

First Unitarian-Universalist Church of Detroit

4605 Cass Avenue
Detroit, MI 48201
February 20, 2011

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First Unitarian
Universalist Church
Organizational Chart
2010 – 2011

Officers

President
Marilyn Mitchell
Vice President
Bill McKnight
**Immediate Past
President**
Dan Wiest
Board Secretary
*Kathleen Jacobs
Johnson*
Treasurer
David Lingholm

Staff

Minister
Rev. Bill Neely
Music Director
Todd Ballou
Cantor
Gwen Foss
Office Admin
Jenn Hurtt
Building & Grounds
*Joe Brimmer
Leonard Swint
(Sunday)*

Trustees

*Dessa Cosma
Robert Johnson
Julie Brock
Sally Borden*

Newsletter Editor

Robert Johnson

Worship Services
held every Sunday at
11:00am.

Minister's View by Rev Bill Neely

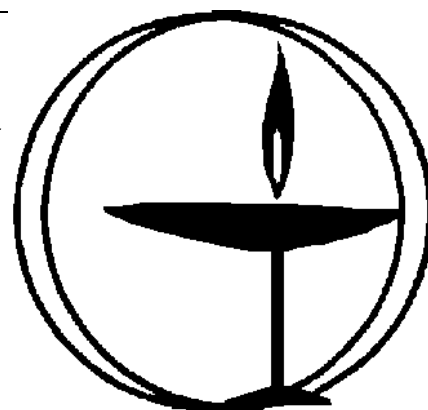
At a recent church Board meeting, *Reimagining Detroit: Opportunities for Redefining an American City*, a book by the journalist John Gallagher, was mentioned. I ordered it not knowing what to expect, but found it to be very a very interesting read. In short, Gallagher argues that the recovery of Detroit will be aided by the city embracing its smaller population and living within the limits and needs of its current size.

Once over 2,000,000 in population, but now living with roughly 800,000 residents, Detroit was built up for a population it has long lost and will never regain. As long as Detroit tries to be a vibrant 2,000,000 person city, it will fail to significantly improve its lot. But once Detroit accepts its current size and works within those limits, it can rebuild to become something new. Using Gallagher's terms, Detroit can be "redefined."

This makes me think of church growth. I've heard different estimates of First Church's size at its largest point in history; they seem to be in the 500-800 range. What's clear now is that membership is closer to 75-100. Several of you, in various settings have wondered how the church can rise back to that former level of membership. You see in that vision a way to save the campus and become a more effective congregation in the community. Many of you remember First Church at those times of burgeoning membership and better finances, and you wonder what it would take to be that church again.

But if Gallagher's book applies to First Church, and I think it does, then we see that this approach doesn't serve the church in its current state. It is striking in his book how often, as he describes Detroit's difficulties with too much infrastructure to support too few people, he is describing First Church. Some of you have reflected to me that the struggles of First Church with declining membership and income are the exact same problems as in the larger city. You've described to me how First Church is a microcosm of Detroit in reflecting the challenges of urban areas these days, making it worthy to apply Gallagher's thoughts about the city to First Church.

And when we do, we see that our goal should be to make First Church the best 75-100 member congregation that it can be. Growth plans should be realistic, consistent, and expectant of the regular push and pull of membership numbers. Sustainable growth for a church like First would be 75 members this year, 80 next, 90 the next, back to 85 the next, 95 the next, 105 the next, back to 95 the next, etc. That growth is only possible, however, when we organize everything within the congregation around being the best congregation that we can be, at the size that we currently are.



Or, perhaps, we organize everything within the congregation around being the best congregation that we can be, at a size a little larger than we actually are. We know that successful and sustainable growth initiatives occur when the church imagines itself as a little larger than it is, and then stretches (within reason) to meet that image. Once met, the church again grows in vision, and works tirelessly to grow in ministry and programs as well. For First, this might mean acting like a 120-member church, even though you're not. Regardless of growth strategy, we know that living like a 650-member church does no favors for a 100 member congregation, just as living like a 2,000,000 person city does no favors for a city of 800,000. In fact, it endangers the survival of both.

Gallagher offers many solutions to redefining Detroit by adjusting its operations to reflect the needs of its current size. Your Board is working tirelessly and faithfully to consider the operations of First Church in the same light. They plan dialogue and desire feedback, and I encourage you to participate. I'll be preaching on "Reimagining First Church" a little later in the year, but we know that the only realistic and sustainable paths ahead for First Church involve significant change. Be a part of that process, and be a part of ensuring the congregation's ministry in the community for as long as we can all imagine.

