



# FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF CHICAGO

## July 2017 Newsletter

First Unitarian Society of Chicago 5650 S. Woodlawn Ave., Chicago IL 60637 (773) 324-4100

### Stretching Rev. Teri Schwartz

Today, I made my way back onto my yoga mat after several weeks away. Yoga is my physical exercise of choice (truth be told, one of the few forms of exercise my body can actually do), and also one of my spiritual practices. Like any form of exercise and meditation, it manages pain, boosts energy, calms my mind, and feeds my spirit. So you'd think I'd make sure to go regularly, and to return to it as quickly as I can if I'm away for a while.

Not so much. The truth of the matter is that the longer I am away, the more I avoid it. The mat becomes about 100 pounds and the mere mile to the gym becomes an unfathomable expedition beyond my ability to traverse, even with a car. Today, getting back on my mat, I had to face my atrophy and regression. I had to face how I had fallen short, how my tolerance for being uncomfortable had waned. I had to face my limitations, and I had to sit (well, crouch

awkwardly, actually) in the gap between where I was and where I am now. And there I found tight spaces I didn't even know I had, and some of those tight spaces were even in my body, not just my mind.

I have a certain fantasy that if I make physical progress, that I should be all done once and for all. Get in shape...and now I'm set forever! I wish that were true. But we don't expect yesterday's shower to keep us clean today, right? The same is true for our growth in any realm of our lives.

At our special congregational meeting on June 18th, our congregation engaged in discussion about the proposed 8th Principle: "We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle

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### In This Issue

Stretching	1	182 <sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting	5
Thanks to Karen Mooney	3	Capital Campaign Update	6
Sunday Services	3	Board of Trustees Report	7
Call to Song	4	Climate Change Presentation	9
Treasury Report	5		

racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.” (Go here to learn more: <https://medium.com/outfront/black-lives-of-uu-organizing-collective-urges-adoption-of-8th-principle-in-unitarian-universalism-377480e615ef>)

The meeting was respectful as our members discussed varied opinions about the procedural aspects of a resolution as well as some of the merits of the content of the proposed principle itself. One of our congregant’s remarks continues to ring in my mind—she said something like this: “I prefer just holding hands and singing Kumbaya, but we can’t.”

Given that many of our members have devoted much of their lives to the Civil Rights Movement and myriad forms of justice work, it can be easy for us as a community to feel like our work is done. Or perhaps, we are younger folks, with lived experience as people of color. Perhaps we are white folks who did a few trainings and took a course in school about racism. We live in Hyde Park after all! Our pews are filled with members and friends with various skin tones.

Yet anti-racism work is ongoing. We don’t get in shape all at once. We don’t “complete” our work to dismantle racism in our hearts and world from work decades ago, or by one congregational meeting or a few anti-racism trainings. Yesterday’s shower doesn’t keep us clean today. We don’t get our flexibility all at once, but bit by bit millimeter by millimeter, to the degree we are able to engage with our own discomfort at a rate that keeps us growing, but at a rate we can handle without hurting ourselves or others.

What was really clear at the meeting is that there is so much for us all to learn about what is happening in our denomination and our world, and our places in it. A new generation is demanding we pay attention and act. We must heed the call. If and when we stay in the past, rest on our laurels, or fail

to act, we are complicit with the status quo. The status quo may be better than our society prior to the Civil Rights Act. We could debate that. But, in the meantime, people are dying in the streets and our denomination has been shaken to its core by the sequelae of major related events this spring, including former UUA President Peter Morales’ resignation.

Our congregation simply must engage with today’s realities of racial injustice and the pervasiveness of white supremacy in our society, our denomination, and in our own lives. It is imperative if we are going to be agents of change in our world and to be as spiritually whole as we can. It’s also critical to our future: If we are not relevant to the justice issues of today, and meet and join the rising leaders of new generations, we’ll quickly become irrelevant. We have to exercise our convictions, again and again, and find our tight spots—even when, and especially when, it’s uncomfortable.

I plan my next step to be devoting a good portion of my July leave to studying events in our denomination, African American history, and race. (To that end, if you have articles, websites, or favorite books, send them my way!). I recommend the materials at <http://citizenshipandsocialjustice.com/2015/07/10/curriculum-for-white-americans-to-educate-themselves-on-race-and-racism/> to folks looking for a place to start study.

