

# ANNUAL REPORT

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2020 - 2021



# REPORTS INSIDE

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About Our Church  
Shared Ministry

Budget & Finances  
Statement of Financial Position  
Current Financials & Proposed Budget  
Funding Our Mission

Nominations

Minister

Board President

Director of Education & Communications

Music Director

Committee on Ministry

Committees  
Stewardship  
Buildings & Grounds  
Leadership Development  
Congregation Connections

Councils  
Worship  
Faith In Action  
Religious Education

# FIRST UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF YARMOUTH

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207-846-4148  
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Yarmouth, Maine 04096

# MISSION



At First Universalist, our mission is to explore our faith, embrace this community, and engage the world as spiritual seekers. The themes of explore-embrace-engage permeate all we do as we each grow, learn, and serve.

## ABOUT OUR CHURCH & OUR FAITH

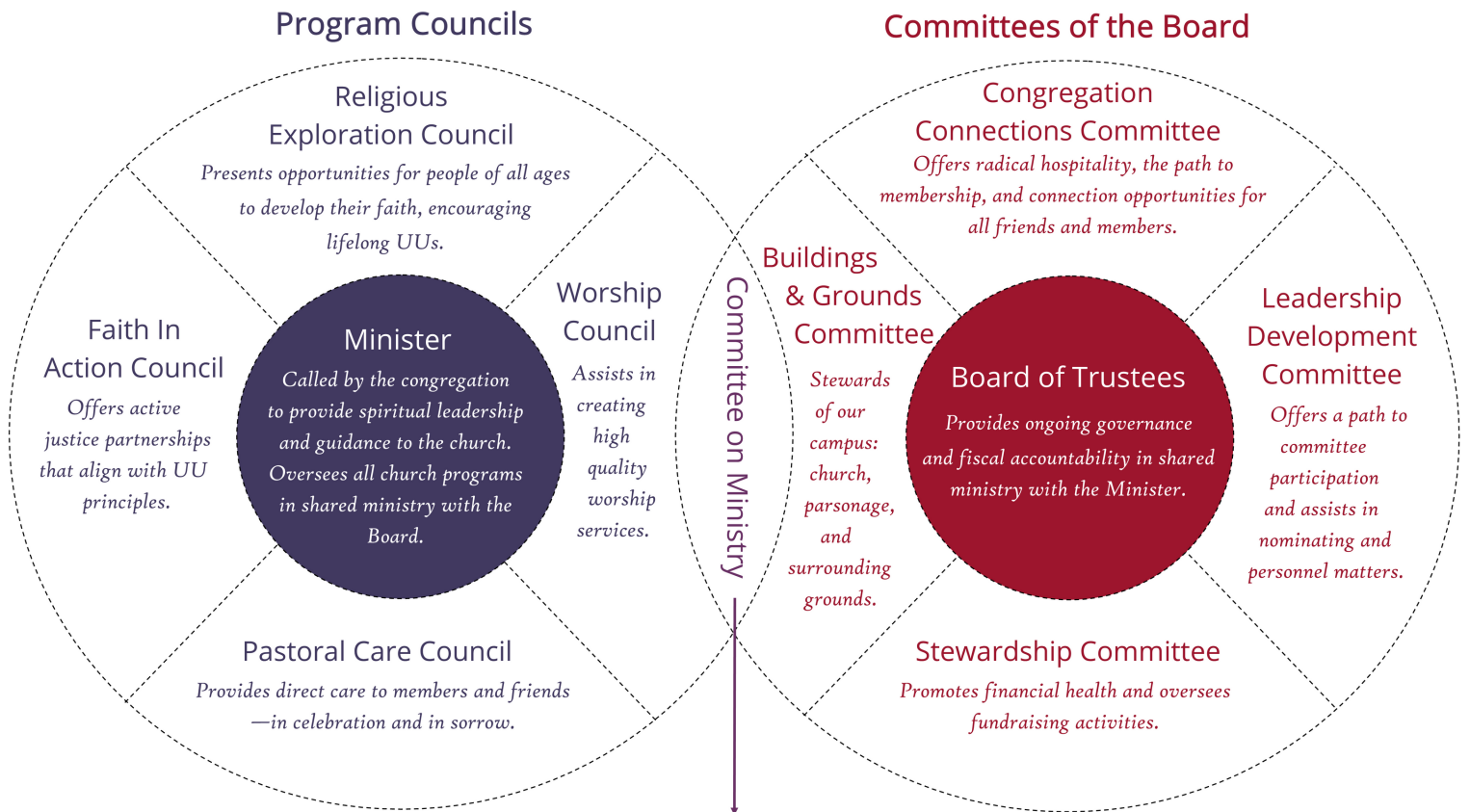
The First Universalist Church of Yarmouth is a self-funded and self-governed volunteer organization supported in our mission by a full-time minister and part-time staff.

