

FIRST UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF YARMOUTH, MAINE

Annual Report

2022 - 2023



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About Our Church



Our 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 and Our Faith

The First Universalist Church of Yarmouth is a self-funded and self-governed volunteer organization supported in our mission by a fulltime 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 shared values.

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.

A Shared Ministry

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. There are four councils who assist the minister in these programs. Our staff also 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. There are four committees who assist the Board in these endeavors as well as support from staff.

About Our Church

Minister and Staff

Rev. Hillary Collins-Gilpatrick, Minister

**Gwen Matthews, Director of Education
and Communications**

Sam Chandler, Music Director

**Andrea Meadows, Administrative
Assistant**

**Mack Jones, Children's Teacher and
Youth Facilitator**

Board of Trustees

Sarah Witte, President

Joanna Landsman, Vice President

Debbie Starkel, Treasurer

Christy Hayashida, Clerk

Dale Shields

Nancy Dix

Stew Guernsey

Andrew Tonks

Photos 2022/2023



Choir singing, spring 2023



*Painting rocks
at the MANA
Community
Pizza Party,
February 2023*

Current Financials and Proposed Budget

Financial Reports including PROPOSED FY24 BUDGET	Prior Year (FY22) Actual	Current Year (FY23) Estimate	FY24 PROPOSED BUDGET
REVENUE			
Annual Campaign	144,610	150,000	171,000
Plate	6,142	8,000	8,000
Fundraising Programs	5,786	8,207	11,200
Other Fundraising (OWL & coffee)	1,268	1,600	2,500
Rental Income	36,887	36,200	39,000
Endowment Income	12,507	10,941	11,000
Other Income (gifts, grants, interest)	6,188	6,808	5,500
TOTAL REVENUE	212,121	221,756	248,200
EXPENDITURES			
Board of Trustees (UUA dues)	11,255	11,375	12,714
Buildings & Grounds for Operations	26,106	35,754	40,500
B&G Administration	12,930	10,870	12,000
Minister's Office	98,750	98,441	103,919
Office Administration	12,901	12,927	19,012
Music & Worship	17,942	18,648	18,646
Congregation Connections	382	500	1,000
Religious Education	30,906	33,236	39,823
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	211,171	221,751	247,614
NET OPERATING REVENUE	950	5	586
Other Revenue (HfG loan forgiveness)	10,000	0	0
Fundraising Events for Justice 100% donated	6,510	5,325	

Balance Sheet

Balance Sheet Information	Prior Year (FY22) Actual	Current Year (FY23) as of 4/30/23
Cash		
Cash Available for Operations	31,068	31,645
Designated Funds	62,524	63,570
Total Cash on Hand	93,592	95,215
Designated Funds:		
Faith in Action Funds	28,514	29,786
Building & Steeple Funds	28,958	28,776
FY24 Prepaid Annual Campaign Funds	0	17,500
various other funds (9)	5,052	5,008
Endowment Funds (managed by UUA)	107,474	95,540

Nominations for the Board of Trustees

Slate of Nominees for the Board of Trustees

Sarah Witte, *President*

Debbie Starkel

Dale Shields, *Vice President*

Cindy Guernsey

Elizabeth Clark, *Treasurer*

Jamie Brookes

Christy Hayashida, *Clerk*

Mary Chaney

Photos 2022/2023



*Playing the piano in the Common Room
at the MANA Pizza Party,
February 2023*



*A line up of pies
at Pi/e Sunday, March 2023*



*Making
slime
at the
MANA
Pizza
Party,
February
2023*

Minister's Report



Rev. Hillary Collins-Gilpatrick,
Minister

What I LOVED this Church Year

Well my friends, though not without some memorable challenges, this year, there was certainly much to love. First and foremost I loved celebrating worship in person with you. Maybe one day the memory of Covid lockdown will truly fade away, but right now I take nothing about our congregational life for granted. From the big all-encompassing experiences of sitting next to each other, seeing your whole faces, and rising up singing side by side each week, to the smaller often overlooked details of simply sharing microphones, passing the offering basket, and chatting over a cup of coffee, it feels pretty miraculous to practice our faith in person together - not to mention spirit lifting and nourishing.

I also loved our emphasis on love this year! Though we were the target of a hate group in December, I celebrate that their animosity only emboldened the love that exists at the center of our faith, the center of our community, and at the center of each one of us. An oft evoked Universalist teaching is that we are called to “love the hell out of this world,” and friends, I’d say we did just that this year. Through our month of Radical Acts of Loving Kindness, our “Love at the Center” Annual Campaign, the more than \$12,000 we gave to local justice organizations with our half plates and farm suppers, the re-establishment of our Hearts & Hands caregiving group, and the myriad ways we served the broader community through legislative advocacy, asylum seeker support, Our Whole Lives courses, Pride participation, and our overall welcoming and affirming spirit - we truly met hate with love. I don’t know about you, but I loved it.

