



First Universalist Church

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Annual Report

2017 - 2018

"NURTURE THE SPIRIT AND SERVE THE COMMUNITY"

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Annual Meeting Agenda June 10, 2018

- I. Call to Order - If you are a congregation member, please remain seated.
- II. Establish Quorum
- III. Break: 10 minutes
- IV. Chalice Lighting / Opening Words
- V. Approval of 2016-2017 Annual Meeting minutes
- VI. President's Comments
 - a. Treasurer's Report - presentation and vote on proposed budget for 2018-2019
- VII. Elections
 - a. Board of Trustees: Richard Reed, Tess McFarland-Porter, Nancy Gaede (2nd term)
 - b. President: Nancy Gaede
 - c. Nominating Committee: Ed Deller, Shelley Adams
 - d. Personell Committee: Beth Ares
- VIII. Special Recognitions
- IX. Other Business
- X. Adjournment
- XI. Closing Words – Extinguishing the Chalice
- XII. Extinguish the Chalice

The First Universalist Church of Rochester Covenant of Responsible Behavior

First Universalist Church is dedicated to the free and responsible search for truth and meaning; the inherent worth and dignity of the individual; and justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. We hereby covenant to create an open and supportive community where we can meet and grow towards wholeness, inspire and challenge one another, share in the observance of special life events, and act according to our principles in the local and world communities—in short, where all can feel safe and welcomed.

To do so, we make these promises:

*To respect one another's beliefs,
To nurture an environment of direct and positive communication,
To build a caring community through understanding and learning,
To respect the safety and welfare of others, To respect our
sanctuary and
church facilities.*

We assert these promises as fundamental rights and responsibilities of all persons attending the First Universalist Church. We accept this Covenant of Responsible Behavior as a guide. Its accompanying policy shall guide the response where responsible behavior is in question.

**FIRST UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF ROCHESTER
MINUTES OF ANNUAL MEETING**

June 4, 2017

The Annual Meeting of the First Universalist Church was called to order after today's church service, and a quorum of members was established. The chalice was lit and Rev. Katovitch gave the opening reading. Approximately 70 members and friends were in attendance.

Approval of Annual Minutes of June 12, 2016: Motion made, seconded and passed with no objection.

President's Comments: Nancy Gaede, President, commented on the strengths of the congregation and how we rise to challenges. She particularly noted the approval of the church-wide social justice initiative, the upcoming year of interim ministry and the establishment of the settled search team.

Treasurer's Report: Dick Shroyer, Treasurer, reviewed the current financial picture and explained how to read the budget sheets. The budget helpfully includes notes explaining some of the line items. He noted we have a surplus in the 2016-17 budget, and that the proposed 2017-18 budget is balanced. Ann Rhody, Finance Chair, presented the 2017-18 proposed budget. She explained several items in the budget. A motion was put forth and seconded to accept the proposed 2017-18 budget. Ann addressed the following questions.

1. How many members were reported to the UUA? Answer: 152
2. How are our green energy investments doing? Answer: Finance team will be discussing this during an upcoming meeting with the investment advisor. We are less than 5% invested in fossil fuels. Tom Ruganis noted that we are now buying energy from renewable sources.
3. Although we had a milder winter, heating budget line could go up next winter.

Answer: The budget figure is a conservative guess for heating use.

A vote was called and the 2017-18 Budget was passed, all in favor.

Elections:

Shirley Bond, Co-Chair of the Nominating Committee, put forth the nominees for various positions.

For the Board of Trustees: Tim Mullins, Kitty Forbush, Karen Ruganis for 2nd terms on the Board of Trustees. Nancy Gaede as President.

For the Nominating Committee: Kate Fleury

For the Committee on Ministry: to be established

Motion was made to accept the above slate of candidates, seconded and passed with one abstention.

Vote on Settled Search Team: Howard Spindler, Christine DeGolyer, Katherine Flynn, Suzie Syta Gutierrez, Bridget Watts, Moritz Wagner, Steve Munson.

Motion was made to accept the candidates for the search team, seconded and unanimously passed.

Update on Interim Minister Search: Rev. Peggy Meeker will be the interim minister.

Special Recognitions: Nancy thanked all the members of the congregation who give so much to the church. The leaders of all the committees were acknowledged. In particular, Nancy recognized the contributions of the Worship Committee, the Stewardship team, the FIAC members, and the interim and search team members. The “Gang of Three” (Connie Valk, Eric Van Dusen, Dick Gilbert) were presented with plants for their work on the social justice report, as was Tom Ruganis for his efforts as House Committee chair.

Other Business: Sarah explained the scope of the renovation work that will be done in the Clara Barton Lounge this summer.

Motion to adjourn. Closing words by Rev. Celie. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Ruganis, Clerk

Board of Trustees 2017 - 2018

The members of the Board of Trustees for the 2017-2018 church year were: Nancy Gaede (President), Ed Deller (Vice-President), Karen Ruganis (Clerk), Kitty Forbush, Tim Mullins, Eric Van Dusen, Janet Rothbeind, and Reverend Peggy Meeker (Minister, ex-officio).

The Board meets the second Wednesday of each month. We held 11 regular meetings, 3 special meetings and called 2 special congregational meetings this year. At each monthly Board meeting, we review the finance report and the Minister's report, and approve the previous month's minutes. Minutes are available in the office for review.

Highlights of our Board activities this year include:

Governance: As part of our on-going study, the Board continued reading and reviewing chapters from Dan Hotchkiss' book *Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership*. We also used a series of questions from the book *In the Interim* to examine our church structure and committees. Thus far, we have examined the areas of staffing, communications and membership. The Board adopted formal polices on church endorsements and staff hiring. We planned and held the annual Leadership Assembly in October.

Interim Year Matters: We approved the members of Rev. Meeker's transition team, and reviewed the goals set forth for the interim year in a 6-month interim appraisal. We assembled a slate of candidates for the settled minister search team. In August, we met with UUA Transition Coach Jeff Donahue to prepare for the interim year ahead of us. We participated in a cottage meeting requested by the Search team and approved the Letter of Agreement offered to our new minister. We also proposed an amendment to the bylaws to change the voting process for calling a new minister. The bylaws were changed at a congregational meeting on January 28th. We held a congregational meeting on May 6th to call the Rev. Lane Campbell as our next settled minister.

Personnel: We completed our final formal evaluation of Reverend Katovitch and shared it with her. The Board was involved in discussions regarding the Office Administrator due to resignations and vacancies in that position. We discussed the responsibilities of that role and ways to ensure consistency in running the office.

Finance: The Board reviewed monthly finance reports, supported the stewardship campaign and provided feedback for budget planning. The Board also reviewed the CARE (Church Administrative Review and Evaluation) summary report from

Heveron & Heveron. In May, Dick Shroyer, Treasurer, presented the proposed 2018-2019 budget. The final budget will be presented to the congregation for approval on June 10th. We approved a variety of one-time expenses/donations (staff bonuses, Promise and the Practice of Our Faith for Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism, Washington Square Park Neighborhood Association, and gift to the community from previous year's budget surplus).

