Transforming Lives through Loving Action

Annual report 2017–2018

First Unitarian Church of Wilmington
Our Mission

First Unitarian Church of Wilmington is a beloved community that nourishes minds and spirits, fights injustice, and transforms the world through loving action.

Our Core Values

- Love and compassion,
- Growth and discovery,
- Freedom and Justice,
- Wonder and Joy.

Our Vision:

At First Unitarian Church of Wilmington, people of all ages:

- Feel safe, accepted, and loved – and empowered to be our authentic selves.
- Gain new perspectives and grow as informed, spiritual human beings.
- Act on our shared values and Unitarian Universalist identity to fight for a more just world.
- Experience wonder, inspiration, fulfillment, and joy.

Our mission at First Unitarian concludes with “transforms the world through loving action.” What do we mean by “transforming the world” and how does that differ from change? While change involves taking the present and working to make it better, transformation leaves the present behind and focuses on the future, creating something new.

The prime example most often given is the caterpillar that transforms to the beautiful butterfly; it is something altogether different – not a better caterpillar, but something new; it will never be a caterpillar again. For humans, transformations are what happen within each of us, rather than in our surroundings. This year, we focus on the role that First Unitarian has had in transforming people’s lives.
MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Our church mission continues to guide our work as the Board of Trustees for First Unitarian Church of Wilmington; we are dedicated to serve with integrity and live our Unitarian Universalist principles. We focused on three main objectives for the 2017-2018 church year:

- Developing a Capital Improvement Plan, continuing the work started with the 2017 World Café process that identified a strategic initiative to improve our facilities in a way that supports us in fulfilling our mission;

- Selecting a seven-member Ministerial Search Committee, with church member input, that will be responsible for choosing a candidate as our new settled minister over the next year; and

- Maintaining our fiduciary responsibilities by executing our policy-based governance duties.

The goal of our Capital Improvement Plan, to be presented to the congregation at our May Annual Meeting, is a more affordable, accessible, flexible and attractive facility – one that supports our vision of being a church where people of all ages feel safe, accepted, and loved – and empowered to be our authentic selves. This includes improving accessibility into and within our building, as well as modernizing our audio visual systems in the sanctuary, and improving flexibility in our central gathering spaces.

From left: Jennifer Brown (Recording Secretary), Jacqueline Kairis, Phil Krape (Vice-President), Linda Sanders (President) with Tiffany, Bill Hardham, Donna González, Mike McCabe (on video), Martin Peres, Tracy Spinka-Doms, Steven Cohen (Treasurer)
With Rev. Finkelstein’s contract coming to an end in July 2019, it is time to begin the year-long process to select a new settled minister. With input from the congregation and a goal of building a diverse team, the Board selected a seven-member committee considering members who: have the trust of their fellow members; are able to dedicate the time required for this important work; are committed to confidentiality required and to work towards consensus; and have the skills to perform the tasks of the search process. We are grateful to this team for being willing to commit to the hard work required for this task and look forward to a successful process of finding our next settled minister, continuing the energy and renewed enthusiasm that has transformed our spirits through Rev. Finkelstein’s leadership.

Finally, we report that we have successfully monitored all of our policies with plans in place to move toward full compliance for policies that require significant time to achieve.

As we move into the next church year, we are entering into an exciting time for our congregation. We will be actively engaged in finding our new settled minister and we will be continuing to live our mission to be a “beloved community that nourishes minds and spirits, fights injustice and transforms the world through loving action.” In these trying times, we find comfort in being engaged with a community that believes in striving for these goals and helping each other be the best versions of ourselves every day. Thank you for the honor of serving as your Board of Trustees and for supporting our church with your talents and resources.

In Love and Peace,

Your 2017-18 Board of Trustees
Four goals are articulated in the contract between our Developmental Minister, Rev. Roberta Finkelstein, and the Congregation:

- **Working together with lay leadership, transition from policy governance to policy-based governance to implement a shared ministry model.** This work has been accomplished.

- **Lead the congregation in creating the means to function successfully as a single minister church.** This work has been accomplished. The staff, volunteers and members have made the adjustment to a one minister staffing model.

“**As the search begins for a new settled minister, the parameters established in the past three years around reasonable expectations for a single minister will enhance the way the congregation presents itself to potential candidates.**”

~ Rev. Roberta Finkelstein

- **As articulated in the strategic plan, lead First Unitarian in attracting new members and increasing member retention/engagement.** After spending much of last year introducing new approaches to understanding the meanings of membership, a new Membership and Engagement Team has been formed. Emphasis is on engaging visitors in the life of the congregation rather than simply getting them to ‘sign the book’. Success is not measured numerically, but by depth and commitment.

- **Lead First Unitarian in creating a culture of voluntarism and member engagement.** The Membership and Engagement team continues to explore ways to use technology and personal relationships to assist each member in finding their niche at First Unitarian. The Worship and Pastoral Associates programs have continued to thrive and grow.

Looking ahead, the Executive Team plans to recruit a Communication Team that will create and implement a strategic communication plan incorporating social media and other forms of outreach. In addition, the newly reconstituted Outreach Team will begin a series of public events that offer an entry into the life of the congregation through non-Sunday morning programs. We intend to enhance our ability to capture data from people who attend events and use our database for strategic outreach.

One tool for enhancing volunteerism and member engagement is for every committee and team to have a well-defined Charter, and for the overall organizational structure of the congregation to be presented with clarity. To that end, the Executive Team has been working with all of the teams and committees in the congregation to create a Charter that describes their mission, responsibilities, practices, and lines of communication and accountability.
Our seventh Principle, “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are part,” recognizes what Martin Luther King, Jr. espoused – that we are all interconnected, inextricably linked to the well-being of others. We believe this and are striving for this at First Unitarian Church as we seek to be the Beloved Community, welcoming of all.

