GROWING TOGETHER

Annual Report 2019 – 2020

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 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.

In her first year with us at First Unitarian Church, Reverend Pamela Wat was asked, “What is your greatest hope for this First UU congregation?”

Her response during a January “Question Box Sermon” was: “that we can grow our work together –that we can go deeper and higher into the areas that matter, that we can reach broader to invite those who are presently just outside of our reach, that we can imagine (higher) the possibilities for transforming ourselves and our world.

That’s how I think of church work: tend to self; tend to one another; tend to community and the world.”

We have many great mission-centered programs at First Unitarian already—these are the subject of our 2019-20 annual report. We now reach out beyond our walls with our newest technology and have created a more welcoming place of worship for all who come through our doors.

The question Reverend Wat asks us is “What else is possible? What needs are not being met?” What are the ways that society and culture are changing that call us to consider these questions? The answer to how we will grow together going forward rests in how well we understand the changes and the unmet needs within and without.
The 2019-2020 year has been a year of change for our Congregation. We saw our sanctuary and church change before our eyes as the vision of our strategic plan became reality. The new settled minister we called in May 2019 began her work with our congregation in August 2019. We warmly welcomed her as we all learned a new way of working together and helped her to settle in. As we enter our final quarter of the year, we are again facing change, navigating the evolving landscape of COVID-19 as we gather in weekly streaming services and online groups. To say that it has been a year of change is an understatement.

Every year, the Congregation votes in members to the Board of Trustees, the body to which the congregation delegates responsibility and authority for all policy decisions not made by the Congregation; day-to-day operating decisions are delegated to the Senior Minister and Executive Team. The Policy Governance model that the Board uses requires the Board to create an annual Vision of Governance (AVG) to guide our work that must conform to clear, written policies and supports First Unitarian Church's Values, Mission and Ends. Our AVG this year had three parts:

- Complete the vision for mission-focused facilities
- Develop plans to secure our financial future, and begin implementing them
- Support the integration and settlement of our new minister

We hold monthly meetings which focus on planning and monitoring performance against our written policies. The Board has three standing committees – Investment, Governance, and Strategic Planning that conduct much of the work.

- **Investment Activities** – we have three primary investment funds: Heritage, Maintenance Endowment, and the Capital Campaign Fund. All are governed by policy documents. Most of our money is invested with the Unitarian Universalist Common Endowment Fund (UUCEF) that has highly competent professional managers. They hold a quarterly conference call, which one or more members of the investment committee attend. Thus far, we are satisfied with their performance, especially the emphasis on socially responsible investments. Previously we transferred the Capital Campaign Fund into cash equivalents in preparation for the Capital Improvement Plan spending; this proved to be a wise move as it avoided the wild swings in the stock market. *Committee members: Carmen Bell-Delgado (chair), Bill Hardham, Marty Peres (congregation), Steve Cohen (ex-officio)*

- **Governance Activities** - This committee is charged with enabling the Board to continually strive for and achieve greater clarity, efficiency, and productivity in its work and policies. They review the bylaws, and currently no changes are needed. Monthly reviews of various policies conducted by individual members of the board found that we are generally in compliance. This team ensures that the Board is faithful to its covenant and checks for any possible conflicts of interest. *Committee members: Leslie Dickerson (chair), Deb Griffin, Tracy Spinka-Doms*
• **Strategic Planning** – The primary objective of the Strategic Planning Committee was to implement the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) approved by the congregation. Developing a new strategic plan was deferred in order to focus effort on the CIP. A novel rolling vote process was used to gather as much input as possible from the congregation. A list of 13 improvements were approved and contractors were engaged to estimate costs. Unfortunately, the total estimated cost turned out to exceed the available funds, so a mini-capital campaign was conducted that raised enough to fund all the improvements. Highlights of the CIP included replacing the office hallway stairs with an ADA compliant ramp; a chair lift between the sanctuary and office levels; a new AV system; mechanized sanctuary window shades; flexible seating in place of pews; new flooring throughout the sanctuary level; mechanized front doors; new folding partitions; new ceilings and lights, plus new paint and finishes. The objectives of improving accessibility, flexibility, and attractiveness were achieved.

A secondary activity is to explore ways to derive income from the vacant lot on Concord Pike but selling the land is not an option. Other options including a ground lease are being considered but no recommendations have been made yet. Committee members: Mike McCabe & Phil Krape (Co-Chairs), Renee Anderson, Greg Griffin, Marty Peres, Paul Pinson, Linda Sanders

Our balance sheet continues strong and the budget is balanced. Because of this, we have been able to weather the impact of COVID-19 thus far. To date, our projections still look good and we continue to address ways to fund reserves. Also, we have begun addressing prospects for operating income and expenses based on projections by treasurer Steve Cohen regarding an aging congregation, reduced pledging and higher costs. Our Board has formed teams to evaluate approaches to extract income such as leasing the library lot, renting more space in the buildings, and erecting solar panels – all these ideas emanating from the World Café process.

In many respects, this church year has been unlike any other and promises to present both challenges and opportunities as we move into the next. Whatever the new year brings, we enter it from a place well secured by the power of love that has provided us with the resources needed to continually serve our community. Moving forward, we will be:

- Benefiting from the growth and spiritual support afforded by our new settled minister, and working with her to provide not only for our members, but also to attract others looking for a caring community
- Sharing our newly renovated worship and activity space with its increased flexibility, openness and accessibility
- 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 challenging times, we find comfort and strength in being part of a community that believes in individually and collectively striving for these goals and helping each other be the best versions of ourselves. Thank you for the privilege of serving as your Board of Trustees and for supporting our church with your time, talents and treasure.

Love and Peace,
Tracy Spinka-Doms (President), Michael McCabe (Vice-President), Deb Griffin (Secretary), Renee Anderson, Carmen Bell-Delgado, Leslie Dickerson, Phil Krape, Travis Laster, and Dale Megill. Also pictured, Steve Cohen, Treasurer.
This past year has been a year of change. In June 2019, you said goodbye to Developmental Minister, Rev. Roberta Finkelstein. I have been grateful for Roberta’s work in establishing a strong Worship Associate team and Pastoral Care Associate team to augment our shared ministry. I also appreciate Roberta’s leadership in helping to raise the funds, and put into motion, the capital improvements that have made a tremendous difference in our ability to welcome a diversity of people and to resume worship services during staying-at-home precautions brought on by the pandemic.

Since my arrival in August, I’ve been getting to know lay leaders, staff, committee members, community leaders, and others with whom I share ministry. I hosted a series of meetings in the fall, and again in the winter, to hear from members of the congregation and provide opportunities for you to ask questions of me. The meetings were very helpful to me and I am grateful to all who attended them.

Some challenges that we have faced together include the retirement of Scott Ward from his position as the Honorary Minister of Music. His talent, creativity, and warmth are deeply missed. Since his retirement in January we have been inviting a diversity of musicians from the community to be part of our worship experience and I’ve been working with our staff and lay leadership to begin the hiring process later in the year.

In this short time together, we have also lost dear members of our church who have died, many of whom were beloved, long-time members. We have also welcomed many new members and three newborn babies into our congregation. We celebrated the rededication of our newly remodeled building and the installation of me as your newly-settled minister.

Despite all this change, we have experienced high participation and positive energy. We were just starting to look ahead to next year (imagining new opportunities for adults, restructuring aspects of CYRE, increasing engagement with the larger community, soliciting the final pledges for next year’s budget) when the pandemic prompted us to close our church building and shift all classes, events, groups, and services online. With tremendous effort, we shifted our connections to online, phone, and mail communications only. Despite social distancing, we have managed to keep much of our mission-critical work alive as we provide opportunities to nourish our minds and spirits, fight injustice, and transform the world through loving action.