On October 15<sup>th</sup>, we will join two-thirds of UU congregations around the country in conducting a special Sunday service devoted to delving into the meaning of White Supremacy. I’m looking into small group work on race and racism—check out the Beloved Conversation project that comes out of Meadville Lombard Theological School: <http://www.meadville.edu/beloved> and let me know what you think!

I’ve received an idea to pilot a program on parenting and race, as well as a

congregation-wide book reading and discussion. At our annual congregational meeting in May, our members voted to partner with the Community Renewal Society (CRS), who offer excellent training and advocacy opportunities. What would you like to happen at First U next year? Please drop me a line by email at

teri.schwartz@firstuchicago.org. We can't tackle it all at once, but we can do much, bit by bit. It's time to get back on the "mat" and stretch ourselves—together!

In service,  
Rev. Teri

## Thanks to the Rev. Karen Mooney

We are so grateful to Rev. Karen Mooney for her work this year! As our interim Director of Religious Education (RE), Rev. Karen completed her tenure her at the end of June, and was recognized during our Sunday worship service on June 11.

Rev. Karen brought fresh eyes to the program and the congregation as a whole. Her stories and song brightened our worship services, and she ensured that our RE program continued to serve our children and youth through this year of transition.

In addition to thanks for the regular day-in-and-out operations of the program, we extend our gratitude for the following the Holiday pageant, the Harry Potter overnight camp-out in the sanctuary (when 30 kids and an equal number of adults, pitched their tents in the sanctuary!), and our spring pageant, "The Creator's Workshop."

The whole First U family sends our deep thanks and very best wishes to Karen for the future.

## 10 AM Sunday Services

July 2<sup>nd</sup>  
*We the People...*  
Joseph Harrington

In Social Contract theory, everyone is deemed free because they all forfeit the same amount of rights and it imposes the same duties on all. In a democratic form of government, we thirst for freedom, but must settle for liberty. America has become great because of her people, not just the few, but the many. Our Government was formed to secure the rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and derives its just powers from the consent of the governed. *We the people* is an exploration of freedom, liberty and the role of the individual.

Joseph M. Harrington has been a member of First Unitarian Church for more than 15 years and was formerly a student at Meadville

Lombard. He serves as the Illinois Department of Public Health's Regional Health Office for Cook County, and in this capacity also serves as an Administrative Law Judge. He is a graduate of Chicago State University (1975), a Fellow of the University of Illinois at Chicago's International Center for Health Leadership Development (1998-2000), and holds a Certificate of Graduate Study in Health Care Ethics from Rush University Medical Center (2004).

July 9<sup>th</sup>  
*The Place of War in Politics and Religion*  
Dr. Dennis Koehn

Drawing on historical perspectives and current analysis, Dennis Koehn identifies forces in politics and religion that push national leaders to choose war as an instrument of foreign policy. He explores

points of leverage where citizens can encourage leaders to more vigorously pursue nonviolent and negotiating strategies for managing international conflicts. Dennis challenges all Americans to gather information through diverse communication channels to minimize the distortion of propaganda. Follow-up conversation will happen in a First Forum, which includes of panel of former State Department and military personnel.

Dennis R. Koehn, MDiv, PhD, is an activist, management consultant, and public intellectual. He studied theology, ethics, and the social sciences at Bethel College, Harvard University, and Chicago Theological Seminary. Dennis loves visiting with friends over coffee, biking along the lakeshore to the Art Institute, swimming in Lake Michigan (temperature above 68, please), and reading Kant from his beach chair.

July 16<sup>th</sup>  
*It's Gonna Be Epic!*  
*How Big Stories Inspire Vision*  
 Charley Earp

In dark and uncertain times, we come together to tell our stories, how far we've come, how we got where we are now, where we want to go, and how we're going to fight to get there.

Charley Earp is a Meadville Lombard student and ministerial intern at Third Unitarian Church of Chicago. He lives in Evanston and is a member of Peoples Church of Chicago

July 23<sup>rd</sup>  
*A Word to the Wise*  
 The Rev. Doctor Lee Barker

These are serious times that call for the cultivation of wisdom. On Sunday, we will see if we can't unearth some deeper wisdom for ourselves.