What I LONG FOR

Oh, I longed for the usual things - an end to covid, a turn of heart and new hobby for white supremacists, a moratorium on Sunday morning youth sports, a quick and easy solution to the housing, environmental, gun, and democratic crises at hand . . . But beyond these hopeful yearnings, I longed for the same thing I long every year: more time spent with you. I long to get to know you all better, to learn about your daily lives, experiences, passions, theologies - and find inroads for you to share your gifts, interests, questions, and your longings with our congregation.

Minister's Report

What I LONG FOR

I think this might just be the perennial longing of ministry - a longing that is always steadily being eased, while simultaneously unfolding and expanding as our community evolves, grows, shifts, ebbs and flows.

Simply put though, I long for you to feel at ease and welcome here to participate, lead, join, suggest, create, and of course, just be. Our Sunday services are very important to our congregational life, but that hour or so together each week is just one aspect of all that we do and can do together. I long to explore all the possibilities of "church" with you. I hope I always feel this way and that you experience this longing too so we can keep on movin' forward together exploring, embracing, and engaging.

What I want to LIFT UP

At the close of this church year, I lift up the members of our Councils and Committees, and our Board of Trustees. At First Universalist our shared ministry model is incredibly important to me - honestly I can't imagine the alternative! We are all in this together because we must be. Our church is a church of the people and of the living tradition. No one person can define nor direct this spiritual life we share. The folks who give their hearts, minds, hands - and often culinary expertise! - to Faith in Action, Worship Council, Adult & Children's RE, the Committee on Ministry, Buildings & Grounds, Leadership Development, Stewardship, Congregation Connections, and the Board are not only indispensable to the life of our church - they enliven our church and make possible the ministry we and I have to offer. Thank you, Lay Leaders!

Alongside these council and committee members, I want to lift up our Ushers - Dorothy McAloney, Cheryl McGilvery, Ruth White, and Janice Tooker in particular who fold the orders of service and stand at the church doors welcoming folks week after week. I must also lift up our Tech Crew - Jennifer Caven, Charlie Horstman, Joanna Landsman and Pete Titcomb who show up on a weekly basis and beam our services out to friends near and far who are unable to join us in our sanctuary. Our Tech crew also is in charge of sound, a/v set-up, recording and posting our services each week. Where would we be without them!?

Minister's Report

What I want to LIFT UP

Lastly I lift up our staff - a wonderful group of creative, skilled, hilariously witty and kind collaborators: Gwen Matthews, Sam Chandler, Mack Jones, and Andrea Meadows. And our Exec Team: Christy Hayashida our Clerk, Debbie Starkel our Treasurer, and Sarah Witte and Joanna Landsman who I pretty much have on speed dial at this point for their sage advice, compassionate solutions, and cute/goofy/noble dog photos.

Go lifted up, my friends!

What I am LOOKING FORWARD TO

I am looking forward to seeing what happens next!

We piloted and reinstated some programs this year that were wonderful and wonderful successes - Dinner Church, Adult RE movie nights, panel conversations, multi-church collaborations, Path to Membership courses - and it feels like only the beginning. Though I am rounding my third year with you, I feel like I've only just gotten my feet under me this spring - this aside, I will say that these past few years have kept me on my toes and trained me to be very agile! I look forward to crafting and implementing our new long range plan in the year ahead and allowing for whatever new and continuous directions, programs, and lessons that arise from that plan to guide us forward with love at our center.

But first -

I am looking forward to diving into the beach reads I've requested from the library, lacing up my boots and meandering along my favorite ridge lines in the White Mountains, cruising around with the windows down listening to Taylor Swift really loud, and enjoying the respite that summer in Vacationland provides with my family and buddies - human, canine, and vegetable alike.

Thank you all - ALL - for what was a really good year. I am so honored to serve our congregation and to know you. May your summer be a fun one, a safe one, a beautiful one, and a loving one.