On April 30, 2017, we joined Unitarian Universalists around the country who gathered to consider how white privilege and white supremacy affect our congregations and our Association. Entitled “Building a New Way,” children, youth and adults joined together for a multi-generational worship service followed by two teach-in style workshops. One workshop illustrated the difference between overt white supremacy typical of those involved in hate crimes or open racism, and covert white supremacy which includes generally socially acceptable behaviors or habits that consciously or unconsciously many of us demonstrate, and prefer to name white privilege, a much more comfortable term. A second workshop was a participatory exercise based on “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” by Peggy McIntosh in which participants, starting in one horizontal line, were asked to step forward or step backward based on whether specific statements were true in their lives. An example of the statements used is, “When I am told about our national heritage or about ‘civilization,’ I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.” The result of this exercise demonstrates clearly the varying experiences in our lives. A sharing session was also available for people of color. The workshops were repeated during the summer, on request of congregational members, so that all could experience both workshops. In March 2018, Rev. Dr. Hope Johnson was invited to First

“Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives.”
~ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

“Whatever your reaction was to the words White Supremacy, it’s a fair reaction. It’s real. It’s part of the journey... We are not saying there is an inherent evil in Unitarian Universalism, at all. We are saying there is a desperate need for the kind of beloved community work that we offer in the world and we want to do that work better.”
~ Sophia Betancourt, interim co-president for our Unitarian Universalist Association, 2017
Unitarian to share the pulpit with Rev. Finkelstein and then conduct a workshop “Navigating the Waters of White Supremacy Is a Balancing Act”. Rev. Dr. Johnson serves as a Congregational Life Consultant for the Unitarian Universalist Association, while also continuing to stay rooted in congregational service as Parish Minister of the UU Congregation of Central Nassau, NY. She brings specialties in conflict resolution and multicultural congregational development.

This is ongoing, difficult and important work for our congregation as we face crises in our world today.

**Welcoming**

Hospitality, responsiveness to emergencies and congregational safety are all critical to welcoming the newcomer and member alike. We strive to provide a warm welcome as our Greeters show them in and our Ushers help them to find a seat. In the summer of 2017, our Greeter and Usher teams received training to enhance their roles, with emphasis on caring: being truly welcoming; being sensitive to the needs of persons with disabilities; being watchful for persons in distress; being watchful for anyone entering the building determined to do harm. We are in the initial phases of creating emergency medical kits to replace our safety medical kits, usable by medically trained individuals in the event of a medical crisis.

In addition, we made progress on our Safer Congregations program, including adding small windows to office doors, holding a lockdown drill to follow up on our fire evacuation drill from the previous February, and have incorporated improvements into our Emergency Procedures Manual. In March, First Unitarian hosted the “Stewards of Children”

“In order for a majority white congregation to be a genuinely safe place for people of color, the majority needs to become aware of the many ways that micro-aggressions and unintended slights happen. Only then will First Unitarian be a truly safe space for people of color.”

~ Rev. Roberta Finkelstein
Workshop”, a 2 ½ hour training by Prevent Child Abuse Delaware, working in cooperation with the Darkness to Light national nonprofit organization that seeks to empower adults to prevent child sexual abuse. The program raises awareness and educates adults on how to prevent, recognize, and react reasonably to child sexual abuse.

Connecting

Engaging visitors in the life of the congregation begins at our Welcome Table, where volunteers are present each Sunday to answer questions and help orient visitors to First Unitarian Church. This year, we added a new program on Sunday mornings; visitors and newcomers are invited from the pulpit and at the Welcome Table to bring their coffee and questions and join a member or two of the congregation in a more personal conversation than may be possible in our crowded Coffee Hour. As a bonus, they meet and get to know others who are visiting First Unitarian along with existing members. Following up on these sessions, we have created orientation sessions for those who want to take the next step towards congregational membership.

Once again we offered several easy ways to connect with others. Our Circle Suppers program helps to build community among long-time members and those who are new to First Unitarian in a small group social setting of six to eight people. Each month, a different group of people share a potluck dinner, giving ample opportunity to meet a variety of people. Our Multigenerational potluck dinners held the 2nd Friday of most months were attended by 50 – 80 people of all ages with the goal of increasing fellowship and friendship at church so members feel a sense of beloved community. Many church teams were engaged in hosting the dinners, making these events sustainable as well as fun.

“At our monthly potluck dinners, we nourish our souls as well as our bellies!”

~ Debbi Zarek, member and Potluck Lead

“Give ‘em the ol’ Razzle Dazzle, Razzle-Dazzle ‘em...” at the annual Coffee House.
Our annual Coffee House was full of fun and laughs, while raising funds for First Unitarian. The Explorers, our 5th, 6th and 7th graders, made and sold snacks. Children and adults entertained us with their talents and humor at our open mic. There was instrumental music, singing, joke telling and more!

Deepening

For a deeper, thoughtful and spiritual way to connect with others, we offered a variety of small group formats. We continued membership in Soul Matters, a nation-wide consortium of more than 150 Unitarian Universalist congregations who share monthly themes for worship, religious education, music, and small group ministry. The program staff made the decision as part of our commitment to creating a culture of engagement and shared ministry. We believe that having adults and children focused on the same theme each month will enhance our connections to each other and to the themes. This year our themes were based on the question, “How can we be a people of...?” - Welcome, Courage, Abundance, Hope, Intention, Perseverance, Balance, Emergence, Creativity, and Blessing. We organized six groups of 6 to 10 people each, including one group held on site at the Maris Grove Retirement – Senior Living community, and one online through Zoom technology.

We also offered several Connection Circles of small groups that explored meaningful topics in a supportive environment. Our Short Story Circle delved into the big questions of life through fictional stories and has developed an environment where participants feel safe, accepted and appreciated. Other circles included, Women’s Spirituality groups and a Connection Circle held on site at Cokesbury Village Retirement Community.

We also have several Brown Bag Fellowship Groups for men and women, and the Channing Society, a men’s social group.