Faith in Action Council (FIAC): We supported FIAC in understanding the framework and procedures set forth in the Social Justice Task Force Report. We approved FIAC nominated team members and documents. In April, Project Team and FIAC members gave a presentation to the Board. We facilitated a request for endorsement of a letter regarding the Police Accountability Board.

Wider Community: The Board continued to monitor the impact of homeless individuals in our alcove with respect to sanitation issues, building maintenance, and safety for staff and the church community. We have begun to plan for a presentation by the police department on church security.

Other Actions: We approved the purchase of a defibrillator, nominated honorees for the annual Faith in Action award, arranged a Board donation to honor Rev. Katovitch, reviewed building usage policy and procedures and agreed to host the New York State Convention of Universalists in October 2019.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Ruganis, Clerk

President's Report 2017 - 2018

And so, another whirlwind church year comes to an end at First Universalist. This time last year, we were adjusting to the news that Reverend Celie was ending her ministry with us. The Board of Trustees established an Interim Search Team who organized quickly and secured Reverend Peggy Meeker as our minister for a year. The Board also asked you, the congregation, to tell us who among you would be trusted to conduct a search for our next settled minister.

A year ago, almost to the day, you voted to have Steve Munson, Bridget Watts, Christine DeGolyer, Howard Spindler, Suzie Syta-Gutierrez, Katherine Flynn and Moritz Wagner serve as our search team. They quickly organized and got down to work. They surveyed, computed, communicated and interviewed ...putting in an incalculable number of hours that led us to the joyously call of the Reverend Lane Campbell....and all with smiles on their faces (at least in public!)

During this time, our office administrator, Melissa Davies, decided to leave us. Our personnel committee, led by Board member Janet Rothbeind, sprang into action. We thought we had things settled with a new administrator, and then, unexpected, she also left us. Undaunted, the folks on personnel went back to work and found Andrea Lewis. Andrea has worked hard to transition into the position. Many thanks to Lisa Gwinner, Peter Perine, and Connie Valk for all their supportive work during this time. And I offer kudos to Reverend Peggy for keeping her cool through this unexpected event. Nothing seems to have fazed her this year! She is remarkable, and I am grateful that she was at the ministerial helm this year.

Our Faith in Action Council continued to work to implement our new social justice framework. Midway through the year, one of our terrific trio (Heather Jones) joined her husband on sabbatical. Joy Leccese and Becky Elwell continued to move things along. Social Justice Circles formed and got to work. Dolores Da Lomba stepped forward to organize a project team, whose task it will be to determine relevant supportive activities for the congregation in which to engage.

The Board will welcome two new members this year as Ed Deller and Janet Rothbeind complete their second terms. Ed and Janet, thank you for the enthusiasm and wisdom you brought to the board during your terms. We plan to continue our work on governance and ministry with Reverend Lane. It will be another exciting and eventful year, I am sure... but not TOO eventful, I hope (except in a good way).

In Faith,
Nancy Gaede, President

Minister's Report 2017 - 2018

What a challenging and wonderful year this has been! I have loved being here with you on this journey, and I'll be leaving a part of my heart with you as we say goodbye. Someday I'll be back as part of the congregation, but right now, my next job is to get out of the way of your new minister! Here are some highlights of the year, using the framework of my monthly board reports.

Nurturing the Spirit: We had many wonderful worship services, including with guest preachers, and I was especially glad to collaborate with the truly talented and dedicated Worship Associates (remember our Halloween ghosts?), with Lisa Gwinner (Winter Solstice), with the Rev. Michelle Yates (several whole congregation services, including the Warm Fuzzies), with the EcoJustice Group (Earth Sunday), with our Story Tellers, and most recently with Dolores Da Lomba on the beautiful service on freedom. I included two sermon series, one on spiritual practice and one on our/UU theological diversity. We also commissioned the Ministerial Search Committee and the FIAC and Project Teams and held child dedication and new member ceremonies. In addition, I was privileged to hold many pastoral conversations and visits; to sing Britten's "Ceremony of Carols" with the choir; to conduct several memorial services; and to enjoy the auction and related events!

Serving the Community: I attended LOTS of committee and team meetings; was filmed (a first for me!) for the Membership Committee video; offered a welcome at the September Concert Across America (for prevention of gun violence); supported FIAC in my worship planning; visited RAIHN; participated in the Interfaith Thanksgiving service; joined with the Music Committee in discussing multiculturalism and cultural appropriation; attended several Cozy Night suppers; attended some Roc/ACTS board and clergy caucus meetings; and mentored seminarian Rachel Irato.

Transitioning: I started the year with Interim Ministry Network training in Guelph, Ontario; then preached on transition-related themes; facilitated discussions of thoughts/feelings about the transition; attended Jeff Donahue's Sunday service and Keith Kron's program; met throughout the year with the Transition Team to monitor and guide the transition; held conversations with ministers considering the position; did a mock interview with the MSC; worked to strengthen various committees; and participated in the six-month and twelve-month appraisals required by the UUA.

Administering: I helped to hire, train, and supervise two new office administrators (and am very thankful for Andrea Lewis!); held monthly staff meetings; met individually with staff for goalsetting and evaluations; attended Board and Communications Committee meetings; participated with other leadership in meetings on personnel issues; and wrote monthly board reports.

Connecting: I attended the Fall & Spring UU Ministers Association Retreats and business meetings, monthly cluster clergy meetings, the CER Fall Leadership Day in Buffalo, and the Seaway Spring Gathering & Gould Lecture in Syracuse; participated in memorial services for colleagues Rev. Martha Munson and Rev. Peter Lee Scott; met with students from the U of R doing a history project on our church's architecture, symbolism, and theology; led a workshop at Nazareth College's Global Citizenship Conference; and attended numerous social justice, interfaith, and other church-related events (e.g., March for Our Lives, Judicial Process Commission Luncheon).

As things wind down for me here, I look forward to retirement—though I'll miss you very much!— and to your exciting new chapter in ministry.

Faithfully and respectfully submitted,
The Rev. Peggy Meeker

Communications Committee 2017 - 2018

Members: Dolores Da Lomba, Melissa Davies (former Office Admin.), Marcy Klein, Andrea Lewis (Office Admin.), Peggy Meeker (Interim Minister), Connie Valk, Bill Elwell (Wayside Pulpit), Lisa Gwinner (Chair)

Areas of oversight and support: Our overarching goal is to promote and support effective communication within our church community and to the community outside our church. We support the Office Administrator in the production of the weekly email '*This Week at First Universalist*', monthly '*Our Outlook*', and email lists for church community and leadership. We maintain and provide bulletin board spaces at church and monitor their use. We support church committees and groups by advising how to effectively communicate their activities within the church community and to the community at large. We provide graphics support and some financial support for advertising church events in local publications. We maintain and update the church web site and Facebook page.