We are an open-minded and open-hearted spiritual community of people who lead lives of justice, love, learning, and hope. Our church and our faith include people of every ethnicity, race, age, social background, ability, political affiliation, family structure, gender identity, and sexual/romantic orientation. As Unitarian Universalists, we are not interested in creeds and commitments of faith, but in right relations with one another and holistic ways of living on and with our planet. We welcome all who embrace our principles.

We are a certified welcoming congregation and have voted to endorse the spirit of the 8th principle. We are a member of the New England Region and an honor congregation with the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA).

# SHARED MINISTRY

## SHARED MINISTRY AT FIRST UNIVERSALIST



First Universalist is a church of shared ministry where the Minister and the Board of Trustees are each responsible for parts of congregational life. Our Minister oversees and is responsible for worship, pastoral care, religious education, and social justice engagement. Our staff assists the minister in implementing these programs. The Board of Trustees oversees and is responsible for church finances, the upkeep of our physical spaces, and developing and growing our congregation.

**Please note:** The Board and Rev. Hillary are currently re-imagining our Shared Ministry Chart to better reflect our church organization and our commitment to our Mission.



# MINISTER & STAFF

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Rev. Hillary Collins-Gilpatrick, *Minister*  
Gwen Matthews, *Director of Education &  
Communications*

Sam Chandler, *Music Director*

Andrea Meadows, *Administrative Assistant*

Todd Roy, *Sexton*

Anna Bianconi, *Children's Teacher*

# BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Joanna Landsman, *President*

Jen Civiello, *Vice President*

Marge Titcomb, *Treasurer*

Sarah Witte, *Clerk*

Joe Dreher

Nancy Dix

Stew Guernsey

Andrew Tonks

# STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

## Statement of Financial Position as of April 30, 2021

		<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Bank Accounts		108,123
Giving Winds Loan		0
<b>Endowment Accounts</b>		
Building Endowment		17,877
Outreach Endowment		13,453
Spirit of Life Fund		75,983
<b>Total Endowment Accounts</b>		<b>107,313</b>
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Church		742,360
Furniture & Fixtures		100,000
Parsonage		183,000
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>		<b>1,025,360</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>1,240,796</b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITIES</b>		
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Prepaid Rents		0
Prepaid FY22 Annual Campaign Payments		18,900
95 Main Security Deposits		1,200
<b>Designated Funds</b>		
Faith in Action Funds		26,917
Building Fund		22,436
Ken Nye Steeple Fund		1,521
Here for Good Campaign		37
Minister's Discretionary Fund		1,250
Music and Worship Fund		193
Religious Exploration Fund		1,702
<b>Total Designated Funds</b>		<b>54,055</b>
Transition/Search Fund		0
<b>Loans</b>		
PPP Loan (forgivable) Bangor Savings Bank		0
Basement Loan—Congregants		40,000
<b>Total Loans</b>		<b>40,000</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>		<b>114,155</b>
<b>Total Equity</b>		<b>1,126,640</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITIES</b>		<b>1,240,795</b>

# CURRENT FINANCIALS & PROPOSED BUDGET

	FY20: July '20—June '21		FY 2022 PROPOSED BUDGET
	Actual (4/30/2021)	Estimate (6/30/2021)	
<b>Revenue</b>			
Annual Campaign and Plate	98,720	109,000	158,000
Fundraising Programs (Gift Card Program)	3,465	4,500	6,000
Fundraising Events for Operations	24,500	24,500	0
Other Fundraising (e.g. OWL outside our walls, coffee)	701	800	2,000
Rental Income	31,396	37,250	39,300
Endowment Income	6,851	7,500	8,000
Other Income (gifts, grants, interest; FY21 incl. PPP)	27,343	27,350	3,000
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>192,976</b>	<b>210,900</b>	<b>216,300</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>			
Board of Trustees	10,420	13,000	11,455
Buildings & Grounds for Operations	20,588	27,000	27,800
B&G Administration	10,388	11,000	14,000
Minister's Office	74,534	98,000	100,629
Office Administration	12,281	15,000	12,609
Music & Worship	13,950	18,000	19,850
Congregation Connections	184	800	1,000
Religious Education	20,576	27,000	27,167
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>162,921</b>	<b>209,800</b>	<b>214,510</b>
<b>Net Operating Revenue</b>	<b>30,055</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>1,790</b>
Other Revenue (Congregant Loan Forgiven)	50,000		
Other Expenditures (First U forgave Giving Winds Loan)	10,000		