Yours with peace and friendship.
Rev. Hillary

Photos 2022/2023



*Visiting and Touring the
New Mainer
Community Garden at
the Brunswick/Topsham
Land Trust, a Maine
Farm Supper funds
recipient, fall 2022*

*Children gather
around the Chalice
at the front of the
Sanctuary
with Rev. Hillary,
spring 2023*



President's Report



Sarah Witte,
President of the Board

It has been a joy and an honor to serve the mission and the congregation of First Universalist Church. On behalf of all of us on the Board, THANK YOU to everyone who has been part of our interconnected web at First Universalist. As we approach the polishing up and presentation of a new five-year plan, we also give thanks for the work of those who came before us and gave us a plan to fulfill. I am filled with gratitude for everyone who shows up, and everyone who works behind the scenes. I am in awe of the consistently faithful work of our minister and staff, and dazzled by their kind and creative responses to our many opportunities and challenges. A heartfelt thanks to one and all! I'd like to highlight the following specific areas of our work. There's so much more than these few bullets (which I am sure you will read about in all the Council and Committee Reports) but wow, isn't it amazing how much you can get done with coffee, pie, candles, and love?

What I LOVED this Church Year

- **The spirit of this Board!** Open-minded, kind, and mission-driven. At the end of a Board meeting, I often reflect on the generous and thoughtful processing. Everyone contributes, and we find our way together.
- We had a successful (I mean really really good) Annual Campaign which even incorporated and embraced the new draft Article II Values of Justice, Generosity, Transformation, Interdependence, Equity, and Pluralism, all **CENTERED IN LOVE**. We called the AC **"love at the center"** and it became a common heartbeat of compassion and care for all. We gathered enough commitments to fully fund the compensation packages and programming costs for the coming year. In these times this was completely amazing.
- The **councils and committees** also had fantastic years. Our Board liaisons had a lot to keep track of, and the councils and committees were busy handling, creating, imagining, fixing, providing, at a whole new pace. Gwen and Andrea stayed on top of the website, the calendar, the Order of Worship, Channels, Wednesday emails and the Sunday Morning News. And yet I think it all worked. Post-covid - which hasn't been very long- this was the most amazing and healthy year I've seen at First Universalist in a very long time. When I look back on the structural and systems we've put in place I think, hey nothing's perfect but this works. This is sustainable.

President's Report

What I LONG FOR in the Future

- We had a brilliant and sensible ad hoc group step forward to review and re-write our **Safe Congregation Plan**. Thank you to Steve, Dale, Wolfgang, Barbara, and Deb! Now it's time for implementation. We must find our way through safety training, grant applications, historic preservation reviews, coordination with local responders, making sure the VNS is safe, making physical and system changes... It's a lot. May a way be found and the courage to take it, step by step.
- Thanks to gentle messages from Rev. Hillary as well as from her peers with substack blog posts about the endlessness of congregational ministry, we have been awakened to the impossible intensity of the work. To respond, to take care of, to sort out. And then there is the running of the place! As if a minister could or even should do it all, and somehow hold healthy boundaries. **A Lay Pastoral Care system** will never take the place of our minister in a crisis or spiritual passages, but a trained team could support the minister/ministry with visits and conversations, and keep us all in good operating condition.
- A special warm little spotlight for the re-birth of our caring network, now known as Hearts and Hands. We are ready to provide meals, rides, visits, all kinds of support. OK here is the "long for" wish: Nobody wants to call for help when the day comes that help is needed. It's understandable. I SO personally understand! We are trained to tough it out. And yet... it's so funny... we all really want to help others! Uh-oh. Where is this disconnect coming from, and how can we as a church family and culture grow our capacity to receive, so it's as huge as our ability and longing to give? Work for the healing heart. Let's find ways to practice 'from thee I receive.'

What I am LOOKING FORWARD TO Next Church Year

- **Renewed stewardship!** Not just financial but ACTIONS. Now that we are 'back' (yay) we are renewing our stewardship and care for the building. We are asking a lot of it. We want to ask more! Last year we decided to hire a contractor for cleaning. We have questions about how successful that is. We ask a lot of our office assistant and bookkeeping support Andrea. We ask a lot of Gwen and so much from Hillary. Growing volunteer ownership of SOME of the many tasks and jobs would lighten the load. I envision the Board asking Councils and Committees to learn more of what Gwen and Andrea do and consider how they can possibly share some of the tasks.

President's Report

What I am LOOKING FORWARD TO Next Church Year

- **Our Vision Plan** (9 months gestation, at least!) will be born later this year. Honestly during the shut-down times of the pandemic, it was very very hard to imagine creating a Plan. The Board put it off and put it off during those months, and sometimes whimpered that maybe we were fine as is. Intuitively, we were right about it not being the right time, but we didn't know it! This spring, with a Sanctuary full of new faces and hoping hearts, we let ourselves dream and imagine. It was time. Now we will take all the input and weave it into a bright vision for the next five years.
- **A growing and vibrant intergenerational church community** is possible for us! Rev. Hillary and Gwen and all those who help them and make plans for children and youth engagement have created a terrific safe, fun, and accessible RE program. Our Vision Plan makes growth and all-ages the highest priority, with many specific (and delightful) ideas for how to get there. We are ALL IN on this!