Events of note this past year:

We met with members of the Faith in Action Council twice throughout the year to explore how we can assist with their communications. We are fortunate to have the Project Team Chair, Dolores Da Lomba, as a member of the committee, which allows us to assist directly as needed. We also consulted with the Search Team to assist with their communications for Candidating Week.

In the aftermath of last summer's Clara Barton Lounge renovation, we worked to restore lost bulletin board space by re-purposing existing boards and purchasing new bulletin board space for the lounge. Connie Valk has been the main bulletin board contact person, with assistance from Andrea Lewis. Connie constructed a portable board with photos of church leaders (for which she arranged photo sessions) that Tom Ruganis hung in the Lounge, prior to the pre-candidating visits of potential ministers.

We assisted with the Office Administrator transitions, after Melissa Davies resigned in September 2017, by providing consultation with Christina Witkowski (Oct-Nov) and Andrea Lewis (Nov- to present) as needed for specific office tasks. As part of Andrea's transition, we changed the software for publishing '*Our Outlook*', with great success. The webmaster and Facebook Admin. positions were moved from the Office Administrator to Lisa Gwinner in order to make the transition easier. Others who assisted with the office transitions were: Peter Perine, Newcomb Losh, Connie Valk, and Paula Marchese. We can't thank these volunteers enough for all their help! Rev. Peggy Meeker, Phil Ebersole, and Dolores Da Lomba, and Marcy Klein also proofread each edition of '*This Week at First Universalist*' and '*Our Outlook*' as well as proofreading the *Order of Services* for the Sunday worship. Many thanks!

The Office Administrator transition turned out to be a good opportunity to review various office policies and add them to the office manual that Melissa wrote before she left us. We've also consulted with the Board and they agree that the church office should be locked on Sunday mornings, for security reasons. The Volunteer Office will continue to be unlocked and available Sunday mornings.

For the first time, we assisted the Stewardship campaign with this year's brochure. Marcy Klein used her excellent graphics skills to produce the brochure. She has also made our church's advert for the annual Greater Rochester Council of Churches program.

We had durable protest signs made for church members to use when representing the church at local protests and marches. We worked with the Board of Trustees to create a policy for their use and what they should say.

Throughout the year we communicated with church leadership to enhance communications, for example, reminding all to make sure that microphones are used for meetings held in the church, so that all attendees can hear and participate.

We began replacing some of the crumbling Wayside Pulpit messages and will continue to do this as our budget allows. We are working with House Committee and Brandon Fagan, our Sexton, to make sure the Wayside Pulpit frame is secure, as some have been stolen over this past year.

For the second year, we took responsibility for the annual Mitten Tree at Christmas. It was a great success. Children's warm accessories were sent to School #7 via Bill Elwell, and adult-sized items were taken to REACH House by Richard Reed.

Dolores Da Lomba spearheaded a project to create a checklist for hosting events at church, which is now available on the Social Justice page of the church web site for anyone to use.

We also upgraded the church Dropbox account from a free one to a much larger, paid one, so that we can save and make available many more photos to be used for Our Outlook, social media, and church brochures. The policy and forms for getting permissions for people featured in photos is also available in the Dropbox account.

I want to take this chance to particularly thank Rev. Peggy Meeker for her participation on Communications Committee during her interim year. Her insight and input made a real difference. We very much look forward to working with Rev. Lane Campbell this coming year!

Respectfully submitter- Lisa Gwinner

Finance Committee 2017-2018

Committee Members: Ann Rhody (chair), Richard Shroyer (treasurer), Bill Jones/Jim Milch (collectors), Paula Marchese, Dave VanArsdale, Karl Abbott (assistant treasurer), Katherine Flynn, Beth Ares (payroll and benefits coordinator), Richard Reed.

We began the 2017-18 church year with the following goals in mind:

- Continue to solidify, streamline, and communicate about our paperless office procedures
- Increase user-friendliness in reporting, funds requests, and budget development work with the Board and House committee to fund lounge renovations and other building improvements
- Work with the Board and Search teams to finance the search, interim, and settled minister needs
- Better organize, document, and store information relating to Payroll and Personnel

The Finance Committee is pleased to report that progress has been made on all of these goals, as well as others.

Paperless office:

- Treasurer Dick Shroyer continues to refine the paperless office procedures through the use of a central email address and Dropbox account for the church treasurer, as well as the Quickbooks online subscription. In this way, other authorized individuals are able to fill in for Dick when he is away, and there is no gap in bill paying or documentation.
- We have recently discontinued the use of paper “green sheet” forms as a means for reimbursement. Most people have become accustomed to the new online system.
- The paperless reimbursement requests, as well as financial reporting, were addressed at the Leadership Assembly in October.

User-friendliness in reporting, funds requests, and budget development

- Dick Shroyer continues to “tweak” the format of the monthly reporting to the board (quarterly to church leaders) and has included a “comments” section to help draw attention to items of note. Color codes continue to be used to indicate strengths and concerns in our financial progress.
- Several members have had personal tutoring in the use of the online reimbursement request system, and a “how-to” sheet has replaced the reimbursement request forms in the office.

- Our 2018-2019 budget development was aided by an interactive spreadsheet by which individuals could add information or comments as the budget was formed.

Funding of Building and Ministerial needs:

- Finance Chair Ann Rhody served on the Negotiations Committee for the Settled Minister Search, and funding was provided according to the needs for settled minister candidates.
- The lounge renovation was wrapped up and there was regular communication between project manager Sarah Singal and the Finance team.

Documentation and Storage of Payroll and Personnel information

- Beth Ares and Ann Rhody reorganized and moved current personnel/payroll information to the locked treasurer's desk. Older information is locked upstairs.

Other items of note:

- We welcomed Jim Milch as he stepped up to take over as Collector as Bill Jones was on sabbatical. Jim handled the job beautifully and we are grateful to him for this service!
- A CARE review was performed by Heveron & Heveron, CPA's, to look at our church's financial practices and procedures. The review affirmed that we are doing a great deal right in our checks and balances with fiscal procedures. The review provided information and recommendations, and the Board has established a small subcommittee to address those recommendations. The finance team will be assisting with implementation where appropriate.
- A successful auction was held on February 4. The event was chaired by Paula Marchese, assisted by Katherine Flynn, Ann Rhody, and many volunteers, and brought in over \$6,500.
- The stewardship drive theme was "Thus Do We Covenant," with co-chairs Richard Reed and Ann Rhody. We had a small team this year, but good results were achieved- current totals for 2018-2019 are 91 pledges and a total of \$205,436. We continue to desire to increase the overall number of pledges to widen participation even among those who are not able to pledge a large amount.
- The Finance Committee met with our investment advisor Bob Reeves to review our accounts and revisit the amount of cash we need to have on hand. As a result, a large amount of liquid funds moved from Canandaigua National Bank to the Schwab account. These funds included unspent PACT funds, which are now housed in the Beryl Haas Building Fund, and a new category of investments which will remain separate from the endowment but will hopefully earn more than they would in the bank.