Rev Bill Neely

An Interesting Historical Note

By: Marilyn Mitchell, president

In anticipation of our 95th anniversary celebration, I have been doing a little research on our origins as Unitarians and Universalists in Detroit. I came across an extract of a letter dated December 11, 1833 that was written by some unknown correspondent to Bernard Whitman, who included it in his book *The Unitarian*, Volume 1. The correspondent wrote:

"Your prospectus of "The Unitarian" came duly to hand some weeks since. Its presence was greeted by our small though devoted band, like a herald in the wilderness. Be assured it could not have come in a better time. Rev. Mr. Pierpont [of Boston] had just been among us, and the impress of his gifted mind was still vivid. You have probably heard that he was compelled to preach in the court-room of our capitol, from an unwillingness on the part of our Orthodox brethren to admit such a heretic into their pulpits. But discouraging as this was, and in spite of the distance from the centre of the City, he was listened to, on the first evening, by a large and attentive audience One thing is worthy of note, Mr. Pierpont's was the first Unitarian sermon ever preached in Michigan. We have a paper circulating for the signatures of such as are independent enough to avow their real sentiments. You see I have obtained some names for your periodical. Its circulation in this community, and the consequent dissemination of the liberal principles it is intended to inculcate, will prepare the way for the organization of a Unitarian society before many months. You may be assured of my utmost exertions in its behalf. The names below are all influential ones."



The "capitol" referred to was the first state capitol, which originally had been a territorial courthouse. The location is Capitol Park in Detroit where the remains of the first governor, Stevens T. Mason, were re-interred on October 27, 2010 inside Governor Mason's monument.

March 2011 Worship Calendar

March 6, *Progress and Process*, Rev. Bill Neely

We're over the half-way point of our year of Interim Ministry together, and it's been wonderful and faith-filled time for me. It's time for reflection on our accomplishments, strengths, and the work we're still called to do, together.

March 13, *Sacred Atheism*, Rev. Bill Neely

The recent resurgence of fundamentalist Christianity in mainstream politics opened up space for renewed interest in atheism. Several vocal authors filled that space with angry atheistic books that sold well, but haven't led to positive change. What does sacred atheism look like? How is it a valuable piece of Unitarian Universalism?

March 20, *A UU Gone Wrong*, Rev. Bill Neely

In a sermon I delivered earlier this year, I mentioned that there is a fundamentalist strain within Unitarian Universalism that harms us and the world. Several of you found this surprising. This is what I meant ...

March 27, *Spiritual Humanism*, Rev. Bill Neely

Humanism is a central theology within Unitarian Universalism and is reflected deeply in our principles, polity, and religious witness. A new form of humanism, one that is more open, spiritual, and embracing, is emerging from our congregations and transforming the world. This sermon will explore why, and how, humanism is changing with the times.

95th Anniversary of First Unitarian-Universalist Church of Detroit.

Hooray! Our church is turning 95 in April 2011! Come one and all and join us for an anniversary celebration on Sunday, April 17, 2011 at 11:00am. In addition to First UUers, members from our sister Southeast Michigan UU churches and the general public are invited to come join us. We will have a special sermon led by our worship committee, featured music from our organist, Todd Ballou, song selections from our choir, and even a special message from Rev. Lisa Presley, the Heartland District Executive. Afterwards, we will have an extraordinary potluck and church tours following. Contact Kathleen Jacobs Johnson if you would like to help plan our special day. Contact our church office for more details. Come celebrate a historic day for our church and congregation!

The Plays the Thing

I am planning a little fundraiser at the Detroit Rep on Saturday, April 2nd at 3 p.m. The play is *Forgiving John Lennon* by William Missouri Downs. It is a dark comedy about political correctness, racial and ethnic profiling and cultural confrontation. Tickets are \$15 with \$5 going to our 1st UU Alliance. We can also go out to dinner together after. If you would like to purchase tickets please call Margaret Beck at 313 882 7775 or mail margretbeck@comcast.net. Thanks ahead of time for participating in this fundraiser.

Margaret Beck



Cleanup Day

Saturday April 9th will be a church cleanup day. We will be doing what we can to make this place shine. Contact Bill McKnight, Robert Johnson, or Dan Wiest for further details.

Movie Night

Join us this Wednesday February 23rd at 7pm in Memorial Hall for the first in what we hope will become a regular film series. This week we will be showing *Waiting For Superman*. Filmmaker Davis Guggenheim reminds us that education "statistics" have names: Anthony, Francisco, Bianca, Daisy, and Emily, whose stories make up the engrossing foundation of the film. The event is free and open to everyone who would like to come. Come early for a catered dinner (\$5.00) at 5:30pm and Vespers at 6:30pm. We hope to see you there!

Potluck

April 17, 2011, First UU will be celebrating the 95th Anniversary of the building of the Sanctuary. This will also be a potluck Sunday. We are asking each and every member to put this date on their calendar now. Please prepare now to bring a wonderful dish to celebrate this anniversary on April 17th. It will be a Gala celebration! Plan your dish now, come and celebrate!