While there are many unknowns in our future, one thing is certain—we will continue to find new and creative ways to cultivate our values and to work toward our principles at home and in the community. I look forward to our second year of this journey together!

In faith,
Rev. Pamela Wat
Growing together in shared ministry begins with covenant. On Sunday, February 16, 2020, we had a fabulous celebration to install Rev. Pamela Wat as our minister. Quoting uua.org, “An installation service formally celebrates the covenantal relationship between a minister and the congregation that has called the minister...The Installation isn’t something the congregation does for the minister; rather, it honors and celebrates the promises you are making to one another as you knit yourselves into shared ministry. As a result, the Service of Installation is centered around a spoken ritual that lifts up your covenant of shared ministry.”

We filled the sanctuary with members, friends, and honored guests of Rev. Wat, to share in this celebration of mutual covenantedness.

Rev. Wat and ministers from all over processed as we all sang “Here We Have Gathered”, led by Anne Turner and the First Unitarian Choir. Beginning with a rededication of our building, with blessings for inclusivity, intergenerational community, creativity, love and service, and connection, we then entered the sacred time of installing our minister. Shay Youngblood, novelist, playwright, artist and teacher, began by reading her story, “Lucky.” Rev. Michael J. Crumpler, LGBTQ and Multicultural Programs Director of the Unitarian Universalist Association delivered his sermon, “You’re UU and You Need to Go Figure That Out” and our own Antonia Bell-Delgado, Ministerial Intern at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Montclair, NJ, delivered the stewardship moment, with the offering supporting the Living Tradition fund of the UUA and the Black Lives of UU Organizing Collective. Throughout the time together, Paul Fleckenstein treated us to amazing sounds from our Rieger Organ.

The Act of Installation was conducted by Tracy Spinka-Doms, President of the First Unitarian Church Board of Trustees, during which the congregation spoke the words of covenant together. Rev. Wat received ceremonial gifts: a stole, presented by Rev. Michelle Collins, Minister of the Unitarian Universalists of Southern Delaware and former assistant minister at First
Unitarian, the same stole she received from Rev. Barbara Gadon at her ordination; and a lovely mobile, presented by Catherine Williamson, Director of Religious Exploration, made by the First Unitarian children and youth. Rev. Abbey Tennis, Lead Minister of First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia gave the Charge to the Minister and Rev. Roberta Finkelstein, Transition Minister at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Jacksonville and former Developmental Minister at First Unitarian, gave the Charge to the Congregation. Following the Benediction and Recession, all were invited to stay for a reception, organized by Marilyn Hyte and Deborah Griffin. The sanctuary was quickly converted to provide for tables and chairs for all to sit comfortably and enjoy their meal—a vegan meal, in honor of Rev. Wat. What an amazing way to use our new flexibility.

“We, the members, children and youth of First Unitarian Church of Wilmington, commit ourselves with Reverend Pamela Wat to work together toward the mission and vision of this congregation. We hereby install Pamela Wat as our called Minister and pledge to share in this ministry and to live out our Unitarian Universalist values in our congregation and beyond.”

“I accept the shared Ministry to which you have called me. I pledge to honor the freedom of pulpit and pew, to speak with integrity and love both publicly and privately, to work hard in the varied areas of ministry: spiritual leadership, counsel, celebration, religious education, activism and administration. I pledge to promote mutual relationships of justice and kindness among all people and within nature as we are called to do in our Unitarian Universalist Principles. This is my covenant with you.”
This year, we continued our role as sponsors for our two ministerial candidates, Antonia Bell-Delgado and Latifah Griffin. This is our opportunity to play an important role in promoting responsible, well-prepared leaders for our religious communities and Unitarian Universalism. We have been proud to play this role in the past and are enthusiastic about embarking on this path with both Antonia and Latifah again this year. Here are their updates.

ANTONIA BELL-DELGADO

Last year when I checked in, I was finishing my first year, Community Studies. I worked in a community setting as a part of the experiential learning part of our program and I was preparing to be a summer Chaplain intern. I completed those learning goals.

This year, I am finishing my second year at Meadville Lombard Theological School (MLTS). It is called the Congregational Studies year for people who are in the Master of Divinity Program. The Congregational Studies year includes a twenty-hour a week Ministerial Internship in a Congregation during the church year. I am an Intern at the UU Congregation at Montclair, in Montclair, NJ (The U). My internship gives me experiential learning in parish ministry. I am embedded in every area of Ministry. I have a lay internship team and I am learning how to be a minister from my teaching pastor and other ministerial colleagues. This internship is a two-year commitment.

I am also the tech production of the VUU, the online talk show of the Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF), and the Senior Learning Fellow. My fellowship prepared me to be far ahead of the curve in producing online worship content because worship is completely online at the CLF. My work on the VUU keeps me knowledgeable about what is occurring in the world of Unitarian Universalism. Learning how to shape content, produce the show, and the tech of the production process serves me well as I shape my craft.

During this time, I am also preparing to present myself to be considered for Fellowship as a Unitarian Universalist Association Minister. This means that when I pass, I will be invited into our association as a minister. This will occur in December 2020. I will go into search in January 2021 for a congregation to serve and if all goes well, I hope to be ordained in May 2021 after my graduation.

As I am moving forward in my seminary career it is not lost on me that there are varying connections that keep me lifted and held. One such connection is the support that I receive from you at 1st U. I was delighted to participate in Rev. Pam’s installation and witness each of you pour out your love for her as she was installed. I look forward to seeing you online. I enjoy the updates that I see on your social media.”

In faith and love,
Intern Minister Antonia
UU Congregation at Montclair
Montclair, NJ.
As I am embarking on my 4th and final year at Lancaster Theological Seminary, I have a lot to reflect on and a long road ahead of me. I am not the same person I was when I entered seminary in 2017. In a lot of ways, this formation process has been enlightening. I am able to apply our seven Principles into daily practice as well as help others to do the same. This helps me cope with life's daily stressors.

During the summer of 2019, I completed one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at Nemours Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children. CPE helped me to discover and understand a more vulnerable aspect of myself that is necessary in ministry. I learned how to be ‘ok’ with uncomfortable emotions in the midst of chaos and confusion. I learned that children receive exceptional care at Nemours (I wished I could transfer my care to duPont). However, I began to question the institutional politics and its view on pastoral care. Personally, I found the institution to undervalue the importance of spiritual care except for when there is a crisis and even then, pastoral care was the last to receive a call. I learned that for each person in the hospital, their visit is a crisis and oftentimes are seeking a nonjudgmental listening ear. The Pastoral care staff at Nemours provide all of that plus some to the staff and patients. If I could change anything about my experience, it is my perception of how institutions utilize pastoral care. However, I found my experience to be invaluable to my life and to my ministry.

I am still an aspirant in the process of becoming a candidate. I am hopeful that I will be able to complete the necessary steps to become a candidate by the end of the summer. I am seeking an internship locally, however, with the COVID-19 pandemic I am not sure where I will be led. In this season of life, I am learning to be patient and to ‘trust the process’.

Peace and Light,
Ministerial Aspirant
Latifah Griffin

LATIFAH GRIFFIN

CHALICE CHALLENGE

At the end of March, as we practiced social distancing, Rev. Wat issued the following challenge:

Make a chalice using ONLY materials you find around the house (cardboard, tape, glue, LEGO, Magnatiles, clay, dominoes, old shoes). Make a chalice that can hold a candle (a regular candle or an LED candle).