Caring

Our Pastoral Care team exists to provide comfort, support and a listening presence for our beloved community, connecting with members in need and focusing on loving action. The Pastoral Care team continued to offer the “Pastoral Care Associate of the month”

“By accepting an invitation to join the Pastoral Care Associates, I feel I have found my niche. I have a revitalized sense of pride and investment in First Unitarian Church of Wilmington. The transformation for me has been rediscovering, reclaiming and reinvesting in my spiritual home.” ~ Lydia Robb, member
after success last year. Several PCAs attended a workshop on pastoral care at a local hospital, and almost the entire group, in addition to several new trainees, attended a week-long training offered by the Central East Region of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

The Pastoral Care team made visits to hospitals, nursing homes, and people who were recovering at home. Calls were made to follow up on immediate needs and those who were homebound. They also provided excellent support in other ways: coordinating food, giving rides for appointments and church, keeping calendars and sending cards, offering a loving presence for memorial receptions, providing comfort cloaks, knitted by the Knitting Ministry Team, and creating a bridge to help and follow our First Unitarian families. Twenty-one cloaks were provided at Christmastime.

Living Well with Chronic Illness (LWCI) and Caregivers’ Groups provide small group settings for pastoral care. The members of LWCI have much in common dealing with health issues and with people who don’t understand the ups and downs as well as the severity of having chronic illness. Before coming to the group, members dealt with health problems in isolation. Having a group that listens and deeply understands is an incredible gift.

Church members who are participating in care giving for a loved one, meet twice a month with the Caregivers’ Group. With those who share similar emotional experiences, it is comforting to be able to talk about feelings and challenges. Caregivers share ideas and resources. Caregivers give and receive love as they support each other.
Sunday worship is the heart of our congregational life. Our services include music from diverse traditions, hymns, readings from a variety of sacred and secular traditions, rituals from earth-based and other traditions, and sermons by our minister, guest ministers, or our Worship Associates.

Our Worship Associates, composed of lay volunteers from the congregation, contributed to the planning and delivery of services throughout the year. Participation includes partnering with Reverend Finkelstein, guest ministers, or each other to design and present services that are inspirational and consistent with both denominational and congregational values. Some of our Worship Associates wrote and delivered their own sermons, centered on their own spiritual practices or interests. Minds and spirits were nourished both in the audience and in the pulpit.

In order to provide an opportunity for all ages and stages to be engaged with the same theme to facilitate conversation across the generations, we held multigenerational worship services once a month. These services focused on the church wide monthly themes. All ages were invited to attend.

We had two all-Music Sundays this year: An all Brian Tate, Canadian UU composer, Sunday, and A Lion King Sunday. In addition, special music included: Brother Ebo, African drumming and dancers; Scott Davidson Trio; Wilmington String ensemble; Martin Hargrove; Kim Reighly, flute; The Jonathan Whitney

Once again, our monthly worship themes followed the Soul Matters program.

We danced in the aisles with the amazing percussion of Brother Darien Ebo and Friends at Ingathering.
trio; Gus Mercante, counter tenor; Mary Kay Mann, penny whistle and harp; Anne Turner, piano; and The Harvey Price Quartet.

Two new programs emerged this year from our Worship Associates program. This Fall we introduced a lay-led, monthly Vespers service on Wednesday evenings, to nourish minds and spirits. It is based on the Taizé style of worship, featuring candlelight, inspirational music, readings and meditation. The services have been attracting an average of 30 participants, who have offered positive comments about the calming influence of the service on their lives. The Vespers team includes Cindy Cohen, Worship Leader; Ami Verrill Elinich, Musician; Jim Curtis, Tonia Bell-Delgado, Suzanne Perry, Michele Tashman, and Jennifer Fazekas.

We also added monthly **art installations** based on our Soul Matters Themes, providing a means of artistic expression of individuals’ experiences with the themes through painting, drawing, writing, needlework and photography. The goals of the program are to inspire creativity among our members, to present an expanded perception of religion, church and spirituality, and to appreciate and support our artists. In our first year, seventeen members were inspired to show their creations, including writing personal statements about the monthly themes.

In December, First Unitarian hosted the Pacem in Terris Children’s Peace Art exhibit in our gallery, including art on the theme of peace by our own First Unitarian children and youth. Each described what peace meant to them. To read and understand what peace means to the younger generation was inspirational to all who visited the show.

Outside of worship, we offered **Yoga** and **Open Heart Zen Sangha**. Members experience growth in spirituality through the practice of yoga, especially its meditative aspects. The instructor encourages participants to “honor the fire in ourselves and within others.”

“**Vespers provides a unique respite from the hectic pace of everyday life and an opportunity to calm our minds and hearts.**” ~ Cindy Cohen, Worship Leader
Members also report an increased sense of physical well-being and emotional serenity. Likewise, through meditation at Open Heart Zen Sangha, participants cultivate a spacious environment for opening to selves and each other, leading to a more harmonious life style, less stress, personal growth and self-healing.

The John G. MacKinnon Memorial Library is a welcoming space and accessible resource that contributes to our understanding and practice of Unitarian Universalism.

New titles on our shelves include the 2018 UUA Common Read, Daring Democracy: Igniting Power, Meaning, and Connection for the America We Want (Frances Moore Lappe & Adam Eichen, Beacon Press, 2017). Also new are several books written or illustrated by members: Riding With the Wind: Three Generations of my Family in China (Fay Yin, 2017); Footbridge to the Light: Self Discovery Through the Mind Body Connection (Dale Megill, 2017); and Something More Special (by Judith Gupton Wiley; Lillian Stark, illus., 2011). Also new, by Rev. Lorakim Joyner who spoke at First Unitarian last year, is Conservation in Time of War: A Transformational Journey through Beauty and Tragedy (2017). Six of our new titles are part of the Green Sanctuary collection, and five books for young people were purchased through the Sagar Memorial fund.

Reactivation of our Archive of First Unitarian Church began in Spring 2017, and organizational work is fully underway during this fiscal year. The Archive mission is to collect and preserve documents and memorabilia reflecting the history of our congregation and to organize them in a consistent, functional manner, storing or displaying them appropriately and making them accessible on a supervised basis to staff and others who seek information to: assist and enlighten in ongoing processes of our church; study and communicate the history, events and culture of our church; and enrich and stimulate our congregation with an understanding of its heritage and its future. Still under development is an Archive cataloging system to help arrange and locate the variety of materials.