Lee Barker is president and professor of ministry at Meadville Lombard Theological School (Unitarian Universalist) since 2003. Along with his wife and daughter, Kris and Ava, he is an active member of our congregation.

July 30<sup>th</sup>  
*Poetry in a Prose World*  
 Rev. David Schwartz

"Facts always lie and stories always tell the truth," said a long-ago English teacher. In an era of alternative facts and data twisted to dubious ends, we turn to poetry to point the way in language plain prose cannot.

## Call to Song

### Jeff Hamrick

All singers are warmly invited to join music director Jeff Hamrick and members of the First Unitarian choir for Summer Choir.

We'll meet in the sanctuary at 9 a.m. on the following Sundays:

- July 9, 16, 23, and 30
- August 6, 13, and 20

We will warm up together, sing through hymns, and prepare a short and simple anthem or choral response for each service.

All ages are welcome. Come sing with us!

## Treasury Report for the 11 Months Ending May 31st, 2017

Joanne Michalski, Treasurer

Actual Pledges	\$232,300
Budgeted Pledges	\$232,863
Surplus or (Deficit)	\$ ( 562)

Pledges appear to be on budget, though we do have some unpaid balances. If you were unable to complete your pledge by June

30th, you can still make late payments. If you pay after June 30th, please write "Pledge for 2016-17" in the memo line of your check. The church will see extensive repair bills in June so every dollar counts. If you don't know what you owe, please email me, Joanne Michalski, at [treasurer@firstuchicago.org](mailto:treasurer@firstuchicago.org).

	Actual	Budgeted
Total Revenues for 11 months	\$474,230	\$472,011
Total Expenses for 11 months	\$464,204	\$471,178
Total Surplus or (Deficit)	\$ 10,026	\$ 833

At this point 1st U is showing a surplus of \$10,026. However, we will have some expensive building repairs (tenant painting, boiler, and roof) exceeding \$16,000 in June. We reserved \$15,000 to cover these expenditures, but cost overruns in other areas (administrative expenses are over budget by \$5000, along with several other

unfavorable variances) will likely lead to a loss this year. A complete income statement will be posted once the year is closed after June 30th.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about finances contact me at [treasurer@firstuchicago.org](mailto:treasurer@firstuchicago.org).

## Highlights of Our 182nd Annual Meeting

Joan Pederson

Our 2017 Annual Meeting on May 21 was filled with elections, important decisions, and special recognitions.

### Elections

All terms are for one year, starting July 1, 2017, unless noted otherwise)

- President: Joan Pederson
- Vice President: Jim Proctor
- Trustees (3-year terms): Joseph Harrington, John Eater
- Alternate Trustee: Christine Harrell

- Program Council Co-Chairs: Betty Holcomb & Cheryl Wegner
- Religious Education Council Chair: Mary Clare Bietila
- Social Justice Council Co-Chairs: Andrea Freerksen & Evan Freund
- Nominating Committee Members: Kris Barker, Lisa Christensen Gee, John Saphir
- Delegates to UUA General Assembly in June 2017: Finley Campbell, Marie Cobbs (both on-site in New Orleans); Ellie Hall, Allan Lindrup (both off-site in Chicago) See the Board of Trustees Report for more details.

## Decisions

- Adopted a balanced \$546,495 budget for the 2017-18 church year that
  - Launches the new staff position of Membership Coordinator
  - Increases funding for the Religious Education program and the salary of the Director of Religious Education
  - Funds major building repairs, key to avoiding deferred maintenance
  - Provides staff raises
  - Restores music program funding, which was limited last year

These investments in our church life were made possible by the congregation's generous pledges, including pledge increases prompted by an anonymous challenge grant.

- Approved amendments to our bylaws that clarify the finance section, providing clear guidance for the first time in many years
- Affiliated with the Community Renewal Society

- Affiliated with the Chicago New Sanctuary Coalition

## Recognitions

- Multiracial Unity Award (granted by the Racial Justice Task Force of our Social Justice Council): **Dr. Kenneth Christiansen**
- Exceptional Service to First Unitarian (granted by the Board of Trustees): **Anita Orlikoff** (presented during the annual meeting), **Madeiria Myrieckes** (presented during the Membership Celebration two weeks later)

## Tabled for a Special Congregational Meeting on June 18

Consideration of a resolution from the Denominational Affairs Committee that would oppose adoption by the UUA General Assembly in 2017—rather than after the usual two-to-three-year process of congregational deliberation and denominational review—a proposed 8th Principle, and that would recommend to our GA delegates that they vote against any attempts to bypass the normal procedure.