UUA Book Fair on Feb 20 and 27

You are invited to check out a sampling of books available from the UUA at a book fair during the social hour on Sunday, Feb 20 and the following Sunday, Feb 27. A sampling of titles includes: A sampling of titles includes: Love in a Headscarf, Singing Meditation, Elite: Uncovering Classism in Unitarian Universalist History and more... Also available will be a catalog of UUA Bookstore materials. Did you know that the UUA Bookstore now offers an e-Book format for some titles? Check it out the next couple of Sundays. See Dan Wiest for more info.

Picture ID Assistance

We need help identifying numerous people and places in old archived pictures. If you have an eye for faces and a memory to go with it we can use your help. We will have pictures out during coffee hour that you can look at and help us with.



Memory book

The 95th anniversary committee is preparing a "memory book" for our 95th anniversary celebration on April 17, 2011. This book is to be a personal retrospective on the lives, memories, and personal experiences of all the members of First UU. This is to be a personal perspective, a "back story", behind the chronological history of our church. We are asking each member of our congregation to complete the following form immediately, and return it to Kathleen Johnson or Sharon Mills.

Please share your memories or personal perspective of a most unforgettable day, time, event, or experience in our church's history:

Name: _____

Member since: _____

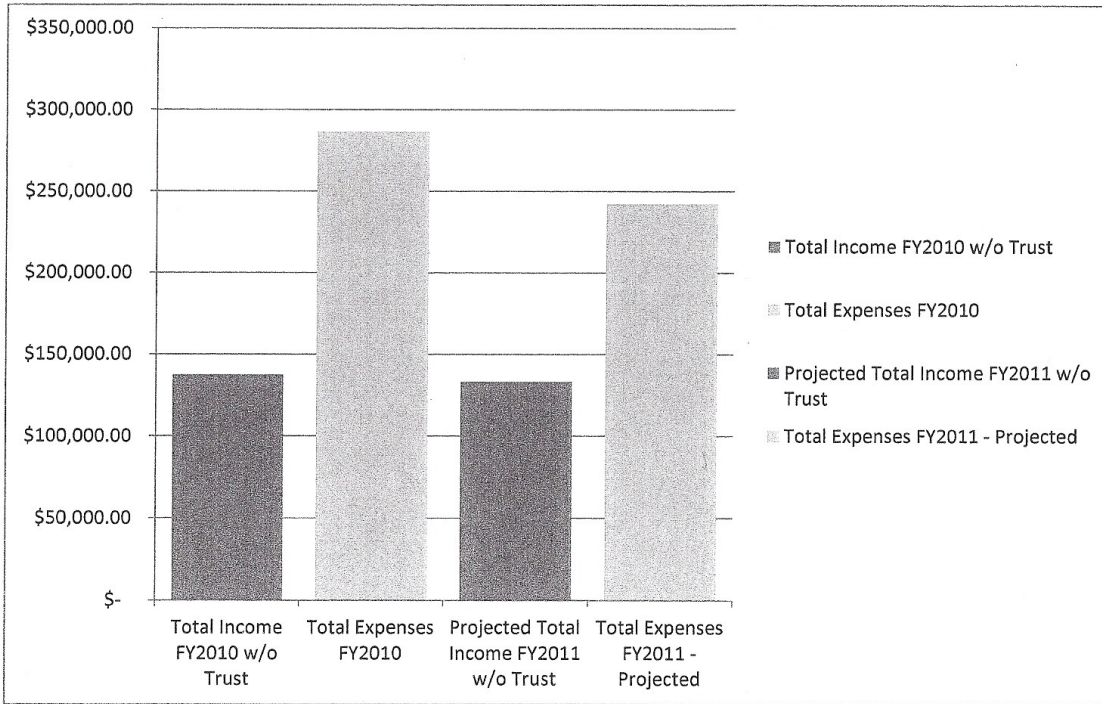


Edwardian Feast in Memorial Hall Dec. 1982. And yes, that is figgy pudding being served.

Informal Conversations between the Board and Congregation on our Financial Health and Future:
 Information presented on January 16th, the first of a series of informal conversations between the Board and the congregation. These are great opportunities for the Board to bring the congregation up-to-date with our situation and allows the Board feedback from the congregation. The series will continue on the third Sundays of each month during potluck.

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Detroit - 2011 Congregational Update

Total Income FY2010 w/o Trust	\$	137,684.00
Total Expenses FY2010	\$	286,587.00
Projected Total Income FY2011 w/o Trust	\$	133,349.00
Total Expenses FY2011 - Projected	\$	242,446.00
Average Donation FY2010	\$	1,101.00
Projected Average Donation FY2011	\$	893.00





First Unitarian-Universalist Church is an urban center for spiritual renewal and social justice in Detroit.