The Library provides meaningful resources for adults and young people in religious exploration and life passages, in ethical concerns including social justice and environment, and more. Library or Archive can also be a rewarding volunteer opportunity and a way to become engaged in the life of our church; even the donation of a timely book that reflects our UU values and concerns is welcomed.

Our First Unitarian Book Corner has provided a safe place for people, especially visitors and newcomers, to gather and chat with fellow book lovers. It has provided a source of books on Unitarian Universalism and other spiritual beliefs as well as copies of the UUA Common Read Book for the convenience of members.

“My experiences in organized religion from childhood through college formed my self image as non-religious, non-spiritual. Attending First Unitarian gave me space to generate a new context. My religious outlook was not prescribed – I was free to be me. In effect, after writing my spiritual autobiography in a program I took at First U, I could see my early life through the lens of the spiritual. My love of nature, my love of music and dance, my desire for interconnectedness through family and friends, were always a part of the spiritual me.” ~ Nancy Pinson, member
Children & Youth Religious Exploration (CYRE): The CYRE curriculum is developmentally appropriate and is designed to build on previous years. Active learning is emphasized, where children and youth engage with the material on Sunday mornings as well as through special projects, such as social advocacy programs and field trips. The curriculum also integrates the monthly worship themes.

The Children and Youth Religious Exploration Team sets policy and strategy for the CYRE Program. The team also provides support and assistance to the Director of Religious Exploration in all aspects of religious education and social functions relating to the children and youth of First Unitarian Church.

The CYRE team’s work focuses on advancing First Unitarian’s mission with children and youth. After all, they are the future of the church and of Unitarian Universalism. Together with the Director of Religious Exploration, Catherine Williamson, the CYRE Team works directly with the children and youth in tailoring the curriculum to fit contemporary needs, as well as in guiding them through finding service projects to fight injustice and transform the world. As stated in the CYRE vision statement, “Our children and youth affirm their identity as members of the Unitarian Universalist faith community, embrace their evolving spirituality and practice Unitarian Universalist values in all facets of their lives.” We have a thriving volunteer group consisting of almost 40 individuals, and every one of them is much needed, as we serve the nearly 70 children and youth who are registered, and their families.

We have a beautiful opportunity every week to change the world. Because the CYRE Team is working with the next generation, we are transforming the future. It’s what we do every week in every classroom.

The curriculum we use brings up some serious issues. The children in our classes are given the opportunity to not only talk about, but also take actions against some of the problems in the world.

The Seekers (2nd grade – 4th grade) addressed issues such as child slavery when they wrote letters of protest to the Nestlé’s company, and agreed to try to avoid their foods. They have addressed poverty by collecting school supplies for Wilmington-area children who can’t afford to buy their own; cruelty to animals when they supported the no-kill animal shelter by raising money and making catnip toys for Faithful Friends Animal Shelter; along with issues such as sickness, and...
Throughout the year they examined God/god/goddess beliefs, thoughts about death, how they would handle ethical dilemmas, and many other topics. In May they will participate in a solo vigil at Lums Pond State Park. Then they will challenge themselves on the Go Ape ropes course. On May 20 they will present their credos to the congregation.

The **Youth Group** (9th grade – 12th grade) provides a welcoming and engaging environment that supports teens in social, emotional, and spiritual growth. Youth programming focuses on group-building, worship, social action, leadership development, and building positive relationships with the adults of our congregation and the Unitarian Universalist community.

The Youth Group has been busy fundraising throughout the year in support of their service/learning trip to West Virginia this summer. This trip, sponsored by the UU College of Social Justice will take them to West Virginia, where they will have a hands-on experience working and learning from Appalachian communities struggling for a new, post-coal future.

When not meeting formally in Youth Group, several of our Youth help with childcare and children's religious exploration on Sunday mornings.

In addition to Sunday morning classes, the CYRE program offered Our Whole Lives (OWL)

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“Overall, I’d say being a part of the First Unitarian community has impacted my life by enlightening me, teaching me how to be a better person, and allowing me to become more outgoing, whether it’s with my actions or my peers, and encouraged me to take my thoughts and turn them into a reality. I’ve become an all around better person; I think more about my actions before I take them, and I am able to be proud in my actions, as I represent an entire congregation in my youth.”

~ Joyce Salasky, Youth
this year for Kindergarten/1st graders, which had 6 children enrolled, and for 8th/9th/10th graders, which had 15 youth enrolled.

In August of 2017, our children and youth had the opportunity to participate in the Pacem in Terris Visionary Peace Art Exhibition at The Delaware Contemporary. The children were invited to create a picture of peace, considering the questions; What does peace look like? What does a peaceful world look like? The Youth Peace Art Exhibition was designed for Delaware K-12 students. The artwork was displayed at the Delaware Contemporary museum in Wilmington during Delaware Peace Week, and some of the artwork traveled to different locations, including First Unitarian.

An important addition to what the CYRE team provides is the Safety policies, specific to CYRE. This includes information on topics such as evacuation, first aid, lockdown and drills, background check sign ups, and signs of abuse. This will be an ongoing effort in order to keep everyone informed and safe. Several members of the CYRE team attended the Stewards of Children workshop and training that was held in March.

"My piece represents that in a chaotic, vibrant world, there can be harmony. A world where everything works in harmony is a world of peace." ~ Rohan Mandayam, First U 7th grader

Our Youth participated in the church organized Walk-Out in March, after much discussion and learning about the use of guns, and gun laws in class.
Following a well-attended workshop in October 2016 led by Rev. Kathleen McTigue, director of the UU College of Social Justice, leaders of First Unitarian’s social justice groups worked during 2017 with the Executive Team to establish a new structure for social action at the church. The goal was to enhance and support the relationships among First Unitarian’s various social justice activities by creating and recognizing several Social Justice Task Forces within the congregation.