Look for the chalices throughout the Annual report!

Joan
Growing Together in Beloved Community

Reverend Pamela Wat joined First Unitarian Church in August 2019 and brought with her new traditions to add to those we already cherish. Once again, at our annual September Ingathering service, we shared in a water communion, each of us bringing water from – or representing – a significant place or experience from the past year. It might have been from our backyard garden, a pond or the ocean; it might have been from our sinks, representing time with loved ones, personal milestones, challenges or other meaningful times.

One by one, we poured our water into a shared vessel to be purified and kept for child dedications and other blessings. Then each person was invited to receive a personal blessing from Rev. Wat, a new experience for many of us. Already we could see that our new minister understood beloved community.

Although we didn’t know it at the time, we were to experience intergenerational beloved community in new, heart-warming ways.

Creating a Welcoming Church

Following major renovations to our building over the past year, our Sunday Morning Greeters welcomed members, friends and newcomers through new, lighter weight, automated doors with glass panels. In addition to the safety factor, the Greeters could see who was approaching and provide assistance to those who are physically challenged. The Warner Memorial Doors were refurbished and moved to our Parish Hall where their history and the complicated nature of our Unitarian Universalist relationship with Thomas Jefferson could be contemplated. Our hope is this change will help all of us expand our understanding of the impact of the images on our historic doors, while expanding our welcome at First Unitarian Church.

Once through our doors, our team of ushers invited all into a beautiful, newly renovated sanctuary, equipped with new, comfortable chairs that could accommodate wheelchairs in amongst others attending the service, rather than always seated at the back. New window shades, flooring, folding panel doors to the Parish Hall, ceiling tiles, lighting, and a fresh
coat of paint provided a welcome, bright update to our 1960 building.

In addition to the Sanctuary and Parish Hall updates, other changes added to a more welcoming environment. A new accessible restroom, a lift from the Memorial Garden vestibule to the Sanctuary level, and an ADA-compliant ramp to the Religious Education wing now make it possible to access all program areas of the church facility without going over stairs.

None of this would have been possible without the generous donations of many members. Phyllis Wynn, pictured below, provided the generous funds in 1999 that allowed us to purchase the adjoining property where our large automated sign now resides along route 202. She was also a major donor in our 2005 Capital Campaign to raise funds, ultimately used for the renovations. During the building dedication in February, the Parish Hall was dedicated to Phyllis and renamed the Phyllis Wynn Memorial Hall.

From the start of the church year, we could see that our Time for All Ages at the beginning of the worship service was different. With added technology, illustrations of stories were projected on a large screen for all to see. Rev. Wat and Catherine Williamson, Director of Religious Exploration, created intergenerational Whole Church Worship services that were not just adult-friendly or kid-friendly but meaningful for all levels of understanding. Words to the hymns were projected on the screen, allowing us to sing out, instead of down, while hymnals were still available for those who prefer that option.

Our technology continued to play a welcoming role as we faced the global COVID-19 pandemic this spring. With the church building closed in March, we moved up the start of live streaming our Sunday worship service. Our first service, complete with readings, story, music, sermon and the collection plate (via mailed-in check or the Give+ app on our phones) was a hit with at least 110 connections. Since multiple family members were watching at many connections, we estimate at least 150 members and friends participated. We even had folks join us who didn’t have a similar option at their home church. The number of connections grew in the following weeks to over 185 with participants from as far
away as Denver and Sedona. Our plan is to have live-streaming ongoing – even when we’re back in the building – so that those who can’t make it physically to church might attend from home.

**Creating Connections**

For much of this past year, creating connections went as usual. Starting with a greeting in the church service – a smile, a welcome, a handshake, a hug – newcomers and long-time members alike connected with each other. Newcomers were invited to fill out a contact card in order to start receiving our First Unitarian Church electronic mailings and for us to begin the process of getting to know them and how they found our church; we estimate about half to three-quarters of our guests fill out a card.

Our **Welcome Table** was ably staffed by volunteers who helped newcomers to learn more about our church and invited them to participate in one of our orientation sessions. This year, our **Membership Team** experimented with a variety of approaches for orientation, welcoming, and connection. Rev. Dr. Richard Speck and Marilyn Hyte conducted orientation sessions, providing a broad overview of our faith and church life with the added benefit of introducing newcomers to each other. Life is busy for all so when scheduling became difficult, one-on-one tours of the building and discussions to address newcomer questions were added. In the past year, we had twenty-two new and renewed memberships.

In addition to these introductions, the Membership Team kept brochure racks well stocked throughout the year, for those who prefer a more private introduction and for those who meet at First Unitarian on other days of the week than Sunday.

Ajay Shalwala and Becca Hammonds shared leadership of our **Circle Suppers** program which they viewed as the epitome of community building: connecting long-time members with those who are newer to First Unitarian in a
small group social setting. The focus at Circle Suppers was on the conversation, new perspectives and connection, celebrating time spent together with people we might not otherwise know. This year, Ajay and Becca experimented with different ways to sign up and gather, including both online and in-person signups and suppers hosted in homes as well as restaurants. We will have to wait until a future date to put these new methods to the test as we entered the global effort to stay healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In March when Governor Carney issued recommendations for social distancing and ultimately issued the Stay-At-Home order, several fun and important programs that provide connection while providing support for First Unitarian Church had to be postponed; among them were the “Bright Future” Goods and Services Auction, the David Schelat Organ Concert and the spring Coffee House. While we look forward to these and other events, online gatherings were set up using interactive Zoom technology for ongoing and one-time small groups.

DEEPENING OUR CONNECTIONS

In the fourth year, our Soul Matters program continued to inform worship, religious exploration, and small group ministry. Usually in groups of ten or fewer, our small group ministries offered our members and friends a way to find a deeper, thoughtful, and spiritual way to connect with each other. This year our themes were based on the question, “How can we be a people of...?” – Expectation, Belonging, Attention, Awe, Integrity, Resilience, Wisdom, Liberation, and Thresholds. As we entered the COVID-19 period of social distancing, practices associated with the themes were timely: Resilience – the practice of moving from “Why did this happen?” and “This is not fair” to “What can I do now?” and “Look at what’s left.”; Wisdom – the practice of untangling yourself from what you’ve been taught; Liberation – the practice of realizing that the freedom of others and our own is one and the same. In March, we moved from meeting in person to meeting through Zoom sessions, in order to keep this important way of connecting with others going.

We also offered several Connection Circles of small groups that explored meaningful topics in a supportive environment. Short Story Connection Circle (SSCC) meets twice a month, the first and third Thursday nights. They are currently discussing stories from the text, 100 Years of the Best American Short Stories (2015). Lorrie Moore, the editor, says in the introduction to the volume “...we tell stories to find out what we believe.” In SSCC we read stories to find out what we believe. And we share our findings with a group of individuals—both church and non-church members—who accept our discoveries and support our individual search for understanding. We gain new perspectives on the issues of life from the readings and from each other.
The Feminine Spirituality Group has transitioned over the past several years to be a part of the small group ministry efforts at First Unitarian Church. The group has been in existence for many decades. The first session of the month is on a topic picked by someone in the group and the second session is a Soul Matters group discussion of the theme for the month.

Sometimes the group uses both sessions to discuss the Soul Matters subject. People in the group take their turn leading the sessions.

Signups are officially opened every year when the Soul Matters groups are formed, and new people are welcomed throughout the year whenever the group has less than fifteen participants. All gender identities seeking this type of spiritual experience are welcome.