For 2018-2019, we hope to work on the following:

- Change the way our church handles Discretionary funds, to better reflect predictable expenses in the operating budget and discontinue outdated practices.
- Improve communication about budget development, with the goal of more timely input from committee chairs and other church leaders.
- Work with the Board to implement recommendations of the CARE review.
- Review our benefits practices to ensure compliance with Fair Compensation Guidelines and church personnel policy (The UUA offers a “benefits tune up” workbook which can be used for this purpose).

Many Thanks to the committee members as well as to Ed Deller, who served as our Board liaison.

Respectfully submitted for the committee,
Ann Rhody

House Committee 2017 - 2018

This year's committee was stable with Tom Ruganis, Sarah Singal, Marcy Klein, Michael Scott, Ed Deller and Shirley Bond as members. All the plans laid out last year were either successfully accomplished or continuing.

These were:

- Renovation of the Clara Barton Lounge was completed in the fall of 2017.
- Investigation of the possible installation of a bicycle rack for the church is just beginning.
- Review the overall painting needs of the church is starting with painting days to be scheduled over the summer.

In addition to the major plans for the year the following various tasks issues were completed or addressed.

- Two successful clean-up days were completed during the year. Thanks to all who helped with cleaning, inspecting and completing small repairs.
- The church Sexton returned from disability last summer after being off for four months. Many people stepped up to cover in his absence. Thank you.
- The restrooms near the coat rooms have were re-painted and re-tiled by our Sexton.
- The annual elevator inspection has taken place and the City of Rochester permit for the limited use elevator was renewed.
- After experiencing the disappearance of two of the three refuse/recycling totes from the parking area, we have once again started locking the units.
- We were informed that our fire detection system needed to be inspected and tested on an annual basis. The first was completed in September 28th.
- A controller unit in the theater lighting in the sanctuary was found to be malfunctioning and was repaired.
- A wet/dry shop vacuum was purchased for the church.
- Bees were a problem in October. An exterminator made three trips to eliminate them.
- Numerous problem with the thermostats were determined to be battery related resulting in loss of the programs.
- The church Sexton and the writer attended active shooter training for houses of worship that was put on by the City of Rochester.
- Several kitchen repairs were made including lack of hot water in the sink, a faucet handle reattachment, a disposal repair and a dishwasher drain issue.

Plans for the upcoming year include:

- Complete phase one of the storm window replacement.
- Investigate requirements for and install a Bike Rack
- Paint selected areas of the building.

Respectfully submitted,
Tom Ruganis

**Rental Committee
2017 - 2018**

Parking:

Currently there are 4 spots filled. We currently charge \$65/month. There have been some issues with non-renters parking in rented spots, especially on Thursdays during the lunchtime concerts. Monthly parking permits as well as a warning parking tickets have been created to help with unauthorized parking.

Long-Term Rentals:

- Every Saturday - SNYP AA
- Rochester Model Railroad Club
- First Tuesdays of the Mont - Rochester Democratic Society of Rochester

Rentals this past year include:

- Concert to remember gun violence (September 2017)
- Private memorial service for Cardegna (October 2017)
- Constantine wedding (December 08, 2017)
- Palomaki wedding (December 16, 2017)
- Memorial service for Jim VanLoon (May 2018)
- Restroom rental for Dachshund Parade (May 2018)
- Rochester Campaign for NY Health (May 2018)
- Coordinated Care Focus Group (May 2018)
- Julia Lin Lunchtime Concert (June 2018)
- Police Accountability Alliance (June 2018)

Upcoming rentals include:

Campbell Wedding (July 22, 2018)
Organ Historical Society Event (August 03, 2018)
Spear wedding (October 06, 2018)
Stott wedding (October 20, 2018)
Rochester Theater Organ Society Concert (July 04, 2019)

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Lewis
Office Administrator

Lifespan Faith Development: Children and Adult 2017 - 2018

Our Children's Programming:

- Our Minister of Lifespan Faith Development (MLFD) was on maternity leave when the church year started. Rev. Michelle returned to us on October 22nd. A big thank you to all our volunteers who helped cover Storytelling and Children's Worship those first few weeks!
- Several of our regular families from last year, while still in contact, have been unable to regularly attend this year. However, we gained two new families this year. On an average Sunday we see 2-4 children for Children's Worship. We have 20 children registered for Children's Worship and Child Care.
- Our monthly themes this year started with Covenant in September and went through the Seven UU Principles from October to May, while pausing to focus on the Winter Holidays in December. We finished up with reflection on the proposed 8th Principle in June.
- Our primary curriculum and activity source was *We Believe: Learning and Living Our UU Principles (UUA, 1990)*, followed by activities searched from *Tapestry of Faith*.
- The Nursery/Childcare has been open and active all year long and will continue through the summer again this year.
- "The Message for All Ages" changed its name to simply the "Story" this year. It continues to be a well received and much beloved portion of our worship.
- Per our volunteer screening policy, all of our volunteers who regularly work with the children have gone through a Background Check.
- The MLFD, Rev. Michelle Yates, worked with Rev. Peggy Meeker to design/support two Intergenerational Services, one of which was a Child Dedication service. At the Child Dedication six (6) of our children were welcomed into our community and promised our dedication to care for their spiritual wellbeing!!
- This year we welcomed Sundae Hodge as our childcare assistant to serve with Carol Williams in the nursery/playroom.
- Two Family Nights were held this year. One in December and one in March from 6-8 pm on Friday nights. Food (with a vegan option) was provided to encourage families to attend. The program consisted of a communal meal, short family worship, kid's activities and parent discussion group. 7-8 children attended with parents/grandparents. The events were well received, and families expressed an interest in doing more in the future.

A Big Thank you to our Children's Worship Leaders & Assistants (Charlie Courtsal, Beth Ares, Becky Elwell, Karl Abbot, Rachel Irato, Micky Toker, Tess McFarland-Porter, and Connie Valk), our Nursery staff (Carol Williams &

Sundae Hodge). Our Storytellers (Janet Clark-Hazlett, Catherine Coates, Shirley Malone, Elizabeth Osta, Lew Ward-Baker, Bill Elwell, and Charlie Courtsal), and ALL the others who have made all this happen!!