As a result, the church now has three official Social Justice Task Forces that represent our current interests and strengths in social action: environmental justice, human rights, and First Unitarian’s longstanding direct service project, Independent Living for Young Adults (ILYA). Our current task forces are described on the following pages.

The existence of this structure does not preclude any other social service or social justice activities within the church, such as serving the Emmanuel Dining Room, the Knitting Ministry, or doing legislative work with the UU Delaware Advocacy Network.

Task forces (which might also be called ministries) are designed as umbrella groups that may include a variety of programs and modes of action consonant with their stated mission.

This structure is designed to focus on actions that have clear goals and are organized by a committed group of leaders who can sustain the work over time. With church recognition, these task forces may receive benefits such as small budget allocations, fundraising opportunities, priority in publicity and meeting space, and staff time—including pulpit attention from the minister.

Through a prescribed application process, they have created mission statements, set goals, listed actions, and indicated sufficient support and leadership from within the congregation. They have also committed to:

- working both within and beyond the congregation
- making intentional efforts to connect with a diverse set of partners within the larger community
- keeping racial justice in the center of their work

Social Justice Connector:
https://firstusocialaction.wordpress.com

#nomore….17 minutes of silence
“We honored the dead, most of whom were children and expressed our support for changes in gun laws to help prevent such tragedies.”
~ Betty Warner, member
• emphasizing the importance of spiritual practice to social justice work.

Following best practices drawn from multiple congregations by Rev. McTigue, the number of task forces is limited to one for each 100 members of the congregation. Our current head count would allow for up to four, and the Executive Team may recognize additional task forces as circumstances dictate.

Task forces are authorized for a limited term (typically two or three years) at the discretion of the Executive Team. They will be reviewed for reauthorization based on meeting stated goals.

All three task forces are welcoming new volunteers. To learn about meetings and opportunities to become involved, speak with or email any member of a leadership team.

Environmental Justice Task Force

As the Green Sanctuary Committee evolved to the Environmental Justice Task Force, task force members worked on doing a better job sharing their environmental justice passions with each other and the wider community, both at our church and in the greater Delaware population. First Unitarian continued our relationship with Southbridge, Sierra Club, the Delaware Nature Society, the local vegan community, as well as completing environmental justice training with other activist groups. This aided in keeping the task force informed about actions they could share and participate in.

The Environmental Justice Task Force participated in the following projects this year:
• Completed a mold project with Southbridge as well as being present for most of their civic association meetings. Our members had a table last July at the Southbridge Days festival and helped on Friday Farmer’s Market events.
• Attended several South Wilmington Planning Board meetings to keep us informed about those projects.
• Our ethical eating members have showcased vegan snacks at the hospitality table as well as sponsoring vegan potlucks. They worked with the youth

The mission of the Environmental Justice Task Force is moving the planet to a sustainable future. At present, this includes support for local agriculture and farmer’s markets such as Bright Spot Gardens; mitigation of environmental effects of climate change on Wilmington neighborhoods such as Southbridge; providing education on vegetarian and vegan eating practices through regular pot-luck dinners; and supporting actions to educate about climate change, including but not limited to forums, community outreach, and public witness. The core leadership includes Renee Anderson, Dee Burdash, Deborah Haskell, Kate Franta, and David Donohue.
group on planning a vegan spaghetti fundraising dinner for their service trip planned for this summer. They also backed the "Cool Congregations" efforts where we received an honorable mention for our commitments.

- Sponsored an Environmental Justice Fair in November to inform our congregation and offer ways they could participate in their efforts. Groups present were: Nurture Nature, Delaware Nature Society, UU Service Committee, Delaware Citizens for Environmental Justice, Southbridge and the Sierra Club.

- Hosted Sierra Club’s renewable Energy Kickoff in March learning about the “50% by 2032” initiative and how we can support it in the Delaware legislature. Tom Noyes from Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) shared his broad knowledge about renewable energy and how those credits work in our state.

First Unitarian Church also participates in The New Castle County Congregations of Delaware Interfaith Power and Light (NC3 of DeIPL), an interfaith effort involving congregations in New Castle County, the state of Delaware, and the federal government.

This year, NC3 promoted:
- Solar-powered homes and cars
- The Yale Carbon Price project
- The Citizens’ Climate Lobby (CCL) – a national price on carbon initiative
- LWV Price on Carbon initiative across Delaware
- Sourcing green electricity for our homes
- Planning for Earth Week/Earth Day activities in April 2018
- Home and congregational energy audits

NC3 continues to encourage and support its member congregations, relay information, and coordinate with DeIPL and other like-minded organizations regarding climate change. The mission of Interfaith Power and Light (a national organization), of which NC3 and DeIPL are parts, is a faith response to climate change, which we see as the greatest moral and ethical issue of our time - a conviction that has been supported by the UUA, UUSC and the UUA Statement of Conscience adopted at General Assembly in 2006.

The mission of Independent Living for Young Adults is to support young people aging out of foster care in building successful independent lives. Specific goals are: to prevent homelessness for young people aging out of foster care; reinforce the value of continued education with emotional and practical support; facilitate furnishing a first apartment according to the preferences of the young young person; recognize and celebrate holidays, birthdays and milestones with the young person; and promote a sense of self-worth by demonstrating interest and caring. The core leadership includes Amy Barch, Barbara Crowell, Carolyn Gibson, Lois Morris, Betty Wier, and Sue Wilson.

Independent Living for Young Adults (ILYA) provides support for young adults when they age out of foster care at 18 years of age, working with social service agencies to fill existing gaps in service, as well as advocating at the state level of legislature. By acknowledging the inherent worth and dignity of these young people and supporting some of their most basic needs, the team expresses our Unitarian Universalist values clearly by facilitating the processes by which First
Abused and rejected from her adopted family at age 14, and after being returned to her birth mother for 1 ½ years, M. entered the foster care system. She lived in 3 foster homes from age 15 to 17 and then a girl’s group home. In her junior year, after running away and getting pregnant, she was again moved to a foster home. Terrified at being on her own at age 18 with a baby, she was introduced to the Independent Living for Young Adults program.