There is also a Connection Circle held on site at Cokesbury Village Retirement Community for First Unitarian members and others. They meet monthly and use either the Soul Matters materials or choose an alternate topic to discuss.

For those who enjoy conversation over a meal, we have several Brown Bag Fellowship Groups for men and women, and the Channing Society, a men’s open social gathering that shares a meal and lively conversation each month. First Unitarian members and friends are invited.

Creating a Caring Community

Pastoral Care Associates (PCA) serve our Church community by providing support to those in the congregation who are experiencing difficult or challenging times. PCAs are a shared ministry of the congregation and are an extension of the Minister’s pastoral care role and responsibilities that we continue throughout the year. This has been a year of transition from our Developmental Minister to getting acquainted with our settled Minister, Rev. Pamela Wat.

To assist with identifying new PCAs and being clear about expectations, we now have written qualifications, roles, responsibilities as well as a detailed description of responsibilities for the on-call PCA.

Each month of this past year, a Pastoral Care Associate was on-call on a rotating basis to receive and follow-up with requests from anyone who identifies an individual or family in need. PCAs offered comfort, a listening presence, and assistance to members who were experiencing medical or other emergencies. They assisted in bereavement support and at memorial receptions. Each PCA maintained regular phone and in-person contact with congregants who are homebound to help us stay connected.

An additional team of volunteers fulfilled specific caring support functions such as sending cards for bereavement, get well, and thinking-of-you; prepared and delivered meals;
arranged drivers for rides to church or appointments; and organized and maintained the food pantry. Our food pantry volunteer regularly monitors the donation bins in the office, and places donations on the shelves in the basement food pantry.

In October 2019 Rev. Wat offered a Pastoral Care workshop for PCAs and all of those in the congregation who are interested. PCAs meet every other month and a portion of each meeting is focused on continuing to enrich our knowledge and skills for serving the congregation.

A group of dedicated knitters and crocheters met every Monday for the **Knitting Ministry**. Each brought her own project and joined in discussions about techniques and yarn choices, happily learning from one another while enjoying friendship and lively conversation. The Knitting Ministry’s most important activity extended well beyond the small group, encouraging others in the congregation to create and donate hats, scarves and mittens for charity. First Unitarian’s largest recipient was the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee who received over 224 items for distribution in the world where there is a need for warm outerwear.

Rev. Wat communicated, via video at our March 22nd service, ways for First Unitarian members and guests to stay connected, along with other First Unitarian priorities of cultivating personal growth and ongoing church administration. A Caring Connection survey was posted online and all were encouraged to answer the questions in the survey about the needs we might have and the ways we might help others, such as picking up groceries, calling to talk or sending a note to someone in need for connection.

Rev. Wat encouraged those who were or still are facing immediate needs because of the COVID-19 outbreak, perhaps a loss of income or some other spiritual or emotional hardship to be in touch with the church’s pastoral care team. She continued to encourage all who were listening to reach out and connect with others who might be vulnerable or lonely through phone, email and online.
While Rev. Wat cannot be in touch with each one in the congregation personally during this time of social distancing, she began to incorporate the thoughts of the congregation and friends into streaming worship services. To begin with, she asked this question:

---

**IF YOU COULD WHISPER 3 WORDS INTO THE EAR OF A NEWBORN CHILD, KNOWING THOSE 3 WORDS WOULD GUIDE THAT CHILD’S LIFE FOR THE NEXT 100 YEARS, WHAT 3 WORDS WOULD YOU WHISPER?**

Here’s what she heard and then shared with the congregation.

---

You are loved
Share your wonderfulness. You be fierce.
You are enough. Eat dessert first!
You’ve got this. Bless the world.
Love everyone always. You are amazing.
kindness, integrity, strength. Brace yourself kiddo.
Cherish Your World You are sufficient
Hopeful, Gentle, Kind Love is enough.
We are One Always choose love.
Patience, Knowledge, Love courage, compassion, connection
empathy, self, others Everything is Love
You are perfect This is it.
Love, Laugh, Respect you belong, love
Love Kindness Hope Follow your gut
You will survive Live long & prosper
Always be kind YOU ARE WANTED
Love, learn, act Believe in yourself.
Find Love Beneath. Freedom is priceless.
Never give up. It’s all holy.
You are YOU! Beauty, truth, love
First, love yourself. You are important.
Welcome little one. Give – Learn – Grow
Be at peace. Read, evaluate, think
You are powerful. DON’T EVER SAY I CAN’T
With compassion and love. Always follow your heart
Just be you. We love you.
Love your neighbor. Always question
God is love. everything.
Boundaries and Be the change.
connection. explore adapt love

---

Catherine
Growing together in mind and spirit starts in our shared Sunday morning worship – sometimes the only time for members and friends to come together in community for discovering and expanding upon their individual searches for truth and meaning. Together we pondered these questions:

- What is the “good news” of our faith? Why is it so desperately important at this time in history?
- How often do you encourage others that they might be enough just as they are? What expectations do we have of one another?
- How do we overcome our biases?
- Who has wronged you?
- Whom have you wronged?
- How do we find our way back to wholeness?
- How do we honor our world community and also keep our country safe?
- What draws you back to your best self?
- How are the children leading us toward a brighter future?
- In a time of entrenched division and partisanship, how do we move forward along the path [to Justice]?
- In our relationship of giving and receiving with our natural world, how are we called to be a people of resilience?
- How do we cultivate wisdom?
- As we navigate this unfamiliar terrain of worldwide pandemic, how might we revive hope for ourselves and others?

In our annual stewardship kick-off Sunday in January, and in step with the Lunar New Year, Rev. Wat shared a tradition handed down to her by her Chinese grandparents and in doing so, helped us to
explore how our Unitarian Universalist faith calls us toward growth. Each person – youngest child to oldest adult – received an envelope containing an amount of money from $1 to $100, a reverse offering. We were not to put it back in the offering basket, but rather to take it home and think about how we might give back in some way – to imagine the possibilities. And once done, we were to report back how we used the gift we received. The $2000 given that day had amazing reach in the world.

Our Worship Associates, composed of lay volunteers from the congregation, contributed to the planning and delivery of services throughout the year. Several of our Worship Associates wrote and delivered sermons this year that related to the monthly themes. Service themes included the wisdom of embracing being lost in life’s journeys, resilience in the face of hardship, and moving down the road to wholeness.

Worship Associates collaborated with Rev. Wat and guest ministers, often writing original service elements and sharing ideas in the creative process. Lay leaders offered an evening Winter Solstice Ceremony creating space to embrace the long night.

**Honorary Minister of Music**, Scott Ward, led three services during the summer: “the spirituality of e. e. cummings,” “The Language of Music,” and “Starting Here, Starting Now,” with excerpts from the musical revue written by Richard Maltby and David Shire – and including a guest appearance via Zoom by Shire. In addition to our Sunday choir, the Chamber Choir, and song leader, Rev. Dr. Richard Speck, guest musicians were plentiful, including Martin Hargrove, Bass, Natalie Gilbert, Soprano, *Constellation* – Helen Wolfson and Eric Thomas, and the Christmas Eve quartet of Donna Grantham and Jennifer Lee, violins, Nina Cottman, viola, and Karen Ahramjian, cello, with vocal excerpts from Messiah by G. F. Handel. After twenty-seven years as “the music guy” at First Unitarian, Scott retired in January 2020. After his retirement, guest musicians have filled in on Sunday while we determine our next steps for our music program: Paul Boris, Katie August, E. Shawn Qaissaunee, James Laster, Anne Turner, Susan Ryan, Anthony M. Condoluci-Smith, Cyril Everett Caster, and Catherine Braik.
creations. In March, First Unitarian hosted the Pacem in Terris Children’s Visionary Peace Art Exhibit in our gallery, including a painting by our own Mason Pust.