Our Adult Programming:

- Monthly newsletter articles focused on faith development themes (particularly the Seven UU Principles) were contributed to the *Our Outlook* by Rev. Michelle.
- Six Cozy Night Suppers were held with an attendance of 19-37 people per evening this year. The themes for the evenings included: Eco-Justice Social Justice Circle, Use of Language (Racial Focus), Light & Hope, the Empty Bowls Project with a speaker from FoodLink, Social Justice Circle Migrant Justice with speakers from Rural and Migrant Ministries, and “Life in Rochester from the racial divide” with speakers from ROC Acts. This year all the dinners were potluck rather than provided food. Many thanks to the facilitators, guest speakers, and the generous food/hospitality volunteers!
- In the spring several church members took a tour of Foodlink’s headquarters.
- One daytime Small Group Ministry Group was added this year, the Wednesday evening group continues, and the long running group came to a close after many fabulous years.
- Two 3-part discussion groups on each of the two UU Common Reads, *Centering* and *Daring Democracy*, were facilitated by Rev. Michelle with an average attendance of 3-4 church members.
- This year we piloted the *Illuminating Justice Film and Discussion* series. On the second Sunday of the month from November through April a film, news or documentary clip (of no more than 45 minutes) on a justice related issue was shown in the sanctuary at 12 noon. Rev. Michelle facilitated discussion afterward. Attendance ranged from 5-12 people.
- The Sunday Morning Drop-In Discussion Group, the Book Group, and Library and Bookstore continue to be vibrant and essential parts of our community!
- At the end of this year Phil Ebersole is “retiring” from coordinating the Drop-In Discussion Group after 20+ years. As of now the group will continue in similar form with leadership by a committee. Beth Ares will now be the contact person.

Thank you to all who make Faith Development programming happen in our church!
Thank you for sharing the Grace and Love of Unitarian Universalism with the world!

Respectfully Submitted,
Minister of Lifespan Faith Development, Rev. Michelle Yates
Children’s Faith Development Chair, Connie Valk
Adult Faith Development Chair, Kathy Russell

Membership Committee 2017 - 2018

Committee members during the year included: Nancy Gaede, Connie Valk, Kitty Forbush, Janine Casillo-Osagie, Janus Mary Jones, and Peter Perine (Chair).

During the summer of 2017, 25 new sets of hymnals (1 gray plus 1 teal) were purchased to accommodate our increased attendance at many Sundays during the church year. Also, two additional 16-slot brochure racks were purchased and installed at the foot of the Clara Barton entrance ramp. Purchases of additional UUA-provided brochures were made to ensure that an adequate supply of UU literature is available for Members and Visitors. Much of this material is also distributed in Visitor Information folders and New Member folders. Several new tri-fold brochures were published and made available during the year: The First Universalist Usher & Greeter Guide, Symbolism in the First Universalist Church, and the UU & You Presentation Handout.

Also, during the summer Connie and Peter created presentation materials (PowerPoint slides, several UUA-provided videos, and a customized Introduction to First Universalist video starring Rev. Peggy Meeker) to be offered to visitors and newcomers to the church. This presentation, titled UU and You, is scheduled for the first Sunday of each month. Invitations to these sessions are included in the weekly *Order of Service* and emailed directly to visitors who have identified themselves by submitting Information Request cards. These invitations are part of a regular series of welcoming information sent to recent visitors. In addition to myself, Ruth Fitzgerald has been very helpful in continuing to make welcoming phone calls to all new visitors.

Our annual Path to Membership program was held on March 24th, followed by New Member Sunday on March 25th. Connie and Peter handled the planning and coordination of both events. 3 new members attended the Path to Membership session; on New Member Sunday we welcomed a total of 5 new members who had joined the church since our previous Membership Sunday in 2017. Our total Active Membership count provided to UUA this year was 148, vs the 2017 number of 154. The reduced net membership count was due to the withdrawal of eight members and the deaths of two others.

Janine initiated a project to evaluate the acquisition of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED), a portable device that is used to treat sudden cardiac arrest (a condition in which the heart suddenly and unexpectedly stops beating). Working together with Kitty Forbush and Charlie Courtsal, a proposal was developed, and approved by the Board. Written AED usage procedures are being prepared.

Also completed during the year was the implementation of a computerized record-keeping process for all non-financial Congregational information. The new process, based on a software package called PowerChurch, consists of a single Congregational Data Base with flexible reporting capabilities. Installation of the new system and validation of the database accuracy has been completed, and the following computer-generated reports are currently available: The Church Directory, Board-Staff-Committee Directory, Congregational Volunteer Directory, and the Church Membership Register. Many additional reports can be provided as needed.

For the Membership Committee,
Peter Perine, Chair

Caring Committee
2017 - 2018

Members: Becky Elwell, Eileen Fernandez, Katherine Flynn, Cathie Grisley, Carole Hoffman, Marcy Klein, Kathi Milch, Paula Marchese (Chair), Connie Valk (Secretary)

Our mission aims to provide short-term help to members and friends of the First Universalist Church through caring, comforting and visitation. We do our best within the limits of our resources to see that those who are experiencing a period of grief, sorrow, illness, joy, or need due to life's transitions are attended to by someone from the church.

This past year we oversaw memorial services for Rev. Martha Munson, Charlie Gibson, Jacque Cady, and Jim Van Loon and Margaret Ross Snell. These services/receptions were supported by many congregants who bolster Caring Committee activities; we could not do it all without them.

At Christmas time, working with Finance and RAIHN, monies from the Spare Change Drive (now named the Charles Gibson Spare Change Drive) were used to grant the holiday wishes of a settled RAIHN family.

Also, at holiday time, our committee ordered poinsettias and spring flowers for members and friends.

We continue to send cards of encouragement and sympathy, make visits and assist as we are able. This year 50 plus cards were sent; dozens of meals, visits, and rides were provided for those needing assistance.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Marchese, Chair

Music Committee 2017 - 2018

Committee members: Dolores Da Lomba, Kitty Forbush (Board Liaison), Lisa Gwinner (Chair), Peggy Meeker (Minister), Theo Munson, Peter Perine, Howard Spindler (on leave as member of Minister Search Team), Keith Stott, Martha Welch, Lew Ward-Baker, Stacey Yang (Music Director)

Highlights of the year:

In August 2017, Music Director Stacey Yang performed at the Organ Historical Society's annual meeting in Minneapolis. She was pleased to report that, at the July 2018 annual meeting in Rochester, our Hope Jones organ will be featured.

Also, over the summer 2017, Lisa and Dolores spent considerable time working in the choir music files. We have discovered, over the past few years, that much of the choir music is outdated, theologically or from a diversity standpoint, due to our not having been able to hire a UU Music Director in living memory. Over 1/3 of the choir music was placed in file boxes to either be discussed or gifted to other churches and also placed in a separate spreadsheet database. The renovated database is much more useful, and we are moving forward with plans to purchase new music that supports the church's goals to become more culturally diverse.