What I want to LIFT UP

- **Shared ministry** - so many ways to do it! Our worship services are so often a blend of voices, beautifully coordinated by Rev. Hillary. We rose up to opportunities to serve in the community, such as the State Street Shelter. We grew the Small Group Ministry circles which are essential to our connections and create a place to honor all of our large or small life moments and passages.
- **Amazing new membership!** Newcomers are welcomed in multiple ways as they arrive, and then if steadily attending, they are invited to consider Membership via a three-part class called "Path to Membership". Rev. Hillary, Gwen Matthews, the Congregation Connections Committee and the Board work together (there's more shared ministry right there!) to make the course fun and meaningful. This year we have offered the class in both fall and spring, and have been deeply moved by the new members who have become part of First Universalist. Real Joy and Justice people! Generous and kind. Welcome, everyone. We are glad you are here.
- I lift up how we are –and who we are–when times are scary or complicated. Our collective response to being targeted by hateful Neo-nazi emails and social media, even as we endured a serious Covid outbreak, was to process the fear, to hold safe space, and to keep on being brave kind unstoppable UU's who explore-embrace-engage with love at the center. **How we care for each other**, even as we do our own work and reach out to the world really matters. People, First Universalist is a true sanctuary.

President's Report

What I want to LIFT UP

- ONE MORE! I have to lift up the **many years of whole-hearted service on the Board** by Nancy Dix, Andrew Tonks, Stew Guernsey, and especially Joanna Landsman who held us together through dark times and complicated transitions with grace, patience, humor, discretion, kindness and the steadiest of voices. You will be missed more than you know. Thank you for blessing us with so much of your goodness. We'll be seeing you, I sure hope, in all the old familiar places.

Treasurer's Report

What I LOVED this Church Year

I love that the Treasurer, in conjunction with the Stewardship Committee is able to meet all our fiscal responsibilities this year. I love that we can adapt, as the budget withstood unexpected changes during the year. When our sexton was unable to return, we worked together with the Building and Grounds Committee to hire a cleaning service.

What I LONG FOR in the Future

I long for an Assistant Treasurer. As the Treasurer, I salute the generosity of the members and friends of our wonderful First U. I would love for that generosity to continue and lift us up to a more vibrant, generous, and giving church.

What I am LOOKING FORWARD TO Next Church Year

I look forward to finalizing a 5-year plan. We can focus on the what needs to be accomplished in the coming years and conducting a Capital Campaign to accomplish our mutual goals.

Photos 2022/2023



Marching in the Pride Portland parade, June 2022



Director of Education & Communications



Gwen Matthews,
Director of Education &
Communications

What I LOVED this Church Year

This year, there was so much to love and so much love that I felt radiating from our spiritual community.

- I loved seeing your faces and sharing the same spaces as all of you. How delightful it is just to be together!
- I loved that some families returned to First U and other new families found First U. I loved the sound of laughter with children playing and I loved the times we would light the chalice together in Children's Chapel and each child would share from their heart what was their joy or sorrow.
- I loved my work with councils and committees this year, the collaborations, the ideas, the fun, and the logistics. Shout out to Congregation Connections, Adult RE Council, RE Council, and Worship Council.
- Speaking of collaborations, I loved getting to work with the UU Church of Brunswick, the Allen Avenue UU Church, and First Parish Portland. We are better together.
- I also loved being able to facilitate the Our Whole Lives program twice this church year, once in the fall with 7th - 9th graders and once in the spring with 10th - 12th graders.
- Believe it or not, I also love the communications work I get to do and allows me time for a different type of creativity.

What I want to LIFT UP

- I am so thankful for and amazed by our RE volunteers: Joanna Landsman, who co-facilitated the Our Whole Lives program and helped with youth events. Joanna is a rockstar. Ben Tupper who joyfully ahoyed some of our youth events. Christy Hayashida who is always ready and willing to make youth programs better. Sarah Witte, Jeanette Newton, Phyllis Jones, Janice Tooker, Lisa Patterson, Dale Shields, Cheryl McGilvery, and Lily Gilbert who took a turn as a Children's Chapel assistant (or who wasn't needed to take a turn, but was ready, willing, and able to do so!).
- Multigenerational services that truly felt multigenerational, involved a lot of creativity, and were made so much better by your participation.

Director of Education & Communications

What I want to LIFT UP

- I have never experienced getting to work with such a great team and am so glad that I get to work alongside Rev. Hillary, Mack, Sam, and Andrea. I really want to lift up all of the ways that they make each day better for me.