The children were invited to create a picture of peace, considering two 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, who inspired us all with their thoughtful depictions of peace. Unfortunately, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the building was closed. A short video was created of the youth art and can be viewed on our First Unitarian YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrznzn2UcZw.

Our Adult Forum continued to meet on Sunday mornings throughout the year, watching videos on a wide range of topics and then discussing them. As an example, the most recent series was “Existentialism,” which addresses the bases for morals and ethics. A new series is planned which will outline the twelve major religions of today.

We continued to offer Yoga and Open Heart Zen Sangha. Monday Night Yoga has created an environment that successfully taps into the diversity of the Wilmington community, allowing individuals of various genders, races, and ages to feel accepted and loved. Members experience growth in spirituality through the practice of yoga, especially its meditative aspects. There’s a feeling of physical well being and emotional serenity after participation in yoga. A sense of camaraderie developed in the class, which has carried over outside the class. One participant used the class email list to share the joy of her wedding engagement.

At Open Heart Meditation, words of wisdom, experiences, and reflections shared at the end of each weekly practice, monthly group discussion, and the one-day retreat, have cultivated an open, safe, non-judgmental environment to allow practitioners of the group to be each other’s teacher as they grow together.

Our church Library fosters interaction and provides resources in our practice of Unitarian Universalism, while the Archive preserves our church history and memorabilia. Together, Archive and Library facilitate awareness, connection, and continuity, linking our congregation’s past to our journey forward.

First Unitarian Church Archive Volunteers for our church Archive continued to consolidate and organize materials that had become scattered over years of limited activity. To facilitate sorting and management of subject and chronological groupings, we replaced most of the filing cabinets in Room 25 with four rolling shelving units. Materials are now on the shelves in banker boxes. We also anticipate more documents and AV media archived as digital files. A new laptop was purchased for Archive Database Catalog work in several storage areas. As organization continues, the database will increasingly help us to find specific information as needed.
First Unitarian, to expand into the library room. Staff and volunteers will be evaluating the impact of the pandemic regarding access to the building and related planning for the move.

Our First Unitarian **Book Corner** was dismantled with the installation of the Warner Doors in the Parish Hall. A new set of shelves was included and will be home to a take-a-book leave-a-book facility.

**Children & Youth Religious Exploration (CYRE)**

Children and Youth Religious Exploration helps our children, youth, and families grow together in their Unitarian Universalist faith. This year we focused on growing in our Unitarian Universalist faith by adding Soul Matters resources and weekly CYRE group summaries to the CYRE website. We also added resources for bringing Unitarian Universalism into your home and ways to celebrate holidays as a Unitarian Universalist. To encourage Unitarian Universalist rituals at home, our children in Pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade made chalices after our Director of Religious Exploration, Catherine Williamson, led a lesson on the meaning of the chalice and ways to use your chalice at home.

Our youth continue to grow as members of our congregation by serving as Guides and assistants in our CYRE groups. Elise Harrell and Nicole McGhee led the Rainbow Walkers (PreK3 - K). Maisie Donohue, Kerri Bell-Delgado and Sarah Shahan served as assistants in some of the CYRE groups. Sarah especially enjoys sharing the story with the children. Children and Youth serve on the Audio Visual Team, serve as ushers and greeters, and participate in worship services. Fourth, fifth and sixth graders planned and led a fundraiser...
Coronavirus, CYRE continued to provide a faith-based community. Age of Reason quickly moved online. The children played games like Simon Says, listened to stories, learned movements to Spirit of Life, and shared work they were asked to do prior to the meeting. The Youth Planning Team met and brainstormed ways for the youth group to stay connected online. Youth decided to meet weekly. They participated in a virtual chalice lighting and extinguishing ritual. They played games such as Kahoots and even had a Quarantine Scavenger Hunt. They watched short videos and had faith-based discussions. Weekly family and children’s worship took place via Zoom. Topics included Courage and Caring for One Another. Additionally, Religious Exploration at Home activities were added to the CYRE website so families could continue growing together as Unitarian Universalists.

This year, our Sunday morning programming was comprised of the following groups:

Infants and toddlers through 3-years old enjoyed their Sunday mornings playing in the Nursery. Our CYRE Staff and volunteers provided a warm and caring environment during the fall. By leading, planning, participating, and volunteering at our church, our children and youth grow together in their understanding of how to be a faith community.

Celebrating and honoring rites of passage are another way we grow together. This year our second and third graders participated in the Age of Reason rite of passage. They met with Catherine Williamson, created their first credos, and planned a worship service.

When First Unitarian Church closed our building due to the Children & Youth Religious Exploration Vision

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.

Mission
It is our mission to provide Religious Exploration programs which promote an understanding of how to live Unitarian Universalist principles and values, grounded in our sources.
worship services in the Nursery. Age appropriate toys, crafts, and stories were provided. Children gained a sense of belonging to their religious community and began to build friendships in a sacred community.

We strive to provide a nurturing environment for our youngest Unitarian Universalists and their parents!

Our Rainbow Walkers, PreK 3—Kindergarten, participated in Spirit Play, a Montessori-based program teaching age appropriate spiritual practices and Unitarian Universalist faith development through storytelling and play. Early childhood (the years between ages 2 and 6) is filled with curiosity and wonder. In a group setting, with loving guides, young children engaged in spiritual seeking, developed their openness to sharing, and experienced the benefit of a supportive community.

The Seekers, 1st through 3rd grade, spent their Stepping Stone Year exploring myths and stories from our Unitarian Universalist sources. They were encouraged to examine their own morals, values, and decision-making processes. Seekers began to make connections between the worlds of science, wonder, and religion. They began to understand that religion helps people find answers to important life questions and that some questions do not have answers.

The Questers, 4th through 6th grade, explored the Bible this year! The curriculum, Bibleodeon, introduces biblical scriptures by presenting the best-known Hebrew and Christian stories with fun and interactive games, such as investigating the Cain and Abel crime scene and solving the “Mystery of the Day.” Participants also acted in playlets, illustrated a timeline, gave awards to outstanding biblical women, and more. They explored connections between biblical events and UU principles, between biblical ideas and their own lives.

Explorers, 7th and 8th grades, are Crossing Paths with the world religions! Crossing Paths celebrates the values that religions share, but it emphasizes their uniqueness. Every world faith tradition was born in response to a distinct human struggle. We honor religions best when we work to understand the particular challenge and aspiration each religion has devoted itself to.

Using videos, music, ritual, fun activities, and sensory experiences Explorers learned about the basic beliefs of a variety of religions. They also considered ways the religions they explored are similar to and different from Unitarian Universalism. Then the group
visited a place of worship connected with the religion they explored. Finally, they processed their takeaways from their trip the week before. This was a chance to review what was learned and think about what one wants to keep and take with them on the rest of their journey.

**Youth Group**—9th through 12th grade—met every other week after the worship service. Youth Group is led by elected youth leaders in partnership with the Director of Religious Exploration and adult advisors. Jon Claney and Becky Laster served as adult advisors. This year the elected youth leaders have been Elise Harrell and Hayden Laster. Leo Claney and Nicole McGhee also served on the Youth Planning Team. Activities formed a balance of social action, faith formation, worship experiences, and opportunities to gather for fun.