In November we began a year-long process of educating ourselves on the topic of singing African American Spirituals in dialect, led by Dolores Da Lomba. Many members and friends of the church were consulted as well as scholarly publications and opinions. After much discussion, the committee decided not to sing spirituals in dialect and crafted the following statement that is being used as a guideline:

In support of our church's stated goals to educate ourselves about racism and work to end racial inequality, the Music Committee has been exploring how racial stereotypes are perpetuated in music. We have specifically explored the practice of singing African-American spirituals in dialect, which is common in music printed in the earlier part of the 20th century and is currently understood by many listeners to be racial caricature. We have decided that this practice is racially insensitive and will choose to use and sing only arrangements that do not use dialect for church services and events. More broadly, we are committed to singing and performing music from diverse sources, in the hope that this will encourage diversity in our church community. We ask that all musicians who contribute musically to our church please be racially and culturally sensitive when choosing music. If you have questions, our Music Director and Parish Minister would be happy to speak with you. Many thanks.

A goal for next year is to add brief notes to the Order of Service when we are singing music from sources of diversity, so the congregation will know.

Throughout the year we also discussed a proposal to share choir music and collaborate musically with the Unitarian Church. In the end, the committee felt that we have not enough people power or interest in pursuing this at the moment.

The choir welcomed three new members this year: Jillian Beaman, Joey Fisher, and Patricia Wollan, and Martha Welch took a sabbatical from the choir.

The choir sang Benjamin Britten's "A Ceremony of Carols" for Music Sunday, in December. We hired a harpist and two vocalists to assist with solos, and it was very well received.

Our music program is also enhanced by members and friends of the church who contribute to services throughout the year. A partial list of these participants is: *Voices of the Spirit* Vocal Ensemble (Glenda Brayman, Ann, Rhody, Howard Spindler, Lew Ward-Baker, Theo Munson piano), *Gathered Here* (Charlie Courtsal, Brendan Courtsal, Ed Deller, Kitty Forbush, Lisa Gwinner), John Akers, Richard Reed, Joy Lecesse, Jillian Beaman, and Theo Munson. We are blessed to have so many talented musicians in our community!

The organ remained in good working order, with a few winter-time issues, air leakage in one of the ranks, that was repaired by Michael Scott. David Peckham, our organ tuner and repairer, hopes to continue some of the bigger repair work over the summer, to keep the Hope Jones in good working order. A film crew from England also contacted the church for permission to film someone playing the Hope Jones for a movie they're making on Handel. This will probably happen in July.

In mid-May, Music Director Stacey Yang told church leadership she would be leaving the church after the June 10th service (she had already asked for the 17th off because she returns to Australia on the 11th). On May 20th, she resigned unexpectedly by email, citing health reasons, leaving us without a director for four Sundays. We are fortunate to have a musically talented congregation and expect to get through the remaining church year without too much trouble. Music Committee will collaborate with Personnel to do a search this summer for a new Music Director.

Lisa Gwinner has decided to step down after three years as committee chair, although she will remain active on the committee. Howard Spindler has agreed to become chair as of July 2018.

Respectfully submitted- Lisa Gwinner, chair

FIAC (Faith in Action Council) and Social Justice Project Team 2017 - 2018

The 2017 - 2018 church year has been a tossed salad of activities, meetings, workshops, rallies, and brainstorming about the how, what and who in all areas of our church's Social Justice Ministry. First and foremost, we have discussed how to organize our collective efforts, how to more effectively communicate with the congregation, and how to connect: with one another, and with local and national efforts to address the topic of systemic racism. Our congregation voted to focus on *A Journey to Justice: Facing Systemic Racism* in May 2017. We have not yet selected a particular congregational project during this organizational church year.

The Faith In Action Council (FIAC) and the Social Justice Project Team (PT) members met several times with the Social Justice Task Force (Rev. Dick Gilbert, Connie Valk, and Eric VanDusen), Reverend Peggy Meeker and Michelle Yates and the Lifespan Faith Development Committee throughout 2017 - 2018 to clarify what each groups' responsibilities are, and how we should go about expanding our congregational efforts to raise awareness of the main issue of systemic racism; how to reach out beyond our church walls to connect and collaborate with other organizations and church communities, and how to inspire members and friends to participate in making a difference. Two workshops – one led by Rev. Dick Gilbert, and one facilitated by Jon Greenbaum from Roc/ACTS – helped us to identify strategies for effective social action and community organizing.

Additional events included our Cozy Friday Night Suppers with guest speakers from the community; book discussions; a series of classes and conversations on topics around systemic racism and white privilege; working for justice for migrant workers; rallies to support efforts to change gun laws; addressing police accountability; feeding the homeless; providing handknitted blankets to the homeless (28 since November, 2017); supporting School #7 with tutoring, mentoring, school supplies, 20 backpacks and 10 winter jackets; and addressing ecological issues (energy / waste management, recycling, and composting).

Roc/ACTS is another large effort that includes multiple organizations, addressing numerous topics, especially injustices directly related to poverty, discrimination in housing, and unjust law enforcement practices among diverse cultures and races.

Our six Social Justice Circles include the following:

Crafting Blankets for the Homeless; Leader: Lisa Gwinner, gwinncourt@gmail.com

Eco-Justice; Leader: Sarah Singal, ssingal@rochester.rr.com

Harvesting Justice; Leader: Connie Valk, cvalk@frontiernet.net

Meals for the Homeless; Leader: Carole Hoffman, choffman002@rochester.rr.com

Roc/ACTS; Leader: Shirley Bond, bondshirl1@gmail.com

School #7; Leader: Bill Elwell, williambearcat@gmail.com

In addition, **RAIHN** is a previously designated Circle in its own right: the lead contact person is Marti Eggers, mceggers@gmail.com

As of March 2018, the Social Justice Project Team is led by Dolores Da Lomba, who has been expanding the team and focusing on events and opportunities for more people to engage in various services. See the attached report from Dolores for more details.

The FIAC team consists of Becky Elwell, elwellbecky@gmail.com, Heather Jones heathermenziesjones@gmail.com, and Joy Leccese, coachingjoy@gmail.com. If you are interested in being part of FIAC, contact Becky or Joy (Heather is away until July); if you are interested in being part of the Project Team, contact Dolores.

Project Team Report to FIAC May 16, 2018. Period ending May 14, 2018.
Leader: Dolores Da Lomba

Overall goal of the Project Team: To develop strategies and actions around the issue of combating systemic racism.

Objectives: Determine church wide anti-systemic racism projects that work with and support an existing community effort. Develop and/or increase awareness of white privilege in its various manifestation and its effects on people of color.

Specific activities:

Recruited new members to the Team: Richard Reed, Shelley Adams, Elizabeth Osta. Project Team has met twice and is still getting organized with new members coming on.

Enlisted Tim Mullins to act as facilitator for the current book discussion group. Hosted a series of book discussions on *Waking up White; and Finding Myself in the Story of Race*, by Debby Irving, during this current year as part of increasing awareness. Discussions are still in progress.

Coordinated a Worship Service, *The Dream of Freedom*, devoted to humankind's struggle for freedom and justice (May 13th) with special emphasis on continuing struggles. The Worship Service involved the participation of most of the musically talented members of the church. In addition, words from well-known freedom activists were read and there was a moving personal reflection from Brendan Courtsal.