What I LONG FOR in the Future

- I long for more children, youth, and families involved in our programs and events. I long for the ability to share with them how UUism can help strengthen their values and build important beloved community. And I long for the ability to deliver the types of programs that feel worthwhile and relevant to their lives.
- I long for more involvement from the congregation in children and youth RE programs, particularly more involvement in our RE Council, in visioning our programs, and in assisting in making those programs come to life.

What I am LOOKING FORWARD TO Next Church Year

- I am looking forward to a youth service trip next year that will hopefully engage teenagers from First U, from neighboring UU congregations, and from the broader community.
- I am looking forward to the continued expansion of children, youth, and adult programs.
- I am looking forward to trying new things, innovating, and being flexible and adaptable when plans need to change.
- Next year, I'm looking forward to continuing our Our Whole Lives programs, especially our partnerships with other churches or community organizations. Maybe we'll finally get to do adult OWL!
- I am looking forward to continuing to improve our communication methods including testing out mass text messaging systems for urgent communications.
- I'm looking forward to embracing our current members, including our newest members, and welcoming even more new faces to First Universalist.

Music Director



Sam Chandler,
Music Director

What I LOVED this Church Year

It's been a tough few years and I was grateful for our ability to pick up momentum and maintain our membership to the point where we could perform at church regularly by the end of the year. I appreciated the choir's willingness to workshop and try new things which kept the music feeling fresh throughout the year.

What I LONG FOR in the Future

I would love more members, specifically a diversity of ages represented, and some lower end voices. I would like to instill our choir with new people with different musical backgrounds which would encourage us to branch out musically and to do more music by memory. I would like more members who are dedicated to participating in our larger events like Christmas, Easter and Music Sunday.

What I want to LIFT UP

I want to continue to modernize our repertoire, presenting more music from popular genres, and finding ways to incorporate that music into services in a meaningful and appropriate way. I want to continue to encourage talented members of the First U community to engage in music making at church in a way that encourages them to do the music they love. I would like the church and I to collaborate in educational opportunities for congregants, old and young.

What I am LOOKING FORWARD TO Next Church Year

I'm looking forward to a year with fewer interruptions for the choir. I'm also looking forward to continuing to grow as a classical pianist and to present the repertoire I will be learning.

Members of the Choir

Sopranos: Jennifer Caven, Kate Connelly, Brenda McKee, and Cindy Guernsey - **Altos:** Karen Carlisle, Anne Turner, Ann Swardlick, Joy Ahrens, Lisa Williams, and Nancy Read - **Tenors:** Marie Wendt, Sarah Witte, Joanna Landsman, and Andrew Tonks - **Bass:** John Auble

Photos 2022/2023



*Emily Dix-Thomas,
Guest Musician,
playing the cello
and Rev. Hillary
at the Christmas Eve
Candlelight Service,
December 2022*

*Mack Jones,
Children's
Teacher,
lighting a
candle in
Children's
Chapel,
spring 2023*



Committee on Ministry

Members of the Committee on Ministry

Emily Bogner-Williams, Jamie Brookes, Nancy Dix, Jeanette Newton,
Nancy Read, and Rev. Hillary Collins-Gilpatrick

The Committee on Ministry (CoM) supports a healthy response as conflicts arise and works to keep a finger on the pulse at First U in order to assist the minister in responding to needs of the Congregation.

What CoM LOVED this Church Year

The CoM met monthly, usually on Zoom. We loved that there were no conflict situations and enjoyed our wide ranging discussions. Some topics were: outreach programming; radical acts of kindness; First U response to Covid and security threat; supporting immigrants at State St. Church; flexibility in face of Covid outbreak at Christmas; and possible Pastoral Care Team.

What CoM LONGS FOR in the Future

We long for more feedback from members of the Congregation.

What CoM wants to LIFT UP

We lift up our joint decision with the Board to continue annual evaluation of our minister even though this is no longer required by the UUA.

What CoM is LOOKING FORWARD TO Next Church Year

We look forward to getting to know everyone better and continuing to provide loving support to our minister and congregants.

About Committees

The Committees of First Universalist

Stewardship Committee

Buildings & Grounds Committee

Leadership Development Committee

Congregation Connections Committee

What are Committees of the Board?

At First Universalist, committees are overseen by and in relationship with the Board of Trustees. Each committee has a liaison to the Board of Trustees.

Each committee is guided by First Universalist's mission, by their charge from the Board, and by the goals that they set each calendar year.