“They threw me a wonderful baby shower. I met so many wonderful ladies there, some that shared a similar past and gave encouraging words. I had so much stuff for my unborn child that I never would have been able to afford without them. A month after my baby shower I was able to get my first apartment with a voucher and ILYA paid half of my security deposit.

A few months after being on my own I graduated from high school. ILYA had a pizza party to celebrate. It was the only celebration I had. During my time in my apartment ILYA, has helped furnish it and they also blessed my daughter and me with a big bag of gifts on Christmas. The most important thing to me is that I formed a very close relationship with Miss Lois who has helped me beyond measures. She is truly the wind beneath my wings. I’ve been working for 7 months at Rite Aid and I’ll be starting college March 15th for business at Goldey-Beacom. Words cannot thank you all for all your support. When you donate your money and time I want you to know you change someone’s life.”

- M, young adult in the ILYA program

Unitarian members can contribute.

ILYA program volunteers contributed to the following projects this year, all delivering significant impact in the lives of the young people we served, based on feedback from Independent Living Coordinators with whom we partner in our work and directly from the young people:

- Supportive grants
- Holiday giving
- Student care packages
- Furniture and household goods
- Graduation backpacks and pizza party
- New apartment kits
- Baby showers
- Educational support

We are grateful for the opportunity to experience the wonder, inspiration, fulfillment, and joy that working on the ILYA projects provides. We are particularly delighted that this year that experience has significantly expanded to include many in our broader community. First Unitarian is gaining significant visibility in the greater Wilmington area and indeed beyond as demonstrated by volunteers and donations coming from outside our own congregation.
Human Rights Task Force

For the second year in a row, First Unitarian Church participated in Peace Week Delaware by creating and hosting a public event. The workshop “I Am Not a Racist: Confronting Race, Racism, and White Supremacy” drew about 80 people to the Parish Hall on September 20. Facilitated by the Coalition to Dismantle the New Jim Crow, the workshop explored white privilege and structural racism in society through participants’ personal experiences of race. More than half of those attending were not members of the church.

First Unitarian Church’s involvement in Peace Week Delaware takes many forms. Jeff Lott chaired the 17-member steering committee, which included four other church members: Julia Diebold, Michele Tashman, Kimberly Tull, and Susan Wilson. Holly Feldheim-Pust served as Peace Week’s graphic designer. Dozens of church members participated in the fourth annual March for a Culture of Peace, which was centered on Rodney Square in cooperation with the grassroots anti-violence group 302 Guns Down. And Peace Week Delaware was supported by a generous grant from the June J. and Russell Peterson Fund for Social Justice.

Peace Week Delaware is a week-long series of public events held statewide that nurture and promote a culture of peace, equality, and justice by celebrating the benefits of peace and motivating and empowering Delawareans to take action. As a project of the Movement for a Culture of Peace, its underlying goals are:

- to provide a shared project that increases communication and cooperation among peace-oriented organizations across Delaware
- to offer a wide range of events and activities that draw not only people already active in building peace, but also those seeking a way to become involved

In only its second year, Peace

Shyanne Miller of the Coalition to Dismantle the New Jim Crow leads a Peace Week Delaware workshop at First Unitarian.

The Human Rights Task Force will advance the cause of human rights—expressed in many forms and for the benefit of all—in harmony with the principles of Unitarian Universalism. Recognizing that racial justice has been our congregational focus in recent years, the Human Rights Task Force will seek to build on this work, but also to engage with those who have other agendas and goals within the larger movement for human rights. These may include LGBTQ rights, women’s rights, the rights of refugees and immigrants, religious freedom, support for Black Lives Matter and the Coalition to Dismantle the New Jim Crow, economic justice, and other human rights challenges. The core leadership includes Doyle Dobbins, Judy Govatos, Lynn Ingersoll, Becky Laster, Jeff Lott, and Debbi Zarek.
Week Delaware expanded significantly, growing from 41 to 62 events with a total estimated attendance of 4,500 Delawareans. It more than doubled the number of events in Kent and Sussex counties, and added a variety of new events in New Castle County.

Kimberly Tull and Susan Wilson have stepped up to lead Peace Week in 2018—and they are always looking for volunteers!

Other efforts where the Human Rights Task Force has partnered with organizations in Delaware over the past year included the following:

**A.L.E.R.T. (Allied Local Emergency Response Team)**

This organization had its beginnings on February 21, 2017 when at the invitation of the YWCA over 100 people gathered at First Unitarian to take a stand against injustice. Within weeks A.L.E.R.T. was born as an action-oriented rapid response team working to meet the immediate needs of the local community after incidents of injustice.

A year later, a smaller but committed group stands up and speaks out against racism and acts of injustice. They work to foster connections in diverse New Castle County Communities, to promote cultural awareness and build trust and confidence that individuals can count on each other.

Some of the actions taken this first year have been supporting the Jewish community after bomb threats were made at the Siegel Jewish Community Center in Wilmington, standing with the Muslim community to protest Islamophobia at the Muslim-American Unity Rally in Dover, hosting ACLU *Know your Rights* training, and supporting safe communities initiatives.

**The Unitarian Universalist Delaware Advocacy Network** (UUDAN), which joins twenty other UU State Advocacy Networks, combined in a national coalition. UUDAN's role is to offer members and friends of the five Delaware Unitarian Universalist congregations the opportunity to join together to champion actions and policies at the local, state and national levels which express our Unitarian Universalist values.

"Over the course of the year I learned a tremendous amount about the challenges facing people in the New Castle County area, from gun violence, the plight of undocumented people, victims of racial injustice and so much more. It is easy for people like me to be shielded from these realities when we stay in our usual bubbles of neighborhood, friends and family. By joining ALERT and getting to meet people from all over NCC I’ve expanded my bubble and have been inspired to act to make my larger community better in whatever way I can. I am very grateful to the First Unitarian Church for hosting some of our meetings and being so supportive of blossoming groups like ours. For our group, these connections are vital to our mission and I hope we can continue to work together to improve the lives of people in our community."

