Our participation centered on criminal justice, education and racial justice activities. Notably MICAH organized around Safe Surrender efforts to reduce warrants and fines for low income Milwaukeeans. We hosted several MICAH events at First Church in-

cluding Ex-Prisoners Organizing (EXPO)'s Mark Rice presenting on "Crimeless Revocations" contribution to mass incarceration and criminal justice. We co-sponsored a community listening session for people with mental illness in the criminal justice system. We also co-sponsored a showing of the "53206" documentary and the April 1 Criss Crass anti-racism event at Alverno. Several First Church members went to Madison for the March 30 legislative action day to meet with legislators and staffers on all of MICAH's priority issues. We are looking forward to a robust representation at MICAH's May 18 annual gala.

#### **Share the Plate**

WOW!!! We've raised \$110,357 in donations for 67 organizations since January 2011! This averages \$1,647 per recipient. Including Christmas Eve and special disaster relief, our total exceeds \$134,000 with an average gift over \$1,700. The 2016-17 church year may be the most generous yet. Nearly \$13,000 was distributed through the end of March. This remarkable support is one of the many ways we live our principles and seek to better the lives of people in our community.

Youth and children also participate. The Youth Steering Committee chose Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin as the February recipient. The K5-12 graders selected Kids Matter Inc. for May.

Check the Social Justice section on the church web site for a complete list of recipients.

THANKS from all of us on the Share the Plate Committee:

- Dawn Blackmore
- Rod Botts
- Dena McPhetres
- Amy Monahan
- Bob Monahan
- Janet Nortrom

- Nancy Spransy
- Florence Waterston

#### **Sunday Morning Forum**

The Forum Group members continue in the long tradition of providing thoughtful, inspiring Forums, Sunday mornings, 10 – 11 a.m. Members include: Jo Ann Bachar, Christian Becker, Mary Buchel, Joan Christopherson-Schmidt, Thallis Drake, Jerry Fredrickson, Mark Mueller, Janet Nortrom, new in 2018, Juliet Hills and Ben Campbell.

Our goal is to provide varied topics with professional and knowledgeable speakers, offering presentations of local interest. Categories we strive to balance are:

- Politics
- Social Action/Environmental Justice
- Arts and Health

During 2016-2017 we endeavored to coincide topics with the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and monthly Sunday Service themes. Forums enjoy consistent attendance and positive feedback from our attendees. Our 30+ annual Forums offer direct connection with local leaders and organizers. Forums are free and open to the public, consider using them as a means to invite friends to visit and learn about First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee.

#### **SWANS (Seasoned Women Are Naturally Social)**

This is a group of women who meet every month on the first Sunday of the month for lunch. Attendance is according to availability. This year we had an average of 12-14 women who came to lunch. Some of the places we went were: Beans and Barley, Darfur, Maharajah, Panera, Davino's, Knickerbocker and County Claire. We also had a holi-

day gathering where we had a potluck and learned about and donated to The Purposed Filled Purse. A good time was had by all.

#### **UU+ Study Group**

The UU+ Study Group is a new affinity group this year. Its purpose is to deepen our understanding of Unitarian Universalism and to enhance our spiritual journeys through reading and discussion. We spent five meetings delving into *A House for Hope: The Promise of Progressive Religion in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* by prominent UU ministers John A. Buehrens and Rebecca Ann Parker. We tried a different format—a single discussion—for our second book, *The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement Is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear* by Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II. This volume is also this year's UUA Common Read book. Twenty people participated in one or more of our discussions. ~ Nancy Pajewski and Chris Linder

#### **UU Book Club**

The UU Book Club has been meeting for at least 40 years and has a long tradition of reading and discussing fiction and non-fiction. Books for the following church year are chosen during a meeting in the summer. Any interested people are welcome to come to the meeting and suggest a few books which they have read and which they think would provide good discussion topics. During the 2016-2017 year, we discussed primarily non-fiction, including the Pulitzer prize-winning *Evicted* and *The New Jim Crow*. Copies of the reading list and meeting times are on the Book Table in the Common Room and will be on the church website.

Our meeting time is usually the second Sunday of the month at 1:00 p.m. Times are announced in the church bulletin and Chanticleer. This is not a membership club. Everyone is welcome to come to discussions.

### **UU Parenting Group**

As we conclude our fifth year, the UU Parenting Group remains a steady presence in the lives of parents at First Church. We have welcomed new participants and continue to act as a resource for parents raising children in the UU tradition. Over the past year, we have provided a space for parents to connect with one another, share stories, celebrate parenting victories and work through challenges. We spent time this year discussing our personal parenting strengths and the areas in which we'd like to grow; learning how to manage family screen-time; and communicating with one another about parenting-related events and speakers in the Milwaukee area.