The **Stewardship Committee** promotes financial health and growth in dialogue with the Board. They keep watch over our church financial health, launch fundraisers for joy and justice, and connect with our renters.

The **Buildings & Grounds Committee** are stewards of our campus, the church, parsonage building, and surrounding grounds. They keep in mind present use and look to the future.

The **Leadership Development Committee** offers a path to committee participation and assists in nominating and personnel matters.

The **Congregation Connections Committee** offers radical hospitality, a path to membership, and connection opportunities for all friends and members. They also collaborate on outreach initiatives and communications and publications.

Stewardship

Members of the Stewardship Committee

Marge Titcomb (Chair), Debbie Starkel (Board Liaison & Treasurer), Jen Civiello, Joe Dreher, Cindy Guernsey, Phyllis Jones, Frank Read, and Tom Settlemyre

What Stewardship LOVED this Church Year

We are inspired by First U's attitude of abundance, and the enthusiastic response to our projects (e.g. Maine Farm Suppers, and Annual Campaign fulfillment of commitments. Our meetings (only 5 per year) reflect the enthusiasm, are dynamic, and a fount of good ideas. Together, we get done what we say we'll do.

What Stewardship LONGS FOR

We would warmly welcome a few more Stewardship Committee members who enjoy playing with numbers or planning fundraisers, brainstorming the future, and bringing visions into reality.

What Stewardship LIFTS UP

We take to heart our role "to sustain First U fiscal health" in collaboration with the Board, Leadership Development Committee, Faith in Action Council, Buildings & Grounds Committee, and our Minister. We also celebrate our open door and transparency.

What Stewardship is LOOKING FORWARD TO next Church Year

We look forward to the Board's finalization of the 5 Year Plan, to guide us as we move forward to do our part to make our visions real, including participating in the design of the next capital campaign in the next few years.

Buildings & Grounds

Members of the Buildings & Grounds Committee

Ben Tupper (Chair), Debbie Starkel (Board Liaison), Charles Herman, Joe Dreher, John Auble, John Vogt, Jon Bogner-Williams, and Pete Titcomb.

What B&G LOVED this Church Year

We LOVE having a team to doing the work, and making improvements (security cameras, panic buttons, door bolts, upgraded internet and phone systems), and having a new electric lawn mower and a new snow blower. But, **we also LIKE** completing repairs, having church systems pass inspections, and having trees trimmed.

Also, **we're TRYING OUT** contracted cleaning, snow shoveling, and lawn mowing. **We're LEARNING** to support the church's audio/visual technology for Sunday services and other events. And **we are WILLING** to prepare the annual B&G budget proposal.

What B&G LONGS FOR

- improvements in building accessibility
- improvements in Sanctuary audio-visual technology
- improvement/upgrades in the kitchen
- improvements in building energy efficiency
- finding the will to increasing our building system documentation
- and finding more time in the day.

What B&G LIFTS UP

We LIFT UP the generosity of the congregation for their support of the B&G portion of the Church budget and their contributions to the Building Reserve Fund.

What B&G is LOOKING FORWARD TO next Church Year

We are LOOKING FORWARD TO figuring out what are the needs and priorities for 95 Main (Parsonage), and helping plan for the next Church capital campaign.

Leadership Development

Members of the Leadership Development Committee

Tom Carlisle, Joanna Landsman, Leslie Livingston, and Lisa Patterson

What LDC LOVED this Church Year

Being in tune with the staff, board and committee roles that are needed to help the church function and making suggestions to benefit all. For example, during the budget planning process (handled by Stewardship) we evaluated pay and benefits for staff members, making sure they are competitive with other churches and the broader community we live in. With 4 Board spots opening up this year, it was a fun, collaborative challenge to recruit for the next slate. We also assisted other councils and committees find new members. Our staff and volunteers are equally important components of our beloved community!

What LDC LONGS FOR

We really need a few more dedicated volunteers who want to keep abreast of all of these roles and offer suggestions that are in keeping with the times for each staff member and volunteer. We would welcome folks who love team-building and are invested in the future of First U!

What LDC LIFTS UP

The LDC created a Resource Binder for the members of the Board of Trustees that outlines how the First U Board functions and contains best practices for boards along with other resources, both UUA and secular. We also lift up the value of each individual staff member and volunteer - all are helping to LEAD us into the future!

What LDC is LOOKING FORWARD TO next Church Year

Welcoming new LDC members and creating a First Universalist HR Binder that can be a resource to the LDC for years to come. But most of all, working with each other and being a part of keeping the leadership (both staff and volunteer) happy and healthy.