~ Nicole, an A.L.E.R.T. leader
In March, the Human Rights Task Force rented two busses for people in the community to ride into Wilmington to participate in the local March for Our Lives. Some members also participated in the March in Washington, D.C.

Other ways First Unitarian connected with the local community included the following activities:

**Martin Luther King Day of Service:** In addition to raising awareness of, and taking action on social justice issues, the CYRE team organized this year’s Martin Luther King Day of Service for First Unitarian Church members and people from our community. To deepen our relationship with the school after our day of service with them last year, children and youth partnered with Elbert Palmer Elementary School again this year.

A large group of First Unitarian members and friends went to the school to assist with a range of projects which included painting a mural, designing bulletin boards, moving and organizing a library, organizing games and classrooms, and cleaning up garbage outside and on the school grounds. Because this school has a deep need for hands-on support, this experience led to building a plan for an ongoing partnership, not only for the CYRE families but the larger congregation. Several members of our congregation volunteered to become mentors at the school, which is much needed.

Youth collected items for, and assembled almost 60 hygiene kits. These were delivered to

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At Palmer Elementary School—“Our CYRE curriculum and UU principles help us to transform our children, and they, by their UU example, are transforming the world around them.”

~ CYRE Team

Marching in Wilmington’s March for our Lives; view a video at our website:

https://www.facebook.com/firstuuwilm/videos/1762034700524967/?t=0
the Claymont Community Center in order to help serve the needs of the many local homeless families that the center serves. They also feed over 200 families per month, so CYRE is going to run a food drive in the months of April and May to help supply their food closet, as it is usually depleted by the summer, when even more meals than normal are needed.

**Martin Luther King Jr. Week Celebratory Concert:** Thanks to the work of our Honorary Minister of Music, Scott Ward, we once again hosted the annual concert of the DuPont Diversity Choir. A good will offering was taken to support the anti-racism work of YWCA Delaware.

Members of the Emmanuel Dining Room team at First Unitarian Church transform the world through their action of feeding the homeless and those in need every month at the Ministry of Caring’s Emmanuel Dining Room (EDR) at 2nd and Jackson Streets in Wilmington. A rotating team of about 30 individuals come together to cook casseroles on the 19th of the month, and serve them on the 20th to over 200 individuals who come for a free hot meal. This program has been in place over 30 years now, and we see no reason why it shouldn’t continue for another 30 years.
Loving action in partnership with the **Unitarian Universalist Association** and affiliated organizations was also a priority at First Unitarian during this year.

First Unitarian Church has been an active participant with the **Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)** over many years.

During fiscal year 2016-17, First Unitarian members and friends contributed over $32,000 to UUSC in response to Guest At Your Table, honey sales, Justice Sunday, donated gifts of stock, pledges, fund raising campaigns, and online giving. During the year, First Unitarian participated in the following programs and activities:

- **UUSC Coffee Project:** Support for the Fair Trade Equal Exchange/UUSC Coffee Project and its sale of products was sustained throughout the year. Thanks to Steve Marek and family, the Project had sales of over $5,000, placing First Unitarian in the top 5% of Unitarian Universalist churches supporting this program.

- **Black Lives Matter (BLM) and Environmental Justice/Climate Change Resolutions:** General support for these initiatives continued throughout the year.

- **The Guest-At-Your-Table (GAYT) UUSC Program for all ages** took place the six weeks prior to Thanksgiving. We had a fantastic kick-off this year in October, with Tom Andrews, the President/CEO of UUSC as our guest speaker. We had a donor reception the evening before for First Unitarian members, who give regularly to UUSC. This Program has two basic goals:
  - To educate our members about the world-wide work of UUSC
  - to promote giving to support these programs.

These goals were achieved by working with the Children & Youth RE program, distributing GAYT boxes, giving Stewardship Reflections and Story for all ages in Sunday worship services, weekly articles in E-News, publishing testimonials from First Unitarian members, helping with Rev. Finkelstein’s “Setting the Table” Service at Thanksgiving, having one-on-one conversations with many members to provide information and to answer questions, hosting the coffee hour hospitality table and social justice tables, and selling over 153 pounds of Doyle Dobbins’ donated honey.

- **Justice Sunday:** On April 8, 2018, Justice Sunday was observed and a special offering was received to

> “This was an exceptional year of support as we, First Unitarian members, recognize that UUSC promotes our values and accomplishes social justice on our behalf around the world.”

~ Doyle Dobbins, member and UUSC leader at First Unitarian
support the UUSC social justice work throughout the world. In addition, Beverley Baxter and Doyle Dobbins reported on their trip to Nicaragua in February with the College of Social Justice and UUSC.

- **Humanitarian Crises:** These crises are unscheduled, but when they happen, the UUSC team promotes support for those who are most marginalized in these crises through timely special giving to UUSC. Examples include Hurricane Harvey relief, Syrian Refugee Relief, and Climate Change Displacement Refugee Relief.

- **Public Policy Statements/Resolution:** Environmental Justice and Climate Change Resolutions were promoted and the local team participated in environmental issues throughout the year.

**UU United Nations Office**

We produced United Nations Sunday on October 22 with a sermon devoted to the refugee actions of the UN, UNICEF and UNO. In addition, we sponsored a program called *Movies that Matter* with Jewish Family Services which involved three films and discussions regarding the worldwide refugee situation. We reached Blue Ribbon status in the UU UNO for congregational participation.

Many of the members of our church have been active, along with Jewish Family Services in helping to welcome and resettle refugees. Last year the flow of families diminished sharply, but this year we are welcoming about one family every two weeks. This personal giving provides some spiritual healing for times when we think we "can't do anything" about a problem.

**UUA General Assembly**

First Unitarian sent a full slate of delegates to the UUA’s General Assembly in June 2017, where the focus was on healing and “calls for more honest examination of the ways our culture, practices, and structure center whiteness and isolate and silence Unitarian Universalists of color.”