## Capital Campaign Update

Joan Pederson

The Feasibility Study for a prospective capital campaign concluded with a presentation by consultant Steve Pratapas after the service and picnic on June 11. He shared his findings from interviews, a focus group, and surveys conducted in recent months that all members had a chance to participate in—findings that included members' opinions about which building projects would be the most important to fund with a capital campaign.

His key recommendation resulting from the study was that First Unitarian has the interest, willingness, and financial capacity to

conduct a successful capital campaign with a goal of \$1.0 to perhaps \$1.25 million.

Next steps to be taken over the summer include forming the Capital Campaign Committee, sharing detailed project descriptions and costs, and preparing for a new Vision and Strategic Plan, which will run concurrently with the first stages of the campaign.

A key question at the end of the presentation concerned other church money that might be available to supplement the proceeds of the campaign itself. One source is unambiguous: the bequest from Ken Schug



for renovating the first floor of Parish House (Chris Moore Parlor, Aki's Place, the women's restroom, and the nursery, a.k.a. the Polly Schaad Room). That project, identified by the shorthand "renovate the kitchen" in some of the study documents, was one of the five projects that drew the strongest support during the study.

A second source of a different kind is the proceeds from the sale of Fenn House, presently held separately from our endowment. In keeping with a congregational decision in December 2015, those proceeds may be used to front the expenses of projects on the final campaign list, allowing congregants to spread capital contributions over three years. All money from the Fenn House fund used in this way

must be returned to the fund when the underlying pledges of support are paid.

The congregation also allowed the possibility of using some of the Fenn House proceeds to supplement campaign funds. Doing so would require a congregational vote, and the current preference is to limit this set of capital projects to what we can pay for via the campaign and the Schug bequest.

If you have questions about the capital campaign, get in touch! For now, speak with or write to any member of the Feasibility Study Leadership Team: Kris Barker, Lisa Christensen Gee, Grace Latibaudiere-Williams, Jim Proctor, Rev. Teri Schwartz, Rev. David Schwartz—or myself! You can reach me at [president@firstuchicago.org](mailto:president@firstuchicago.org).

## Board of Trustees Report

Joan Pederson, President

The June 15 board meeting was a pivot from the church year now ending to the new one about to begin. We thanked and bade farewell to trustees Kris Barker and Kent Richmond, who completed three-year terms of service, and to Joanne Michalski, who stepped down from the position of treasurer after several years of vital service. Trustees Margot Horn, Joan Pederson (president), and Jim Proctor (vice president) completed the second year of their terms, while trustees Beverly Bennett and Dennis Koehn finished their first. Alternate Christine Harrell, completing her one-year term, has been elected for another. Senior Co-ministers Revs. David and Teri Schwartz continue as members ex officio. Julie Larson agreed to continue to serve as secretary, and we hope to name a new treasurer in the coming weeks.

Completing old business, the board ratified two votes by poll conducted since the May 18 meeting:

- Calling a special congregational meeting for June 18 to conclude deliberations on a resolution tabled during the Annual Meeting on May 21 but moot if not acted upon before General Assembly begins on June 21
- Agreeing to proceed with a capital campaign with a goal of \$1.0 to \$1.25 million (this vote could not take place at the May meeting because of a document mix-up; the corrected document was distributed to the board during the week of May 22)

Continuing work on old business, the board heard a very encouraging report on the status of the search for a new Director of Religious Education (DRE). Member of the congregation Aneesah Ali had lent valuable professional expertise in fair hiring that informed the processes of defining and advertising the position, initially assessing the 18 applicants (15 of whom were qualified), narrowing the field to 6 through objective written evaluations, then to 3 through phone

interviews. In-person interviews follow, with a selection expected by the end of June or very early in July. Join the board in thanking Aneesah and search team members Sarah Arthur, Christine Harrell, Katie Haviland, and Revs. David and Teri Schwartz for their fine work. It provides us with a robust model for fair hiring that sets a new standard for us and an example for others.