# FUNDING OUR MISSION



## FUNDING OUR MISSION

Sources and uses  
(FY 2021–2022)

**JUSTICE**  
faith in action

**\$30,000**  
events | half-plate | justice endowments

**\$150,000**  
annual campaign  
half-plates

### PROGRAMS

worship & music  
education &  
communication  
office of  
the minister

**FOUNDATION**  
buildings & grounds

**\$40,000**  
rents | endowments

uua

# NOMINATIONS FOR THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

President: **Sarah Witte**

Vice President: **Joanna Landsman**

Treasurer: **Debbie Starkel**

Clerk: **Christy Hayashida**

At Large: **Nancy Dix**

At Large: **Joe Dreher**

At Large: **Stew Guernsey**

At Large: **Andrew Tonks**

This coming church year, 2021-2022, the positions of president, vice president, treasurer, and clerk are all seeking a first term in this position.

All at-large members are currently in the midst of their terms and are returning for the church year 2021-2022.

Please note: The Board of Trustees are voted on as a slate, not as individuals.

# PHOTOS FROM 2020-2021



This is the year we welcomed Rev. Hillary as our called minister to First Universalist! Back in September, we even had an in-person, outdoors welcoming celebration where many congregants met Rev. Hillary for the first time.



Instead of our usual congregational photo on our chancel, we took a church Zoom selfie. We learned how to do a lot of new things over Zoom, like conduct meetings, worship, vespers, votes, hold children and youth programming, and yes, even take a group photo.



# PHOTOS FROM 2020-2021





# MINISTER

Beginning with gratitude:

As we reach the end of this remarkable church year, there is an endless list of names to thank: Our council and committee chairs and members, our Board of Trustees members at large, our Small Group organizers, and you - yes, you! - beloved friend and member of our faithful, justice-seeking community.

I also want to take a moment to list the names of those whose dedicated work behind the scenes this year must be uplifted:

Our church staff, each of whom plays an integral, interconnected role in the spiritual, educational, organizational, financial, and structural life of our congregation:

Gwen Matthews, Director of Education & Communications

Sam Chandler, Music Director

Andrea Meadows, Administrative Assistant

Todd Roy, Church Sexton

Anna Bianconi, Children's Teacher

For our astute, attentive, compassionate, and committed Board Executive Team:

Joanna Landsman, President

Jen Civiello, Vice President

Marge Titcomb, Treasurer

Sarah Witte, Clerk

For my insightful and thought-provoking Committee on Ministry, who ask the most productive questions - and also make me laugh a lot: Emily Bogner-Williams, Nancy Dix & Ben Tupper

# MINISTER

And for our trusty, inventive, savvy, and perpetually cool, calm, and collected Tech Crew: Kai Fast and Pete Titcomb

Without these two in the technological driver's seat each Sunday, we would not have had church services this year.

Thank you to all, what a year.

Friends, the word "unprecedented" doesn't even begin to describe it all, does it?

Though I still am learning First Universalist's history, I feel I can safely say that never since 1860 when our church doors opened, has there been a year in our congregation quite like this one.

Sure, we could recite the litany of challenging events we faced in the past 10 months by heart at this point - a pandemic, the death of supreme court justice, a contentious presidential election, a government insurrection, a wave a mass protests against racism, ongoing economic instability, and a national vaccination campaign - but let the record show that during the 2020-21 church year, First Universalist Church of Yarmouth remained steadfast in our commitments to explore our faith, embrace our community, and engage the world as spiritual, justice seekers. Yes, there is much to mourn this year, but in equal measure there is great reason to celebrate and be grateful for this life, this year, and our community.

First and foremost, let's celebrate that we remained connected despite our physical distance from one another. Attendance at our live streamed Sunday services was consistent throughout the entire year, with an average 72 households watching each week.

# MINISTER

Attendance during our Wednesday Vespers, a “new tradition” as it’s been called, also was steady with an average of 16 households logging-in every Wednesday eve. Along with these weekly worshipful offerings, special events like our Pi Day Mini-Pie Exchange, Election Night Candlelight Vigil for Peace, and Christmas and Valentine’s Postcard Exchange garnered upwards of 70 participants - possibly more.