Congregation Connections

Members of the Congregation Connections Committee

Sarah Witte, Cindy Guernsey, Sandra Stark, Janice Tooker,
Ryan McKisson, Lisa Williams, Martha Hutchinson, Brenda McKee,
Gwen Matthews, and Rev. Hillary Collins-Gilpatrick

What CCC LOVED this Church Year

- We loved seeing that our membership is growing.
- Loved providing refreshments for Easter for the town this year.
- Loved coming up with ideas to connect people with events, etc. (such as creating postcards).
- Loved being able to meet in person this year!
- Loved being more welcoming to newcomers.
- Loved Dinner Church, getting to know each other better.

What CCC LONGS FOR

- More music events (concerts!) open to the public, as an outreach opportunity.
- Buddy system or mentor system (possibly intergenerational).
- More in person meetings with a fixed time for CCC meetings.
- A new facilitator or chair of the group.

What CCC LIFTS UP

- We held a second group of Path to Membership series in one church year!!
- How good it is and feels to be a longtime member and being able to attend the Path to Membership and meet newcomers, learn more, reflect, etc.

What CCC is LOOKING FORWARD TO next Church Year

Some ideas for things we could try next year: Path to Membership renewals/revisit for longtime members? Add a "Did you know?" section to Channels? Stay after church and do a church tour! Feature different committees in Channels - updates from committees/councils. More visibility for First U in the wider community and more outreach to the wider community.

Photos 2022/2023



*Child Naming & Dedication
Ceremony, May 2023*



*Blessing of the Animals,
October 2022*



*"Save the Bees"
Children's Protest
during the Service,
April 2023*

About Councils

The Councils of First Universalist
Faith in Action Council
Worship Council
Religious Exploration Council
Adult Religious Exploration Council

What are the Program Councils?

At First Universalist, councils are overseen by and in relationship with the minister, Rev. Hillary Collins-Gilpatrick.

Each council is guided by First Universalist's mission, by their charge, and by the goals that they set each calendar year.

The **Faith In Action Council** offers active justice partnerships that align with UU values with the belief that justice for all will help heal our world. They offer education, participation in justice activities, activism, and decide on half-plate contributions.

The **Worship Council** assists the minister in creating high quality worship services. They are a collaborative and creative group who support Sunday services, including developing services on Sundays when the minister is off.

The **Religious Exploration Council** and the **Adult Religious Exploration Council** present opportunities for people of all ages to develop in their faith, encouraging lifelong spiritual seekers, and lifelong Unitarian Universalists.

Faith In Action

Members of the Faith in Action Council

Marge Titcomb (chair), Sue Ellen Bordwell, Jane Makela,
Cathy McKenna, Dale Shields, Steve Thomas, Pete Titcomb,
Rev. Hillary Collins-Gilpatrick (our fearless guide)

What FIA LOVED this Church Year

With LOVE at our Center, we are inspired by the generous response of our congregation to embrace the world with love and justice, such as expressed through intentional half plates, Maine Farm Suppers, and radical acts of loving kindness. We also love the dynamics of our time together, learning and exploring Justice opportunities to then share with the congregation from identifying half plate recipients to hosting events such as the Climate Panel Discussion.

What FIA LONGS FOR

In coming years we long to intentionally consider beyond Yarmouth when appropriate, and to develop a deeper connection with our neighbors at 95 Main. We long for more engagement/participation in Justice events through broad publicity and outreach skills.

What FIA LIFTS UP

We lift up the First U commitment to Justice, with LOVE at the Center, as expressed through generosity of time, talent, and treasure.

What FIA is LOOKING FORWARD TO next Church Year

We look forward to expanded events and actions fostering personal growth in big current Justice topics such as housing and climate crises, continued focus on asylum seekers issues, and beginning implementation of the new 5-year plan.

Worship Council

Members of the Worship Council

Joanna Landsman (chair), Sarah Witte, Anne Turner, Kate Connelly, Gwen Matthews, and Rev. Hillary Collins-Gilpatrick

What WC LOVED this Church Year

- Working with Rev. Hillary and Gwen to help plan and support special services and give feedback on worship plans.
- Being part of the team that helps fill the spiritual needs of members and friends. We feel we've established a solid yet flexible framework for services, with a good mix of old (tradition and ritual!) and new (boundary-expanding!) elements.
- Selecting and collaborating with guest ministers and lay leaders for Rev. Hillary's Sundays off.
- Encouraging more folks from the congregation (past or present) to participate in services – reflections, poetry and music.
- Sharing in the facilitation of Weds evening Vespers and the very popular Dinner Church events!