Another new post will offer a second chance to use this hiring model: Our new Membership Coordinator. This process will kick into high gear in August, with the person likely in place two months later. We learned during Rev. David's presentation of his quantitative analysis of membership growth and loss over the past four years that two-thirds of our losses have involved moves out of the area and deaths. Nonetheless, while the membership coordinator will help greatly in establishing stronger and earlier connections with visitors and new members, we as church members are the only ones who can perform other key work in incorporating newcomers into the congregation and helping those who are here to remain involved:

- Meeting and making friends with people we don't yet know
- Breaking bread together and extending hospitality
- Actively helping newcomers become involved in our groups and task forces and committees, shaking up our comfort with routines that create an Us-Them environment
- Helping others grow as leaders by mentoring them and by stepping aside to let them lead, even—especially—when they don't agree with us on how things ought to be done.
- Behaving ourselves by living our covenant: Recognizing that being in relationship is commonly more important than being right, assuming

the good intentions of others, speaking civilly and with humility, and actively listening more than we speak.

In new business related to the capital campaign, the board approved the development of a new Vision and a 5- to 10-year Strategic Plan, one of the key recommendations coming out of this spring's feasibility study. This work has a provisional budget of not more than \$6,500, subject to reduction on July 1 when final 2016-17 finances are known and the last pledges for 2017-18 (still arriving!) have been received. The board does not deem it an expense of the capital campaign because such plans are normally covered as part of ongoing operations and because it will have value beyond informing decisions in the capital campaign. It should provide a clear vision for the future of this congregation through and beyond the capital campaign, along with objective benchmarks to mark our progress and keep us on course.

Other recommended pre-planning steps arising from the feasibility study will be undertaken this summer by the feasibility study leadership team and others.

A difficult piece of new business also faced the board: Reducing our delegation to the 2017 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association, June 21-25 in New Orleans. After the Annual Meeting, the president learned that the congregation is entitled to only three delegates in 2017, not four. One of the elected delegates would need to be re-designated as an alternate delegate.

Although the elected delegation, the Denominational Affairs Committee, and the Social Justice Council recommended one of the offsite delegates be named the alternate, the board learned during its deliberations that only onsite delegates are eligible to be alternates. It designated Finley Campbell as alternate delegate, in part because the other



onsite delegate, Marie Cobbs, is the chair of our Denominational Affairs Committee, and in part because Finley has already served frequently as a delegate over the past decade or more; the decision allows others that opportunity. Ellie Hall and Allan Lindrup will both serve as offsite delegates.

Finally, we set our summer schedule: No board meeting in July, although I will conduct an orientation for new members Joe Harrington and John Eater by mid-July,

and a brief formal meeting at the conclusion of our August retreat on Saturday, August 26, 8:30–12:30.

The Board of Trustees meets monthly at least eleven months of the year, on the third Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. in Chris Moore Parlor (unless otherwise announced). All members are invited to attend board meetings. For more information, write to [president@firstuchicago.org](mailto:president@firstuchicago.org) or speak with the president.

### Abrupt Climate Change Presentation by Dr. Guy R. McPherson Thursday, July 13, 2017

Conservation Biologist Dr. Guy McPherson will be speaking at First Unitarian about our collective response to Earth's newest phase of accelerated warming in a public lecture Thursday, July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017, from 7:00–9:00 pm. This will include a full presentation and a question and answer period. Admission will be free; donations will be accepted.

Dr. McPherson is an award-winning Professor Emeritus of Natural Resources & Ecology, and Evolutionary Biology at

University of Arizona. He is best known for promoting the idea of the risk of near-term human extinction due to abrupt climate change resulting from human CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. He has written a dozen books on the environment, including his joint effort with psychologist Carolyn Baker, *Extinction Dialogs: How to Live with Death in Mind*. Dr. McPherson hosts the monthly podcast "Nature Bats Last" on the Progressive Radio Network. He appeared with Bill Nye on National Geographic Explorer.

### Church Office Hours

Monday – Friday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm  
Saturday 9:30 am – 3:00 pm

### Co-Ministers' Office Hours

Rev. David Schwartz, by appointment on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Sunday

Rev. Teri Schwartz, by appointment on Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday

### First Unitarian Newsletter

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