We revived and forged new connections with our neighbor churches, participating in a collaborative Christmas Eve Service with Brunswick UU and Augusta UU, as well as attended the Revolutionary Love Conference with First Parish UCC in Yarmouth this spring.

On top of all this, we welcomed 9 new members to our church and were contacted by many new friends living near and far and who have been grateful for our congregation and our virtual offerings this year. For this reason, no matter our ability to meet in our Sanctuary at the start of the new church year in September, we intend to continue to offer our services online for those who cannot join us in-person. We want to maintain all the connections we built this year.

Our care for one another blazed brightly during not one, but two successful fundraising campaigns: our Rise Up Campaign in the fall and our Annual Campaign this March. Friends, I have to tell you, when I received word that we reached our goals during both of these campaigns, I teared up. Your generosity towards our church and therefore, towards one another leaves me awash in joy, gratitude, and awe. Talk about “embracing community!”

# MINISTER

What an honor it is to have been called to serve this congregation.

Which brings me to one last, big, accomplishment this year: our affirmative congregational vote to endorse the spirit of the 8th Principle. Yes, this vote was huge, but to me, the vote itself is not as important as the momentum it built up and sustained for anti-racist action, education, and engagement throughout our congregational life. May this momentum continue, and may our vision for a world without systemic oppression be woven into the good works of our church.

Friends, thank you. We will never forget this year, at least - I know I won't!

And I cannot wait to see what happens next.

Let's hope that whatever it is, it is good, kind, just, and in-person in our beautiful Sanctuary. I am SO ready to know you all beyond the bounds of our Zoom squares!

I offer a heartfelt prayer of thanks to each and everyone of you. Thank you for welcoming me this year, for teaching me, for creating with me, for zooming with me and for keeping your connections to our beloved faith community as strong as you could.

May you know you are good, may you know you are loved, and may you be blessed with a safe, sunny, fun and restful summer.

Yours in peace, friendship, soft-serve, and sea roses.

Rev. Hillary

# BOARD PRESIDENT

It is bittersweet to be writing my last President's Report. After four years, my time as the President of your Board of Trustees is up, although I expect to remain on the Board in a different role, for one final 2-year term. I'm honored to remain of service in this way.

Meanwhile, what a ride my presidency has been! Thanks for sharing it with me. There have been plenty of challenges along the way, but I have learned so much these past 4 years, thanks to meaningful mentoring and wonderful examples of effective leadership provided by so many folks.

Together, we have moved past the end of a long-term ministry, through the transition period of interim ministry, and into a new shared ministry with Rev. Hillary – which is proving to be remarkable. And oh, how excited I am to continue working with her, and to be in continued community with you, regardless of what First U role(s) I may find myself in in the years to come. Since Rev. Hillary's arrival I've been repeatedly awestruck by the power of collaboration and cooperation in our shared ministry.

We're in a good place First U, and although I will no longer be your President, I remain all in, as committed as ever to all things First Universalist.

Meanwhile, what did we accomplish together this church year? As highlighted at our Mid-Year Meeting in January 2021, we:

- Welcomed Rev. Hillary!
- Participated in UU the Vote
- Maintained financial stability

# BOARD PRESIDENT

- Adapted to the times, with live-streamed services, virtual meetings and events
- Dreamed Big together at a virtual retreat in December
- Continued to educate ourselves and take action to become anti-racist

At the Mid-Year Meeting, we also rolled out First Universalist's goals for calendar year 2021 which continue to focus on maintaining our overall 'health'. Read the various Council and Committee reports for details about each group's individual goals. Here are the highlights of the goals specifically owned by the Board for the 2021 calendar year:

- **Lead development of 2022-2026 goals for all councils and committees in shared ministry** (to be taken up in earnest Fall 2021)
  - Consider 'Dream Big' goals
  - Potential bylaw revision
- **Support Minister in Fellowship**
  - Complete UUA Minister Evaluation for Fellowship (year 2 of 3) due June 2021 (done)
  - Plan Minister Installation Event (to occur spring 2022)
- **Lead all councils and committees in shared ministry** (ongoing)
  - Consider the spirit of the 8th Principle throughout
  - Support Minister development of protocol for First U community participation (e.g. letters, movies, banner, public relations)