Our thanks to all who participate in UUPG! We are always searching for new leadership and ideas, and invite others to join our group. ~Sarah Richards & Stacey Thieme, Co-Chairs

### **The Chronologically Gifted**

Within TCG, volunteers have helped the families/loved ones of those who have had memorial services at First Church by organizing the receptions that follow. This is proving to be a well-received ministry.

We are engaged in a pilot effort to offer rides to church services and other major church events for TCG participants who would have had difficulty attending.

TCG had a hand in advocating for the church's new hearing system. Two of our members worked with

the Lead Music Director, Alissa Rhode, to select the system. This is all happening as we continue to enjoy one another's company at monthly potlucks and other social events. We are developing closer bonds and appreciation of community. Our numbers are growing, and new energy is infusing our activities.

### **WomanSpirit**

The WomanSpirit group is one of our connections to the National UU Woman's Federation. We pay an annual membership fee that alerts us to our Central Midwest District Women's Connection retreats. We reach out to and welcome women of all genders, practicing mutual support, personal growth and spiritual enrichment. We provided service hospitality on different levels starting with the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Picnic.

Many of our members were picnic hosts and singers for the service. We helped provide hospitality for a private reception for our Unitarian Universalist United Nations Director, Bruce Knotts. During Woman's International month we hosted the First Friday film. We continue to collaborate with many women's groups, working on voting, immigration, Black Lives Matter, and sex trafficking with the League of Woman Voters, the Sorooptimist International group, and the International League for Peace and Freedom. Equal pay and Title 9 connected us with the American Association of University Women. We continue to offer financial support to women attending conferences and the General Assembly.

# Wheel of Life

## Addendum

### New Members

Fall 2016	Spring 2017	Winter 2017
Andrea Ar- ciszewski	Keith Anderson	Lynda Cipov
Erika Broman	Risa Brooks	Suzie Considine
Michelle Buelow	Kristi Davis- Gutierrez	Laura Ehlers
Thyra Dahlstrom	Alicia Donner	Erica Gottschalk
BJ Ermenc	Ardis Gottschalk	Kari Gunderson
Lorinda Flores	Fred Gutierrez	Katie Knaebe
Patricia Geenen	Jean Hudson	James Law
Paul Geenen	Joseph Kelly	Dave Lehman
Joel Herringa	Monica Kling	Ron Oshima
Erik Islo	Chris Liro	Pat Parcell
Larry Krolikonski	Elizabeth Lundberg	Joylnn Woehrer
Angi Krueger	Nicki Nelson	
Jason Ludtke	Mary Olen	
Yolanda Ludtke	Michael Pointer	
Laura Maker	Mace	
Linda Piele	Desiree Pointer	
Diana Schoberg	Mace	
Susie Seidelman	Sara Ratayczak	
Veronica Thomp- son	Andrew Sinko	
Ben Weston		

### Heritage Society

Paula Anderson	Lisa Koneazny	Patricia Scharmach
Judy Anderson	Pete Koneazny	Max Scharmach
Christian Becker	Lucille Krug	Dale Skaggs
Jo Ann Bishop	Hank Kulesza	Nancy Spransy
Mark Bishop	Lynda Lambert	Robert Szymanski
Rod Botts	Michael Lewis	Christopher Vernon
Cheri Briscoe	Sally Lewis	Melinda Vernon
Tom Briscoe	Loren Leys	Don Weimer
Susanne Carter	Christine Linder	Lois Wesener
Paul Carter	Katherine Marrs	Bruce Wiggins
Susan Comstock	Patricia McFarland	Terry Wiggins
Steven Culver	Sally Miles Heuer	Edwin Wiley
Jill Erickson	Robert Moore	Bettie Zillman
James Ford	Mike Newman	
Judith Ford	Ellyn Newman	
Jerry Fredrickson	Janet Nortrom	
Scot Henry	Marlowe Nortrom	
Elizabeth Irwin	Mimi Notestein	
Moore	Patrick Patterson	
Nelson Kading	Barbara Patterson	
Adele Kaferly	Tom Radoszewski	
Linda Katz	Michael Radtke	
Mike Katz	Lisa Radtke	
Andrew Kennedy	Kathy Rivera	

**The congregation of The First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee  
affirms and promotes the full participation of persons in our activities without regard to race, color, gender,  
physical or mental challenge, sexual identity or orientation, age, class, national origin, or ancestry.**

**Indeed, we are interested in actively promoting  
more diversity within our congregation.**