This year the youth held two retreats. The first retreat was over Labor Day Weekend and involved games, art projects, canoeing on the Brandywine, and lots of bonding activities. The second retreat was the annual Pocono Retreat in February. Youth skied, went tubing, watched Dinotopia, and had some fun debates!

The youth also held a Haunted House and Bake Sale. Proceeds from these events help support youth activities such as skiing, canoeing, and social justice trips. Currently, the youth are planning a five-day social justice trip to Philadelphia in June 2020.
Challenging the congregation to think beyond today and the past, Reverend Wat asked, "What else is possible? What needs are not being met?" What are the ways that society and culture are changing that call us to consider these questions? The answer to how we will grow together going forward rests in how well we understand the changes and the unmet needs within and without.

First Unitarian Church has three official Social Justice Task Forces that represent our current interests and strengths in social action, and through which we are learning about the unmet needs in our community and beyond: environmental justice, human rights, and First Unitarian’s longstanding direct service project, Independent Living for Young Adults.

The Task Forces have 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
- emphasizing the importance of spiritual practice to social justice work.

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. Contact information is available on the First Unitarian Church website: www.firstuuwilm.org.

In addition to these task forces, other social service or social justice activities are ongoing within the church, such as serving the Emmanuel Dining Room, the Knitting Ministry, and doing legislative work with the Unitarian Universalist Delaware Advocacy Network.

Environmental Justice Task Force

The Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) was active in the following events and initiatives this year with our UU principles as an underpinning to our actions.
- In September, members and friends of the EJTF attended the Climate Strike at UD where Maisie Donohue spoke eloquently on Climate Change and her choice to go “plant-based” for the planet.
- During Peace Week in September, the EJTF sponsored an Educational Movie Night to watch Eating you Alive, a film that “informs and inspires as
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.

many as possible that our health, the health of our planet and the creatures we share it with, is within our power to change – one bite at a time” (eatingyoualive.com). Healthy snacks were served following the movie. Following Peace Week, in October, the EJTF hosted a three-week Health Challenge DE supporting over 80 people transitioning to a healthier and more ethical plant-based diet.

- In October, the EJTF began the “Green Monthly Challenge” program, sharing ideas for individual actions for the planet. The challenges which have continued to the present include:
  - With a goal to have twenty-five households from First Unitarian switch to wind power during the month of November, the EJTF invited WGL Energy to come and help our members sign up after services one Sunday. WGL Energy was also giving a special discount for those who signed up online that month.
  - In December, the EJTF provided information to the congregation on their Solar Panel Research Project.
  - The January Green Challenge was for each of us to consider how our diet is playing a role in global warming and what changes we could make for our Mother Earth. An article on becoming a “flexitarian” and incorporating more meatless meals in our diets was recommended: 
In February, the EJTF encouraged First Unitarian members and friends to get in the habit of bringing our own reusable bags when shopping. The average American family takes home almost 1,500 plastic shopping bags a year and 100,000 marine animals are killed by plastic bags annually. Some suggestions they provided were to keep a supply of reusable bags in the car and get them out every time you shop. If you forgot your bags, go back out to your car and get them. After you do this a few times, you will make a new “green” habit.

The March Green Challenge was to reduce food waste. According to Project Drawdown, “the most comprehensive plan ever proposed to reverse global warming,” food waste is considered the #3 most crucial thing we can do to help our environment. 1.3 billion tons of food production is wasted every year – that’s one third of the whole food production! This wasted food goes into our landfills and is the “third-largest source” of human-related methane emissions – a major contributor to global warming. There are many ways for our community to decrease this food waste, including buying only what you need, buying the “ugly” produce, and composting.

- EJTF joined Plastic-Free Delaware and Indivisible Highlands and Beyond to host an event to make reusable bags for Wilmington residents from T-shirts, bringing scissors, sewing machines and previously owned clean T-shirts to join in the fun.
- During the year, the EJTF attended the Southbridge Civic Association meetings to bear witness and offer support. We kept the Southbridge Neighborhood House pre-school book box supplied and celebrated with them in October at the groundbreaking of the new wetland park in the Southbridge neighborhood. Currently, we are waiting for an update on Southbridge from the Wilmington Housing
Authority and the city’s Economic development Office.

- EJTF encouraged an earth-friendly plant-based lifestyle by sponsoring several Sunday Hospitality tables and a Potluck Vegan Thanksgiving. This annual community event, hosted by the Vegan Subcommittee and the EJTF, was a feast of holiday foods made with no animal products, including dairy or eggs.

- In February, EJTF hosted a Vegan Potluck Bowl Brainstorm meeting where eighteen participants collectively imagined and committed to ways where we could grow our Climate Change initiative at First Unitarian. Representatives from Delaware Sierra Club and United Delaware joined us as we moved to expand our networking with the wider community.

- In March, before we began social distancing, several members gathered to consider potential future actions. Some people at the February meeting were also moving forward on a native plant plan and a grant to show the movie *Cowspiracy*. The following week involved some networking and fact finding and forward action.

- With social distancing in place by mid-March, EJTF is still considering “What’s still in the toolbox?” What new tools are necessary? We are working behind the scenes as we navigate a way forward.

May Earth Day find our congregation engaged in planet healing journeys.

Independent Living for Young Adults (ILYA)

For fifteen years Independent Living for Young Adults (ILYA) has provided support for young adults who are aging out or have already aged out of foster care (ages eighteen to twenty-one) in New Castle County, Delaware. Our ongoing goal is to fill some of the gaps left in the support provided by the state programs. By acknowledging the basic worth and dignity of these young people and supporting some of their most basic needs, such as shelter and education, the ILYA team expresses our Unitarian Universalist values to the wider community.

In the words of the young people we serve and their Independent Living Coordinators hired by the state, ILYA projects have had a hugely positive impact on the lives of Pam and Keith.
these youth for the fifteen years of our existence and hopefully for many more years in the future.

This has been a year of reorganization and evaluation of programs supported by ILYA. We have new project leaders for the Graduation and Furniture/Household Goods projects. Our reorganization team is working to recruit volunteers for other roles to share the responsibilities previously managed by the team leader which was becoming too overwhelming a task for one person. We will continue to approach church members who have the skills we need. We have also put requests out to Delaware State University and the University of Delaware for a volunteer intern to support a variety of administrative tasks.

A new goal being incorporated into all our projects for 2020 is increased community partnering. All our project leaders are taking action to invite community businesses and organizations to join with us in supporting the ILYA clients. Retailers are being asked to donate items for our backpacks at graduation time and baby car seats for baby showers. Schools are being asked for volunteer “interns” to help support our infrastructure, particularly with social media, but also other administrative activities. Cokesbury Village Retirement Center and Habitat for Humanity are exploring ways to partner with us for furniture and household goods.

The part of the ILYA Supportive Grants project that provided loans to youth who needed temporary assistance with funding has been put on hold until we can successfully address the few defaults we’ve experienced (not COVID19 related). We believe this action has communicated to the Independent Living Coordinators the need for them to be more proactive in seeing that the commitments made when requesting a loan will be fulfilled. We’re hopeful to restart that program at some point in 2020.

Our projects include:

**Student Care Packages:** Sending “care packages” five to six times during school semesters to bolster morale – as you would send to your child away at school.

This year we had more volunteers than students. Our reorganization team is evaluating ways to improve communications regarding when packages are sent.

**Supportive Grants:** One-time grants to assist with apartment or utility security deposits,
admission fees, books, and emergency needs.

We started a loan project as an offshoot of the supportive grants to make loans to youth who needed money on a temporary basis due to timing issues. Many have been repaid but loans are currently on hold as we address some loans that are in default.