Facilitated the introduction of a "Talk Back" session following the sermon of guest speaker, Gaynelle Wethers. Unfortunately, there was an ice storm the day of her

talk resulting in less than normal attendance (approx. 50 people). However, feedback was positive from those present.

Kept congregation informed and updated through the monthly article in “*Our Outlook*”.

Encouraged the congregation to share ideas by using a Suggestion Box. Established an-on-line suggestion box as well.

Did research on current thinking vis-à-vis use of dialect in spirituals sung in church. Research assisted the Music Committee in establishing a policy regarding said use.

Two meetings held to discuss *Waking up White*. The first one brought 15 people. The second one had a scheduling conflict and brought only 6 people. The third was May 20th and the final session will be June 10th.

The discussion on *The Dream of Freedom* was well attended and brought many positive comments, including suggestions to repeat it.

Discussion of dialect in spirituals brought out the entire music committee members for a spirited discussion.

The Project Team has had two meetings and has increased its membership by 3, resulting in more ideas and avenues to be pursued.

Submitted by Joy Leccese

**Social Justice Plate Committee
2017 - 2018**

We had a gratifying year. The monetary response shows that the congregation is supportive of our efforts. The monthly Sunday morning offering was gratefully received. In keeping with the mission of First Universalist we tried to make sure we honored our commitment of serving the downtown community of which we are a part. Local non-profits were our target recipients. As a committee we are shocked and awed at the continued commitment of members and friends of First Universalist.

Many thanks,
Shirley Bond, chair
Becky Elwell
Marcia Weaver

Month	Organization	Amount
September 2007	UUSC Hurricane Relief	\$739
October 2017	Interfaith Impact	\$309
November 2017	Well Ventions Teen Farmers Market food vendors	\$272
December 2017	Staff Bonuses	No SJPO For December
January 2018	Greater Rochester Community of Churches (GRCC)	\$300
February 2018	Metro Justice	\$269
March 2018	Mom's Demand Action	\$291
April 2018	Rochester People's Climate Coalition	\$126
May 2018	Migrant Workers Summer Camp	\$524
June 2018	Rochester Community Bikes	TBD

Nominating Committee 2017 - 2018

Committee members: Shirley Bond (Chair), Chris DeGolyer, Kate Fleury, Joy Leccese, Howard Spindler

The committee worked together to search for the best possible candidates for the benefit of First Universalist. Gathering together we chose candidates who matched the vision and mission of the church.

The By-Laws for the First Universalist Society state that the nominating committee shall:

- 1) Working with other committee leaders cultivate a pool of qualified lay leaders of the congregation.
- 2) At the Annual business meeting submit at least one candidate for each elective position to be filled at that meeting.
- 3) Recruit delegates to represent Society at official denominational meetings, and submit names to the Board of Trustees.
- 4) Recruit at the request of the Board, candidates for other appointed positions.
- 5) Ensure that each candidate has a written description of the responsibilities of the position.

We nominated two candidates to be on the Board:

Tess McFarland Porter and Richard Reed

We nominated two candidates to be on the Nominating Committee:

Edward Deller and Shelley Adams

Ed Deller and Janet Rothbeind have both served on the Board for 6 years and have completed their terms.

Shirley Bond and Howard Spindler have completed their service also.

As of this printing the candidates for attending the General Assembly in June have not been announced.

Richard Reed has been approved by the Board to be on the Project Team committee.

Respectfully submitted,
Shirley Bond, Chair

Worship Committee 2017 - 2018

The mission of the Worship Committee is to support and collaborate with our Ministers, staff, and volunteers, to maintain and develop congregational worship that supports the goals and mission of First Universalist. Because we began the year with only two members, Bridget Watts and Suzie Gutierrez, who both agreed to serve on the Ministerial Search Committee, the committee this year has mostly consisted of myself (Bridget) doing only necessary organizational tasks.

Many thanks to our Worship Associate team, led by Patti Goodwin, and our interim minister, the Rev. Peggy Meeker, for taking on the task of providing speakers and/or programming for the Sunday every month when our minister is out of the pulpit.

The Worship Committee organized the summer services team of volunteers who provide refreshments and logistical support to the summer minister for 11 weeks. Also, the worship committee and WA's organized speakers for two Sundays (three this coming summer) when the summer minister is out of the pulpit.

Thanks to the following teams associated with the Worship Committee that contributed to the worship ministry of our church:

Worship Associates: 2017-2018 WA's Patti Goodwin (Team Coordinator), Kitty Forbush, Brendan Courtsal, Dolores Da Lomba, Tom Williams, Catherine Coates, Janet Clarke-Hazlett, and Bridget Watts.

Keepers of the Flame: Michael Van Arsdale (team leader), and other volunteers who come in early to prepare the sanctuary for worship.

Summer Worship Team: The great 2017 summer team: Nancy Gaede, Karen Ruganis, Dolores Da Lomba, Richard Reed, Pamela Jacobstein, and Bridget Watts (coordinator). Thanks also to our two guest speakers, Verdis Robinson and Catherine Coates, to the two WA's (Patti Goodwin and Bridget Watts) who assisted our guests speakers, and to House Chair Tom Ruganis for your helpfulness and answers to questions about locks, microphones, and so on.

And a special thanks to Tom Williams and Kitty Forbush for once again decorating the sanctuary for Christmas.

All of us involved in worship have been grateful for the guidance and support we have received this year from our interim minister, the Rev. Peggy Meeker, and look forward to working with our new called minister in the fall.

Bridget Watts, Chair

**RAIHN (Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network)
2017 - 2018**

Mission: to provide a welcoming, safe place for temporarily homeless families with children to call home four times a year for a week at a time. Volunteers from First Universalist (a Host Congregation), and from Support Congregations St. Mary's and Aldersgate United Methodist Church of Greece as well as a number of unaffiliated volunteers provide hot evening meals, evening activities, an overnight presence and breakfast in the church during each Host Week. Volunteers also set up and take down the guests' rooms and launder all the bedding. At least 85 volunteer slots, representing approximately 375 hours, need to be filled during each Host Week.

Task Coordinators:

Volunteer Scheduler: Chris DeGolyer

Meals: Ed Deller

Bedding: Karen Dau

Families served: We hosted in June/July and September/October in 2017, and in January and April in 2018. The chart below shows the number of families, individual guests and bed nights served during the 2017-2018 church year. This represents a decrease in the number of guests and the number of bed nights over last year, due to the fact that First Universalist hosted 2 one-week rotations in 2016 and 3 one-week rotations in 2017 instead of the 4 rotations in the current church year. In addition, several families "graduated" during their time at First Universalist during the previous church year, and new families came in the next day so that we hosted more than 5 families during some rotations.

Number served at First Universalist 2017-2018	
Families	18
Adults	27
Children	28
Total guests	55
Total bed nights	375

News: The Social Justice Committee at St. Mary's has been providing substantial financial support to RAIHN at First Universalist over the past few years, allowing us to replace failing beds and to increase our bed count so that we are no longer reliant on beds from the Day Center.