# BOARD PRESIDENT

- Lead transition post-Covid to in-person community (Newly formed Reopening Team of Ben Tupper, Christy Hayashida, Gwen Matthews, Joanna Landsman, Nancy Dix, Sarah Witte, and Rev. Hillary are considering the needs of all members and friends as all contend with the trauma of the pandemic.)
- Consider UUA resources of Spiritual Leadership
- **Review specific issues of congregational health** (to be taken up in earnest in fall 2021)
  - Welcoming Congregation Renewal
  - Safe Congregation policy – revisit
  - Appropriate responses to ‘when bad things happen’

I have such confidence that together, we can accomplish so much. I also know that the important work is in the trying. Which brings me to this: I had a few mantras this past year. Phrases like *keep it simple*, *don't expect perfection*, *have a 'try-it-and-see' attitude*, and *focus on what really matters* helped me a great deal. Perhaps these words could serve us all well, as we move forward into whatever our new normal will be. To paraphrase from our Unison Benediction...**may we have the courage to take it step by step.**

Respectfully submitted, with gratitude,

Joanna Landsman, Board President



# DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & COMMUNICATIONS

As challenging as a pandemic year can be, I am, perhaps, even more proud and grateful to support the work and mission of First Universalist.

## Religious Exploration Programs

- In the fall and spring, we were able to offer a few different **family events** where we were able to gather together outdoors and masked. This included events like pumpkin carving, church yard clean-up and planting, and an Easter egg hunt.
- About once per month, Rev. Hillary and I had the opportunity to present a pre-recorded **Time for All Ages** during the worship service. We covered everything from equity to avocados and were able to experiment in ways to create engaging online content for all ages.
- **Children's Chapel**, for some of our youngest friends, continued this year online over Zoom each Sunday, led by our Children's Teacher, Anna Bianconi. This group followed the Soul Matters themes and engaged through play, story, and discussion. Anna, unfortunately, will be leaving First Universalist at the end of this church year.
- **Junior Youth Group**, for middle schoolers, initially started out with online meetings but was reconfigured to offer in-person events this Spring. We were able to go apple picking in the fall, create our own instruments, and participate in a beach clean-up day. Thank you to Ben Tupper, Christy Hayashida, and Rev. Hillary for their flexible yet steady co-facilitation and their cheerleading of this program.

# DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & COMMUNICATIONS

- **Coming of Age**, which mostly took the place of our senior youth group this year, ended up being a group of entirely 9th graders. We primarily met online, with a few notable exceptions of a bonfire, making mandalas on the beach, and a hang-out and worship-creating session at First Universalist. Thank you to co-facilitators Joanna Landsman, Alexis Waller, Ben Tupper, and Rev. Hillary for your thought, creativity, and dedication.
- **Adult programs** were offered on a limited basis primarily through one-off conversations on a few specific subjects. Notably, Sarah Witte, Rev. Hillary, and a guest co-facilitator, Johanna Munson, offered a End of Life Questions group.
- As part of our **Our Whole Lives - Outside of our Walls**, I was able to offer a presentation on gender identity to a group of professionals via Zoom.

## Communications

Our methods of communication shifted some, this year, with online communications becoming even more vital. There were three weekly emails, social media postings, and regular website updates.

## Congregation Connections

I was glad to support, along with Rev. Hillary, our Congregation Connections team as they worked to creatively maintain connections during this unusual year.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gwen Matthews

# MUSIC DIRECTOR

We began the year tackling the issue of how to deliver live services from the sanctuary, and through the efforts of several truly irreplaceable volunteers from the church community and the work of the diligent staff, I was playing on the lovely grand piano directly from the space I have become used to. It was the perfect way to start off a potentially difficult year, and the familiarity of the space allowed me to slide into a comfort zone and bring the congregation music with the kind of emotional heart that I can often only achieve through live performance.

One struggle remained though which was how best to utilize the fantastic UU choir, in a time when we couldn't meet in person. We began meeting weekly to sing a little and check in. We continued those meetings via Zoom throughout the church year. For Christmas and Easter we recorded music from the sanctuary, one voice at a time, until we had a track filled with familiar voices. It was a necessary piece of the year for me, but now I am looking forward to next year, with the hope of regular church choir participation returning.

The choir plans to meet this summer for a half-day retreat to get a first look at new music for next year, and to have the opportunity to sing together outdoors, fully vaccinated. We would gladly welcome any new choir members, or people interested in exploring that idea. While there still may be a need for caution next year, I'm cautiously optimistic that we will have a great variety of music, ensembles and musicians next year.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sam Chandler

# PHOTOS FROM 2020-2021



This church year we had nine new members join First Universalist. We met outside - even in the snow! - to sign the membership book.