What WC LONGS FOR

- A bigger choir and more frequent choir presence in services
- Pick-up choir opportunities and choir for kids
- Expanded Tech options: improved sound for Zoom and service recordings, ability to project the announcements and OOW during services
- Hearing even more voices as part of the service, and not just on the weeks Rev. Hillary is away.
- Greater youth presence on Sundays, including as part of some services
- More members to join the WC – especially 'new-to First U' folks!

What WC is LOOKING FORWARD TO next Church Year

- Continued collaboration with Rev. Hillary and Gwen to provide more and more opportunities for spiritual growth and evolution for our members and friends.
- Having our Music Director regularly attend Council meetings and participate more fully in the planning of services. We love Sam!
- Exploring ways to increase congregants' musical comfort.
- Doing more of what we did this year, and hearing more from all of you!

Worship Council

What WC LIFTS UP

- Time for Wonder with Gwen and Mack, including the introduction of D.B. the puppet! We see (and hear) more children in the sanctuary which gives us hope for the future of our church and our world.
- The Tech Crew (Pete Titcomb, Charlie Horstman, Jennifer Caven, and Joanna Landsman) who make our services accessible beyond our walls. In addition to the steady number of folks who join via Zoom, we get an often-robust number of views on YouTube afterwards. Newcomers have mentioned this is how they decided to come check out First U in person.
- Special services and events such as Christmas Eve - despite our choir's unfortunate and unexpected Covid absence, Rev. Hillary, with cellist Emily Thomas-Dix, pulled it, and us, together with meaning and joy.
- The Zoom service on the Sunday after the white supremacist threat, where with Rev. Hillary's guidance, we came together and shared our grief, outrage, fear and as importantly, our deep care and concern for our church community.
- The Save the Bees protest led by the children!
- The 'Imagine a Church' service in May - particularly the 'Call to Worship' where, led by our visionary President, Sarah Witte, we became part of that naturally musical ecosystem, opening us up to dreaming both small and big about the future of our beloved church.
- And of course, of course! Rev. Hillary's services, every one, from start to finish. There is always something for everyone. AMEN!

Religious Exploration

Members of the RE Council

Christy Hayashida (Chair & Board Liaison) and Gwen Matthews

What RE Council LOVED this Church Year

- The completion of two successful and well attended OWL sessions. The first one being for 7th - 9th graders in the fall where we hosted youth from First U, A2U2, First Parish Portland, and the greater Yarmouth community with a total of 17 participants. The second being for 10th - 12th graders in the spring where we hosted youth from First U, First Parish Portland, and the greater Yarmouth community with a total of eight participants.
- An ongoing Children's Chapel program every Sunday with happy, responsive, engaged children.
- Continued Sunday nursery care, staffed by youth from First U.

What RE Council LONGS FOR

- More children and youth engaged in programs.
- More families attending church programs and events.
- More participation from church members in the RE Council and RE programs.

What RE Council is LOOKING FORWARD TO next Church Year

- A youth service trip next church year that will engage more high schoolers and possibly middle schoolers.
- More regularly offered youth events.
- Continue to build Children's Chapel.
- Continued collaborations with local UU churches or other churches with aligned values.

What RE Council LIFTS UP

- Those who helped make RE programs happen including minister, staff, and volunteers.
- The new Children's Tea & Games with the Minister that happens on the first Sunday of the month after the service.
- The ongoing collaborations with Allen Avenue UU Church and the UU Church of Brunswick.

Adult Religious Exploration

Members of the Adult RE Council

Cathy McKenna, Anne Turner, Peter Fromuth, Gwen Matthews,
and Rev. Hillary Collins-Gilpatrick

What Adult RE LOVED this Church Year

The Adult RE Council loved discussing what we were learning about and how to share it with the congregation. It's exciting to be a lifelong learner and it's fun that learning happens within the meetings too.

What Adult RE LONGS FOR

We long for even more participation in attendance at Adult RE events and classes. We also long for people who would like to facilitate learning opportunities.

What Adult RE is LOOKING FORWARD TO next Church Year

The Adult RE Council is looking forward to expanding and growing Adult RE offerings. In particular, the Adult RE Council is intrigued by the idea of dedicating the month of January to RE opportunities.

What Adult RE LIFTS UP

We want to lift up our Activism that Works documentaries series that spanned the church year and featured four different films and engaging conversations. We lift up the successful Soul Matters discussions, led by Rev. Hillary once per month beginning this spring. We also want to highlight and celebrate successful collaborations with the FIA Council and hope to continue with more collaborations in the future.

Photos 2022/2023



*Advocating
at the Maine
State House during
the Transgender
Day of Advocacy,
May 2023*



*Senior Youth
Group Alum
Participate in the
Christmas Eve
Candlelight Service,
December 2022*