**Furniture and Household Goods:** Arranges for free furniture and household goods for a first apartment. Our relationship with Catholic Charities has changed and is not as supportive of our clients. The project leader is exploring partnership opportunities with other organizations. A relationship with Cokesbury Village has been established which will provide the furniture (no household goods); delivery of items purchased is still an unsolved issue that is being worked on.

**Holiday Giving:** Facilitates fulfilling “wish lists” submitted by young people at winter holiday time.

One recipient from the 2019 project was so grateful for that support that she requested an opportunity to speak to the congregation which she did in February.

**Graduation Backpack/Pizza Party:** Provides graduation gifts and a graduation pizza party, often the only celebration these young people receive.

This creates the opportunity to build support networks among the youth. The new project leader is focused on obtaining backpacks and contents as donations from large retailers and having a recognizable sports figure attend the party as a boost to the graduates.

**New Apartment Kits:** Provides basic items that get a young person started in their first apartment out on their own.

Partnership with Cokesbury Village has been established to obtain items at a much-reduced cost. We will also expand the contents with tools at the suggestion of the Cokesbury representative.

**Baby Shower:** Help create a positive, supportive atmosphere when a baby is expected and provide basics for safe, healthy baby care.

Currently this entails providing donated equipment/supplies as needed. We will resume having actual showers when we have the volunteers to manage a full-blown program again.

Not only are team members happy to have the opportunity to serve this very deserving population; they are also grateful for the support and closeness gained within the team, which is constantly expanding. As our network continues to grow, First Unitarian Church enjoys greater visibility out in the larger community of New Castle County.

**Human Rights Task Force (HRTF)**

In September, our Human Rights Task Force (HRTF) enjoyed another great year with Peace Week Delaware for which many First Unitarian members and friends attended stimulating, spiritual, and creative workshops across New Castle County. The culminating Peace March and Rally included an inspiring kick-off event for the Non-Violent Wilmington Campaign. The HRTF continued First Unitarian’s racial awareness and justice work.
through our strong partnership with the YWCA.

In the fall, Rev. Pam Wat and Linda Sanders facilitated a group of people in an 8-week discussion of the book *White Fragility - Why It’s so Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* by Robin Diangelo. Seventeen participants met with Rev. Wat and Linda for two hours each week with homework assigned to read one or two chapters of the book in preparation for the discussion the next week. They had lively and in-depth discussions on some hard topics, like

- the challenges of talking to white people about racism,
- how race shapes the lives of people of color and white people,
- white supremacy,
- anti-blackness and the good/bad binary, and
- white fragility and how to give and receive feedback on our own inherent racism.

Feedback from the group was very positive and all reported learning a lot from the discussions. We hope to partner in the future with the YWCA to host a monthly reunion group at First Unitarian for all participants in this YWCA program, including our group. We hope to keep growing and learning about white allyship and how to keep challenging ourselves to understand and combat unconscious biases and racism.

In January, about 20 First Unitarian members and friends participated in a field trip to watch the movie *Just Mercy* and then met afterwards for an informal discussion.

The HRTF engages in local
legislative advocacy through Unitarian Universalist Delaware Advocacy Network (UUDAN). UUDAN brings together the five Delaware congregations to make sure our values are represented during legislative sessions. Initiatives this year included opposition to a proposal to reinstate the death penalty as well as support of gun control, justice reform, and environmental justice. About 30 people came together in early March at First Unitarian to watch the movie Bob’s Choice and discuss Delaware’s death with dignity legislation. We continue our support for the Delaware chapter of American Promise, an organization working to overturn Citizen’s United and get money out of politics.

The Human Rights Task Force partners with local organizations in support of activities to improve human rights in the local area.

- American Promise
- Coalition to Dismantle the New Jim Crow
- Network Delaware
- Pacem in Terris

Movement for a Culture of Peace
- Poor People’s Campaign
- UUDAN
- YWCA Racial Justice Dialogues

Delaware Coalition to Dismantle the New Jim Crow (partnership)

The Coalition has been undergoing transitions in how we accomplish our goals. We have focused on coalition building with other agencies that are also working on dismantling racism in Delaware.

- Partnered with the Delaware Center for Justice in promoting prison reform and sentencing reform to lessen the impact on people of color. We are doing this as part of the Coalition for Smart Justice which brings together various groups around the state to try to get the laws changed to make the system more fair and just.
- Partnered with the YWCA on teaching antiracism classes to religious institutions.
- Co-hosted a presentation on Equity in the Green Jobs Sector with the Sierra Club of Delaware.
- Supported food for the parent and educator trainings that were held for Red Clay School District, in collaboration with ACLU, to reduce the school to prison pipeline.
- Supported a group of Black Women leading a movement called Mothers in Power in collaboration with Network Delaware & the Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League. This is a statewide campaign to create regulations and policies for improving Black Maternal Care in Delaware.
Their aim is to decrease the mortality rate of Black babies and mothers & improve their health throughout the State of Delaware.

For a small organization on a shoestring budget, the Coalition continues to make an impact in Delaware and Wilmington to improve the lives of people of color. Richard Speck continues to serve as the secretary of the Coalition Board.

Other Community Connections

Martin Luther King Jr. Week Celebratory Concert: Thanks to all who attended our annual Martin Luther King Celebratory Concert on January 24! We raised $622 for the YWCA’s Racial and Social Justice program and our sanctuary was blessed by the timely words from Beyond Vietnam by Dr. King, spoken by Rev. John G. Moore, and the voices of members of the American Spiritual Ensemble with accompanist Linda Henderson. Thanks to Max and Julia Weiss for sharing the background of Dr. King and to Jim Weddell and others who helped with the offering, reception, and other behind-the-scenes efforts. Special thanks to Martin Hargrove for developing the readings, lining up musicians, and organizing the concert!

The First Unitarian Church Emmanuel Dining Room (EDR) efforts continued strongly through 2019, and while we are currently in the throes of the coronavirus, we have hope that our efforts will continue unabated.

The EDR program is still very popular at church. A volunteer core of 45 folks receive our monthly email request for help, from which we get our seven or more volunteers each month who help cook and serve our meals on the 20th of the month.

Upgrades to the church kitchen are planned for Summer 2020, and in the meantime we are preparing, cooking, and serving our casseroles at EDR on the 20th of the month, instead of usual prep day on the 19th at church, followed by cooking/serving on the 20th at EDR. We look forward to returning to the church kitchen and the camaraderie that occurs there.
We put out a call for cookies again this November, along with the annual special collection, and boy did that grant us a windfall of cookies! The baskets have been overflowing ever since. Reminders throughout the year should allow us to continue that trend. Our members are so thoughtful and generous!

And speaking of generosity of our members, this year’s special collection in November netted us just over $2,000! A vast improvement from last year’s collection, these funds will allow us to keep running in the black.

We offer thanks and gratitude to everyone at First Unitarian who helps us support the Emmanuel Dining Room. From cooking, serving, donating cookies, to donating money, all is so appreciated. We checked in with ReeNee LaFate, Program Manager at EDR, mid-coronavirus outbreak, and EDR assured us they would continue as best they could through the pandemic with our support. They all sent their love to us, and we reciprocated ours to them. We are all in this together, and together we are stronger.

Since 1997, the House Pin Team has donated $28,200 to the YWCA Home Life Management Center, which provides transitional housing to homeless families. The goal of the program is to help these families obtain permanent employment and stable housing.