We stayed connected in all sorts of ways, both virtually and through various exchanges, like our mini pie exchange on pie day (3/14).





# COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

The Committee on Ministry meets monthly and is composed of three members of the congregation chosen by the Board and the Minister. Our focus as defined by the Board is twofold: to advise and introduce Rev. Hillary Collins-Gilpatrick to First Universalist and to model healthy conflict resolution process as conflicts arise.

Especially in this year of Covid, our work has chiefly been in orienting our new minister to a congregation that is largely remote. Everything about this year is unlike any other. We have recently begun to explore the UUA evaluation process which is requested of new settled ministers. We anticipate completion by the end of this church year.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Dix

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Members: Nancy Dix, Ben Tupper, and Emily Bogner-Williams.

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# STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

## **CHALLENGES MET! We UU's are a creative, resourceful, generous people!**

- Our RISE UP! Campaign last fall met the \$24,500 challenge to replace the lost income from our usual fundraisers cancelled due to the Pandemic (Clam Fest, Maine Farm Supper, Holiday Fair, Gala). RISE UP! filled the financial gap while also modelling how we could move from a heavily events-funded church to a stronger community-supported congregation.

## **GOAL: Improve our Structural Financial Health**

- Our February annual campaign was a success, raising \$150,000 for the year that begins July 1, 2021. The campaign invited us all to consider re-thinking our annual commitment so that we could fund all our operating costs without fundraising events. This shift allows our events proceeds to be dedicated to Social Justice rather than operations.
- We evaluated each fundraising event regarding serving our mission, enthusiasm, participation, and funds raised. We expect to continue the Holiday Fair, hold 2 Maine Farm Suppers, and continue the annual spring Gala, albeit perhaps a new format. We do not expect to participate in the Clam Fest, but may offer an appropriate activity on our grounds.
- We began discussions on how Justice partners might be determined as events are planned. Current thinking is that Stewardship will continue to hold the production and publicity of Events, Faith in Action will identify the funds recipients (congregation input will be welcome). Likely Justice topics: Food, Climate, Racism.

# STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

## **GOAL: Review UUA best practices and document financial procedures**

- We continue to streamline procedures to clearly define the scope of Treasurer responsibilities to ease transition to new Treasurer July 1, 2021 (when current Treasurer term limits).
- We introduced GiveButter, an electronic giving platform, which is available to receive any/all donations. Of course, other methods are also encouraged: personal check, bank-issued check, stock.

## **GOAL: Ongoing responsibilities**

- We monitor and share state of our finances – monthly Financial Times highlighting opportunities, celebrations, and transparency – new format launched Sept 1. And, we welcome questions and ideas.

Respectfully, and filled with Gratitude,

Marge Titcomb, Treasurer & Stewardship Chair

Members: Marge Titcomb (Chair), Jen Civiello, Joe Dreher, Cindy Guernsey, Tom Settlemire, Frank Read, and Phyllis Jones.



# BUILDINGS & GROUNDS COMMITTEE

Buildings and Grounds Committee has reformed under Pete Titcomb's leadership to include John Vogt, Charles Herman, and Ben Tupper with Joe Dreher serving as both liaison with the Trustees and an active member.

We convene monthly and are currently "walking through" the church with Pete guiding us on the various systems.

## **Notable achievements of the year:**

- Sanctuary Window Restoration: The restoration of the final two large windows was completed and they were installed in January.
- In support of live-streaming of Sunday Services, Internet access was upgraded:
  - DSL Internet service to the church was upgraded.
  - New higher speed WiFi routers were installed.
  - Higher speed (CAT6) network cabling was installed.
  - A direct Ethernet outlet was installed in the Sanctuary.

## **The coming year:**

Establishing goals and a mission statement to propose to the board. For now, we are operating under this mission: "Organizing information regarding buildings and grounds upon which the board and congregation can make informed decisions about its properties."

# BUILDINGS & GROUNDS COMMITTEE

Organizing and digitizing documentation of building systems, maintenance schedules, and maintenance procedures. This is not a short task, Pete has carried this on our behalf for years and it is now muscle-memory for him. Our goal here is to leave a legacy of meaningful and workable documentation on how to keep the church properties running no matter who is responsible.

Respectfully submitted,

Ben Tupper, Buildings & Grounds Chair

Members: Ben Tupper (Chair), Joe Dreher (Board Liaison), Pete Titcomb, John Vogt, and Charles Herman.

# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

## Goals 2020-2021

- Collaborate with Rev. Hillary to develop/plan the Leadership Retreat
- Recruit candidates for committees, councils, and Board of Trustees
- Update Employee Guidebook

## Work Done

- Employee Guidebook updated and submitted to Board for review
- Slate of Board of Trustees presented for vote at 2021 Annual Meeting
- Onboarded new minister
- Assisted committees and councils with member recruitment

## Goals 2021-2022

- Identify and present slate of Board of Trustees for 2022 Annual Meeting
- Assist councils and committee chairs with member recruitment
- Collaborate with Rev. Hillary to develop/plan the 2021 Leadership Retreat
- Support staff recruitment efforts on an as-needed basis
- Develop Board of Trustees guide/orientation for Fall 2021

Members: Lisa Patterson (Chair), Joanna Landsman (Board Liaison), Nancy Read, Tom Carlisle, Sue Myers, and Jeanette Newton.

# CONGREGATION CONNECTIONS COMMITTEE

## 2021 Committee Goals/Subtasks

### **CONNECTIONS: Keep people connected, both existing and new friends and members.**

We supported and helped to organize Cottage Meetings for discussion of Endorsing the Spirit of the 8th Principle by connecting to possible participants. We updated and maintained a directory in coordination with the church database - a special thank you to Jerry Myers for great assistance in maintaining/updating the church directory. We imagined new ways for people to connect, especially during the pandemic. For example: we distributed Valentine's Day postcards to send to fellow congregants, delivered Easter baskets and flowers to people at home, and introduced new and old congregant profiles in Channels.

### **VISIBILITY: Increase our visibility and accessibility, via our website and other social media space.**

With Gwen's leadership we work to make First Universalist communications friendly and accessible. We encouraged Rev. Hillary to make a welcoming video for our website home page. The banner on the front of our sign encourages people to check out our website and online worship. We want to explore how we could be even more visible and meet the needs of the larger community, for example, supporting FIA projects, or partnering with projects in the area.

# CONGREGATION CONNECTIONS COMMITTEE

## **GROWTH: Grow the membership of First Universalist.**

We have worked with Rev. Hillary and Gwen this year on creating a flexible "Pathway to Membership.". In lieu of the traditional in-person classes, we made extra efforts to respond to individuals who approached the church. We followed up on visit cards with friendly emails, invited newcomers to zoom "tea," met people at the picnic tables, found each other on Facebook, etc. We also provided Rev. Hillary with names of people who might appreciate a check-in. We did not conduct any 'exit interviews' as we had no formal withdrawals of membership. We welcomed nine people into membership with mini-celebrations of flowers and treats, and look forward to the day when we can have a bigger ceremony to celebrate all of us and how much we mean to each other and to our faithful journeys...more every year.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Witte, Congregation Connections Committee Chair

Members: Sarah Witte (Chair), Martha Hutchinson, Brenda McKee, Cindy Guernsey, and Gwen Matthews (Staff).



# PHOTOS FROM 2020-2021



We held some covid-safe in-person events for families this year, like apple picking, planting bulbs and cleaning up the church yard, and pumpkin carving, all in the fall. We took a break in the winter from in-person events for safety and due to weather.

It was so special and fulfilling to be able to gather in person, even for just a few times.



# WORSHIP COUNCIL

The Worship Council began our church year welcoming Reverend Hillary during a two day retreat in August. It was both a joyful in-person time to get to know each other, and a huge challenge to find ways to create this year's virtual worship opportunities to keep our church community nourished and connected while our building remained closed. This necessitated a focus on all the technical details, and the formation of a tech team to assist with all aspects of worship. The Council is hugely appreciative of the volunteers, especially Pete Titcomb, who have stepped up to record services for us.

One of the first changes made was to add multiple opportunities for connection during each week. The Wednesday Vespers service and Friday informal time with our minister have been well-received and are likely to continue beyond this pandemic year. Another change was the decision not to use guests in our pulpit once each month as in the past, but to use the fourth Sunday of the month as a Gathering Sunday to allow for Zoom connections and Joys and Sorrows, which couldn't happen during the YouTube services the rest of the month. As an added bonus, this decision allowed our budget to be used for supplemental tech-related expenses rather than guest stipends. As we have all become increasingly comfortable with virtual worship, we have also embraced other opportunities to expand our UU connections beyond Yarmouth. A collaboration with two other churches for our Christmas worship produced a beautiful service, and on several occasions we have tapped into the national UU organization for inspiring virtual services.