Thanks to a generous matching challenge grant from an anonymous donor who is very impressed with the Social Justice effort in general in our congregation, and with RAIHN in particular (more than \$4,000), including the matching grant, was raised for RAIHN during the summer of 2017. This is being spent on providing our guests with a more comfortable space to call home while they are with us – new carpets (which also lengthen the bed life), tables, lamps, space heaters and room fans as well as a substantial bookcase filled with books for our RAIHN guests of all ages, especially books for the children.

Comments: Filling all the volunteer slots before the beginning of each hosting week can sometimes be a challenge, and we are needing to recruit from the RAIHN sub list more often than we'd like, but in the end all slots are filled. We are pleased to welcome several new volunteers to our volunteer roster, making everyone's burden lighter. More volunteers are always needed and welcome.

We continue to be impressed with the resilience of these families who are under stress. When there are issues with a guest, we get good support from the RAIHN Director.

Respectfully submitted, RAIHN Co-coordinators

Marti Eggers – First Universalist

Sarah Singal – First Universalist

Chris DeGolyer – First Universalist

Rosemarie Horvath - St. Mary's

Carol DeCann - Aldersgate United Methodist Church of Greece

Animal Ministries
Unitarian/Universalist Animal Ministries of Rochester (UUnAMOR)
2017 - 2018

ANIMAL MINISTRIES ... UUnAMOR: Unitarian/Universalist Animal Ministries of Rochester (you-nah-more), founded in 2010 by Lois Baum, is a local chapter of the national UUAM.org. Our focus is on nonhuman animals; our purpose is to examine how we perceive our co-existence with animals, our complicity in their exploitation, and to bring a heightened awareness of animal sentience within our church.

Animal Ministries (as UUnAMOR is commonly called) has now grown to ~15 interested members of First Universalist, and we remain active in a variety of ways:

- Field Trips to nearby animal sanctuaries, ie: ASHA in Newfane, Farm Sanctuary in Watkins Glen. Directly meeting rescued farmed animals who are now safe in forever-sanctuaries, is educational, inspirational, and fun. All are welcome and encouraged to join us for upcoming field trips.
- Vegan Snacks and Games: this event was offered again at this year's annual church auction. We provide vegan snacks, while our guests enjoy miscellaneous games, all of it organized and led by members of *Animal Ministries*.
- Provide occasional vegan creamer, condiments, soap, etc. for general use at church.
- Continuous education regarding animal issues through our local email list.

Our ongoing focus for *Animal Ministries* will include: more field trips to animal sanctuaries close to Rochester, vegan dining as a group, continued education and advocacy for nonhumans. Those interested in joining *Animal Ministries* (UUnAMOR), please contact Lois Baum: KissaPawDaily@gmail.com.

Submitted by Lois Baum
Founder and Chair

HOMELESS HEARTBEATS for UURoc 2017 - 2018

Homeless Heartbeats of First Universalist focuses on Rochester's "chronically homeless" population. Current membership of this group (fka Homelessness Task Force formed 5/2015) is ~25 people. Lois Baum remains Chair.

Homeless Heartbeats has worked to gain a better understanding of "chronic homelessness" and how we can help. Again, this year, *Homeless Heartbeats* hosted a seminar in our sanctuary for our parishioners. We invited four area Social Workers who shared pertinent information and answered questions: *James Murphy of St. Joseph's, Nick Coulter of PCHO, Andy Carey of MC Collaborative, and Jeanette Creighton of Veterans Administration.* One question concerned the few homeless people who sleep in our church portico and defecate near our garden. Several UURoc members subsequently met with Elaine Spaul of Rochester City Council, requesting the installation of a public bathroom in neighboring Washington Square Park.

Homeless Heartbeats members have worked together, individually, and have led our congregation in various ways to assist local advocacy groups who work daily/directly with this hard-to-serve population. Local organizations and shelters we have connected with include: *REACH (Rochester Engaging in Action for the Chronically Homeless), House of Mercy, St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, Bethany House, Person Centered Housing Options (PCHO), MC Collaborative (downtown library), St. Mary's monthly Homeless Initiative Walk (Deacon Dave Palma), Indigent Burial (Sister Beth),* and other groups whose focus is on poverty, as well as chronic homelessness.

Many members of *Homeless Heartbeats* have joined REACH ... an interfaith, local volunteer advocacy group that has provided emergency shelters over the past three winters, each year a different address. Every REACH Home is run by social workers from numerous area homeless shelters, working to place individuals in "housing first", then get them the help they need (mental, health, financial, etc). Many members attend REACH meetings, give financial support and/or assist in other ways, to help advocate for and help this hard-to-serve population.

A fundraiser for REACH, organized by Lois Baum November 2017, was held at our church. Several from *Homeless Heartbeats* helped set-up and clean-up, provided and served food for the chili-cook-off, donated items for the fundraiser's silent-auction, and worked the auction tables. This event was well-attended and was very successful. Two local TV stations were present to interview and record the event inside First Universalist Church.

Inspired by each other, several individuals in *Homeless Heartbeats* have engaged in various actions, ie:

- Transportation, as needed for residents of area shelters, to appointments (medical, financial, etc.)
- Footwashing, a nursing service provided at House of Mercy. As footwear is often inadequate, the feet of the homeless often need medical attention due to lack of regular bathing, exposure to the elements, etc.
- Meals, groups of 5+ from our church often provide/prepare/serve dinner to residents of REACH Home (NOTE: UURoc's Carole Hoffman has now formed a separate group, focused solely on meals).
- Soup Kitchens, some of our members help on a regular basis around the Rochester area.
- Donations of clothing and misc. items offered individually and delivered directly to area shelters.
- Homeless Initiative Walk, one night a month, groups of volunteers, social workers, medical personal, clergy, led by neighboring St. Mary's Deacon Dave Palma, go to specific urban locations to seek out homeless persons who may welcome an overnight in an area motel (contract prearranged), and to meet any immediate needs.
- Point-In-Time (PIT) Count, groups of volunteers, led by local social workers, perform an annual headcount of homeless persons countywide. Data is reported to the federal government for funding of local shelters.

First Universalist now provides healthy snacks and sandwiches to homeless people who drop by during the week. Lois Baum has created leaflets for distribution regarding the Housing First program, listing nearby Meal Programs, and homeless shelters.

Over the past year, our church has collected blankets, socks and towels, and members of *Homeless Heartbeats* then deliver these donations to House of Mercy. A Sunday collection plate, as well as Christmas Eve, have been designated for REACH. *Homeless Heartbeats* will continue its advocacy in the myriad of ways already underway. We are properly guided in our efforts by working alongside organizations already engaged in the daily lives of the chronically homeless population. Join *Homeless Heartbeats* by contacting Lois Baum: KissaPawDaily@gmail.com.

Submitted by Lois Baum
Chair