Led by interim co-Presidents, Afro-Latinx the Rev. Sofia Betancourt, and African-Americans the Rev. Bill Sinkford and Dr. Leon Spencer, and tri-moderators Gregory Boyd, Kathy Burek and Elandria Williams, we elected our first woman President, Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray and entered into deep reflection of our practices.

Coming back from General Assembly, Rev. Roberta Finkelstein led the congregation in supporting *The Promise and the Practice of Our Faith for Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU)* in November. We collected $4,484, surpassing the goal of $10 per certified member.

"Being new to UUism I imagined that this meeting of the UU Association was not for me; in all the decades as a Presbyterian I had never attended their national assembly. But here at First UU Wilmington, the joy and enthusiasm expressed by everyone who had attended General Assembly was enticing. And with the meeting being held in New Orleans this year the pull to go was irresistible! I am so glad I did. Every day I was challenged and inspired to live our UU principles."

~ Darlene Scott, First UU Wilmington delegate

“Dear Friends, stand by this faith. Work for it and sacrifice for it. There is nothing in all the world so important to you as to be loyal to this faith which has placed before you the loftiest ideals ...”

~ Rev. Olympia Brown, Universalist Minister

Thank you to our members and friends for your ongoing support which sustains our congregation and this faith.
## Gifts to our Community

First Unitarian members, visitors and friends made the following contributions from May 2017—April 2018:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish Family Services—Refugees</td>
<td>$1,204</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Bike Project</td>
<td>$881</td>
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<td>National Alliance on Mental Illness—DE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Movement for a Culture of Peace</td>
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<td><strong>Grants for Growth:</strong></td>
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<td>UU Congregation of Southern DE</td>
<td>$2,695</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southbridge Civic Association</td>
<td>$675</td>
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<td>Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism</td>
<td>$4,584</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emmanuel Dining Room (meal prepared and served for 200+, once a month)</td>
<td>$2,861</td>
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<td>Lutheran Community Services</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Independent Living for Young Adults:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>25 Backpacks (estimated value)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holiday project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support grants</td>
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<td><strong>Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC):</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee Project Sales</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest at Your Table</td>
<td>$3,662</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honey Sales</td>
<td>$1,870</td>
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<tr>
<td>Justice Sunday special collection</td>
<td>$1,162</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>YWCA—House pin sales</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>$2,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total donations through First Unitarian Society</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$34,334</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Direct contributions by First Unitarian Members:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>EDR International Dinners (approximately 150 seats purchased)</td>
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<tr>
<td>UUSC: donated gifts of stock, pledges, special fundraisers, online</td>
<td>$23,946</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

“Our money is being well-managed and being spent in accordance with the annual budget passed by the Congregation.”

~ Steve Cohen, Treasurer
Financial Performance

“... in the midst of our First Unitarian 150th anniversary celebration, we spent a good bit of time talking about how much we were beneficiaries of those who went before us – we were reaping what others had sown - and how it was our turn now to pay it forward. Robert and I have made many contributions, but, oh my, we have gained so much from being a part of this beloved community, our spiritual home.”

~ Helen Foss

“Our money is being well-managed and being spent in accordance with the annual budget passed by the Congregation.” ~ Steve Cohen, Treasurer

**Investments And Fixed Assets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net Assets (Unrestricted)</td>
<td>$222,803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Assets (Restricted)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capital Campaign Fund</td>
<td>$1,281,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Net Assets:</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,539,165</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rev. Roberta Finkelstein, Developmental Minister

Scott Ward, Honorary Minister of Music

Catherine Williamson, Director of Religious Education

Marina VanRenssen, Business Manager

Chrissy McCullin, Congregational Administrator

Ernie Congo, Building Coordinator

Harold Cannon, Night Custodian

Mohamed Konate, Weekend Custodian

Lenell Laws, Substitute Custodian

Julia Davidson, Elizabeth Donovan, Grace Ruoff—Childcare

Will Donovan, Elise Harrell, Will Harrell, Nicole McGhee, Olivia Reeves, Natalie Ruggerio, Lauren Smith, Substitute Childcare
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to the planners, designers, writers, reviewers, editors and photographers for our 2017-18 Annual Report:

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Dee Burdash  Marilyn Hyte  Sylvia Tarzanin
Jon Claney  Philip Krape  Chad Tolman
Cindy Cohen  Jeff Lott  Marina VanRenssen
Steve Cohen  Rohan Mandayam  Scott Ward
Jim Davis  Barry Marrs  Betty Warner
doyle dobins  Burley Melton  Jim Weddell
Maggie Duffy  Lois Morris  Lori Weddell
Holly Feldheim  Nancy Pinson  David Weiss
Rev. Roberta Finkelstein  Paul Pinson  Catherine Williamson
Helen Foss  Lydia Robb  Judy Windle
Ben Fleury-Steiner  Linda Sanders  Debbi Zarek
Vivian Gray  Joyce Salasky

“As part of the Eagles football celebration in February, they interviewed a former player who is now a minister in the Philadelphia area. He said “it is not the location that matters but the destination that counts”.

Candidly, I do not know my destination’s final stop, but along the way I’ve changed myself and hopefully others. The ability to integrate my professional skills and the core teachings of this church provided focus for me to use in the non-profit charitable arena here in Delaware. Simply not to write a check or donate to worthy causes, rather become engaged, listen to various differing opinions and find the avenue best to proceed and accomplish our goals. Our UU principle of the “inherent worth and dignity of each individual” set the tone for me over 20 years ago and I carry it with me every day. Sometimes it’s hard to keep it fresh in my mind’s eye when I’m convinced I’m right and others are wrong. But that is what transformation is all about. My journey continues.”

~ Marilyn Hyte, Member
Our Principles

- Unitarian Universalists covenant with each other to affirm and promote:
  - The inherent worth and dignity of every person
  - Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations
  - A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
  - Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations
  - The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
  - The goal of world community, with peace, liberty, and justice for all
  - Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are part

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First Unitarian Church of Wilmington