# WORSHIP COUNCIL

Undoubtedly, the highlight of the year has been working with Reverend Hillary to adapt our worship and meet our challenges with grace, flexibility, and courage. We are so grateful for her leadership, and are looking forward to creating worship together in our sanctuary again as soon as we can.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Turner, Worship Council Chair

Members: Anne Turner (Chair), Joy Ahrens, Lily O'Brien-Gilbert, Andrew Tonks, and Kai Fast.

# FAITH IN ACTION COUNCIL

First Universalist has made a paradigm shift toward broader commitment to social justice. With First U's adoption of the Spirit of the 8th Principle to actively dismantle racism and other oppressions, we are now determining how to organize our Justice Work to proclaim our Anti-Oppression grounding through all aspects of First U. We are grateful to Rev. Hillary for her guidance and leadership!

Responding to the national groundswell of racism acknowledgement, and our own growing awareness (e.g. 25 members/friends read Kendi's How to be an Antiracist), First U formed the Antiracism Working Group (AWG). AWG focus has been on education and determining a way forward for First U.

Going forward, financial generosity for Justice will likely at least double in the coming church year. With the congregation's generous response to the Annual Campaign, we can now fund church operations without fundraising events – so all fundraising event income can be joyfully given for Justice! Thank you, congregation!

## **GOAL: Offer Advocacy Opportunities**

**Elections Matter.** We coordinated with MUUSAN's (Maine UU State Advocacy Network) Get Out the Vote, UUA's UUtheVote, and Maine League of Women Voters (MLWV), participating in Friends-to-Friends, postcard campaigns, phone banks, reaching 100s of new and lapsed voters in Maine and in southern U.S.

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**Wabanaki Land Sovereignty.** With MUUSAN and area churches, we are supporting current legislation seeking to correct the 1980 Land Settlement Act, which did much to acknowledge Maine's Indigenous People, but neglected to offer the Tribes sovereignty consistent with all other states' agreements. We are following the lead of the Wabanaki Alliance in supporting current proposals. We also converted our 2006 \$10,000 loan to a grant to the Wabanaki through the Giving Winds Project, eliminating their obligation to pay us interest.

**GOAL: Offer Education and Action Opportunities**  
**Regular Anti-Oppression Learning Opportunities.** AWG organized 5 discussion groups where each group selected materials from a suggested list of books, videos, and articles. Curated materials are also offered weekly in Channels. Land Acknowledgement is articulated in worship. Nine half plate recipients focus on anti-oppression.

**3D: Dinner, Documentary, Discussion offerings.** In spite of the pandemic, we continued to offer documentaries grounded in Racial Justice, including: Indigenous Peoples Land, Criminal Justice, Voting Rights, Environmental Justice, and also Brain Health.

**GOAL: Continue our Social Justice Programs**  
**Immigrant Community.** Our support of our four 95 Main residents continues.

# FAITH IN ACTION COUNCIL

**Partner Church.** Last October we celebrated 30 years of our partnership with Gyepes, Romania. We continued to support education with sponsorships this year of \$2220 for 13 students.

**Half Plate Program.** As of 4/30/21 we have given \$4850 to 14 organizations, all in Maine.

**Preble Street.** The pandemic has caused Preble Street to significantly revise its services, ending our traditional support of First Tuesdays dinner service. We applaud their work and are grateful for our 10 years of collaboration.

Respectfully submitted,

Marge Titcomb, Faith-In-Action Council Chair & Anti-Racism Working Group Chair

Members: Marge Titcomb (Chair), Jane Makela, Pete Titcomb, Sue Ellen Bordwell, Marie Wendt, and Mariana Tupper.

# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COUNCIL

This year, the religious exploration council at First Universalist strived to maintain connections between families and the church by providing opportunities for online connection, safe, in person outdoor events, and opportunities for at-home projects.

Our in-person events were some of our most successful engagements, and they included:

- Apple picking for youth
- A bonfire for youth
- Pumpkin carving for families of all ages
- Fall clean-up and bulb planting for families of all ages
- An Easter egg hunt for families of all ages
- Making our own musical instruments for youth
- A Coming of Age celebration and ceremony for youth
- A beach clean-up day for youth

Next year, we hope to offer more opportunities for adult religious exploration and are hopeful that we can be together in person for RE programming.

Members: Cathy McKenna (Chair), Joanna Landsman (Board Liaison), Raj Vinnakota, Christy Hayashida, Mika Lentz, Lesli Chambers, and Gwen Matthews (Staff).