In recent years, we have supplemented our pin sales by making bead jewelry from donated supplies. We donate 100% of the sale price of our bead jewelry to the YWCA. In addition to supporting a very worthy cause, the House Pin Team fulfills the mission of our church in other ways: members provide fellowship and support to each other in hard times and encourage each other to exercise our creativity by trying new jewelry designs. Thank you, First Unitarian members, for continuing to support this very worthy cause!

Loving action in partnership with the Unitarian Universalist Association and affiliated organizations continued as a priority at First Unitarian during this year.

**Delmarva Cluster**

First Unitarian is actively involved in the Delmarva Cluster, which consists of congregations in Delaware (Wilmington, Mill Creek, Newark, Central Delaware, and Southern Delaware) and Eastern Maryland (Chester River, Salisbury, and Easton). The cluster meets regularly to plan joint events and share information on upcoming training, activities, and resources. First Unitarian maintains the agenda, a list of speakers for congregations to call on, and hosts the cluster funds. The cluster sponsored the following events:

- **A Delmarva Cluster meeting** at UU of Southern Delaware, and an afternoon program at which Rev. Michelle Collins spoke on *Graceful Adjustments and Congregational Financial*
Futures.

- Two booths at the Delaware Pride Festival.
- Beach Day at Lewes, Cape Henlopen (Bay Side)
- Central East Region workshop, What’s in your Toolbox II, organized by the Cluster and hosted by the Newark UU Fellowship. The all-day workshop included topics and speakers that were aimed at building the church community

The UUSC Team at First Unitarian Church works to support the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee as it addresses difficult human rights issues around the world, usually working with the most marginalized, always working with on-site, mostly indigenous, partners to empower those without power or resources. UUSC’s work is based on our UU principles, especially the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

The following are our activities and programs:

Guest At Your Table (GAYT):
The Guest-At-Your-Table UUSC Program for all ages took place the six weeks prior to Thanksgiving. Our kick-off this year was on 10/20/2019, and our wrap-up was on 11/24/2019. This Program has two basic goals:

- To educate our members about the world-wide work of UUSC
- To promote giving to support the work and programs in twenty different countries, including the US.

These goals were achieved by:

- having one-on-one conversations with many members to provide information and to answer questions,
- distributing GAYT boxes to all church members and to the

“We've received the packages with the winter hats and scarves – they are amazing! We are so happy, and the people love them as well. Please give a heart-felt thanks from both us and our beneficiaries to the people who've put in so much love into making them, it's one of loveliest donations we have received. Warm regards from all of us at AYS.”

- AYS Program Manager
Director of CYRE for all classes on kick-off Sunday,
- giving Stewardship Reflections and Time for all Ages in Sunday worship services,
- writing weekly articles for E-News and three E-Blast articles for church-wide distribution,
- publishing support testimonials from First Unitarian members, answering “Why we support UUSC,”
- hosting the coffee hour hospitality table and social justice tables, and selling over 100 pounds of Doyle’s donated honey (over $1,000) with all proceeds going to support UUSC,
- welcoming Laura Randall and Cassandra Ryan, both on staff at UUSC, to participate in a reception on 11/23/2019, and Laura as our guest speaker on 11/24/2019, the Sunday before Thanksgiving.

Plus, continuing something new—knitted hats and scarves made by our knitting group and friends, which were given to UUSC as part of our GAYT program.

**Knitted Hats and Scarves:**
The knitting group produced over 350 hats and scarves throughout the year, with these warm, fuzzy gifts recognized and highlighted during our GAYT program and dedicated as part of our offering on 11/24/2019. Two hundred were sent to *Are You Syrious* (AYS) in Zagreb, Croatia, a UUSC partner, working with refugees.

**UUSC Coffee Project:**
Support for the Fair Trade Equal Exchange/UUSC Coffee Project and its sale of products was sustained throughout the year. This project has continued for over twenty years, and UUSC continues to support, via grants, small indigenous farmers. Thanks to Steve Marek and family, the Project had sales of nearly $4,000, placing First Unitarian in the top 5% of Unitarian Universalist churches supporting this program.

**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: Syrian Refugee Crisis, Climate-Forced Displacement from Hurricane Dorian, and the Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Myanmar.

We celebrated the UU United Nations Office (UU UNO) work in March with a service focusing on world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all. Bruce Knotts, Director of the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office was our guest speaker.

First Unitarian sent a full slate of delegates to the UUA’s General Assembly in June 2019 *The Power/Possibility/Struggle/Joy of We* in Spokane, Washington. This program was created to be an experiment in engaging in deeper discernment about the future of our faith. Articles about General Assembly 2019 can be found online at [https://www.uua.org/ga/past/2019](https://www.uua.org/ga/past/2019).
“One of the privileges of our free church tradition is to provide all of the financial support for our many ministries from among ourselves. Generosity, therefore, is one of the spiritual values we recognize as central to our personal and our institutional well-being.

- Rev. Dr. Victoria Weinstein, minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lynn, Massachusetts

Thank you to our members and friends for your ongoing support which sustains our congregation and this faith.
“(First U performance) demonstrates strong stewardship of our assets and your financial contributions to the Church. Our money is being well-managed and being spent in accordance with the annual budget passed by the Congregation. I want to recognize the Executive Team and the Church Staff for their very good work in tracking, managing and containing expenses again this year.”

~ Steve Cohen, Treasurer

As of March 31, 2020

**Investments and Fixed Assets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net Assets (Unrestricted)</td>
<td>$351,072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Assets (Restricted)</td>
<td>$1,451,483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Campaign Fund</td>
<td>$116,429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Net Assets:** $1,918,984
**GIFTS TO OUR COMMUNITY**

*First Unitarian members, visitors and friends made the following contributions for fiscal year 2019-20 to date.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Lives UU</td>
<td>$952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition to Dismantle New Jim Crow</td>
<td>$610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware Nature Society</td>
<td>$908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmanuel Dining Room</td>
<td>$2,415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdenominational Ministers Action Council (IMAC)</td>
<td>$1,775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Living for Young Adults:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special offering</td>
<td>$2,621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Backpacks (estimated value)</td>
<td>$3,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday project</td>
<td>$2,143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray Grove</td>
<td>$781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network DE safe communities</td>
<td>$532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UU House Outreach</td>
<td>$687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UU UNO</td>
<td>$888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UUA Living Traditions Fund</td>
<td>$912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee Project Sales</td>
<td>$3,736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest at Your Table (including honey sales)</td>
<td>$7,882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly gifts and humanitarian crisis relief</td>
<td>$2,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YMCA</td>
<td>$532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YWCA—House pin sales</td>
<td>$775</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total donations through First Unitarian Society**  
$32,626

**Direct contributions by First Unitarian Members:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UUSC: donated gifts of stock, pledges, special fundraisers, online</td>
<td>$47,605</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2019–2020 MINISTER & STAFF

Rev. Pamela Wat, Senior Minister
Scott Ward, Honorary Minister of Music (retired 1/16/2020)
Catherine Williamson, Director of Religious Education
Marina VanRenssen, Business Manager
Chrissy McCullin, Congregational Administrator
Ernie Congo, Building Coordinator
Cecil Williams, Night Custodian
Mohamed Konate, Weekend Custodian
Lenell Laws, Substitute Custodian
Natalie Ruggerio, Samantha Wulkewicz, Nicole McGhee —Childcare
Elise Harrell, Kerri Bell-Delgado, Meghan McCullin —Substitute Childcare

Our Executive Team

Reverend Pamela Wat
Senior Minister

Marina VanRenssen
Business Manager

Randy Windle,
Lay Member at Large

Doyle Dobbins
Lay Member at Large
Our Principles

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person
2. Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
6. The goal of world community, with peace, liberty, and justice for all
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part