

# First Unitarian-Universalist Church of Detroit

4605 Cass Avenue  
Detroit, MI 48201  
March 27, 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.

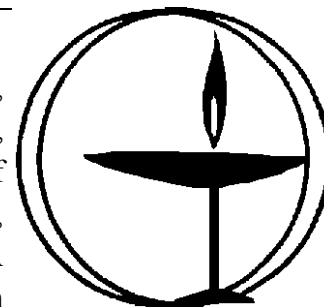
## Missional Ministry by Rev Bill Neely

There was a great article in this month's issue of UU World, the magazine of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Titled, "Cultivating an Abandoned Place," the article tells the story of A Third Place, a community center and church in Turley, Oklahoma. Directed by Rev. Ron Robinson, a UU minister, A Third Place focuses on being a missional church, or a church whose focus is less on internal structures within the church and more on the extending the church's ministries into the community. A Third Place does this by operating a community center, developed in a rented space but about to be shifted into its own location, that includes a health clinic, a library (the only one in Turley), public-use computers, a food pantry, a clothing swap, and other basic services. The church focuses its energy and leadership on meeting the spiritual and practical needs of the people of Turley; a struggling community on the outskirts of Tulsa.

One can never directly apply any congregation's model of ministry to the life of another congregation and guarantee success, but we can learn from different models. We can learn from creative approaches to becoming vibrant and healthy congregations, and A Third Place offers a radically different approach to becoming an effective congregation than we typically consider. At a time when many of denominational resources are aimed at membership growth, A Third Place seems to be more focused on missional growth; on their ability to enliven their faith in an under-served community, whether it results in membership growth or not. If the point of the church is mission work (service), then as long as that work is accomplished, the church is successful. And while membership numbers can tell us a lot about a church's sustainability and possibilities, other measures can tell us a lot about the church's spirit. A Third Place, even with few members, seems to have an abundance of spirit and service.

Give the article a read and some thought. If you have online access, you can find the article here: <http://www.uuworld.org/news/articles/172162.shtml>. I'll also leave photocopies of the piece on the table by the mailboxes outside of the Main Office. As First Church considers major changes to its institution in the near future, use this article as an invitation to consider new possibilities in the life of your congregation. How will your faith be enlivened in the next year, or 2, or 5? How will you bless the community around you, and find in that ministry that which fills your spirit? With change comes opportunity. How will the changes before you become your opportunity to bless more widely this city you love?

Rev. Bill Neely



## President's Page

Thanks to the many folks who stayed after church on March 20<sup>th</sup> to learn about the two options the Board of Trustees is investigating to secure the future of our buildings and our congregation. For those who didn't have notice of the meeting or were unable to attend, let me outline the options here.

### A. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

The Board has signed an MOU with a non-profit organization. This is a preliminary document that outlines what the parties expect from each other and allows them to conduct due diligence that may lead to a binding contract. The important features of the MOU are:

1. First U-U will donate its buildings to the non-profit to create an Arts Incubator.
2. The non-profit will assume all costs, liabilities and maintenance.
3. The congregation will continue to use the sanctuary and restrooms rent-free through June, 2016. Thereafter, the congregation may enter into renewable 5-year leases and pay monthly rental equal to one-twelfth of the annual utilities cost attributable to the square footage occupied.
4. The deed contains a reversionary clause which provides that if the new owner attempts to make exterior architectural changes or wants to demolish the buildings, they revert to the congregation.
5. The contract contains a right-of-first-refusal, meaning that if the new owner receives an offer from a third party to purchase the buildings, the congregation has the right to match that offer and re-acquire the buildings.
6. A church member will serve on the board of the non-profit.

Consummation of the MOU and a binding contract are contingent on three (3) things:

1. The non-profit must obtain sufficient financial support from grants or otherwise to afford to do the project. Conservatively, the costs would be approximately \$100,000 in the first year without building up-grades.
2. The board of the non-profit has to approve the contract and project.
3. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the congregation that is eligible to vote must approve the donation.

### B. Request for Proposals (RFP)

A committee of the Board chaired by Dessa wrote a Request for Proposals and has circulated it throughout the community. The RFP is on the church's website to study at your leisure. It provides for three options. The highlights are:

Option A. Sale of the buildings, but a right-of-first-refusal upon attempted re-sale to a third party that has not been vetted by the Board.

Option B. Donation of the buildings to an owner with the demonstrated financial ability to maintain and improve the buildings. The congregation would continue to use the sanctuary on Sunday with reasonable support spaces for at least 25 years. Guarantees that the owner would not significantly alter the exterior or demolish the buildings. Right-of-first-refusal if the owner attempts to sell to a third party.

Option C. A 25-year lease of the buildings. In exchange for rent-free space, the lessee would pay all utility, insurance, staffing, security, janitorial and maintenance costs. The lessee must provide a plan for im-

mediate and longer term up-grades and improvements. The lessee must demonstrate the financial ability to maintain and improve the buildings. The congregation would continue to use the sanctuary and support spaces on Sunday and other parts of the buildings for special events, if space is available and by prior arrangement.

Organizations that share UU values will be given priority in the selection process. The Board committee has also written an assessment rubric to assist in evaluation of the proposals. One open house for interested groups was held on March 17<sup>th</sup>, and a second open house is scheduled for April 1<sup>st</sup>. Proposals are due April 9<sup>th</sup> but short extensions may be given on a showing of hardship. The Board anticipates that the congregational vote on the destiny of the church buildings will be held on June 12<sup>th</sup>.

Please direct your questions about the MOU and RFP to any member of the Board. Dessa is most knowledgeable about the RFP, and I am most knowledgeable about the MOU. It is far too early to indicate which of the options the Board will recommend since all interested prospective owners are conducting their due diligence reviews. However, we can tell you that the Board is very optimistic and hopeful that within months, the congregation can pursue its mission of providing an urban center for spiritual renewal and social justice in Detroit free of building worries and expense.

Marilyn Mitchell

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## **April 2011 Worship Calendar**

April 3, A Brief History of Heaven, Rev. Bill Neely

What did our distant ancestors think of heaven, and how did their thinking shift over time? Flying through thousands of years, we'll try to see heaven as our ancient ones did and consider how those images have informed us today.

April 10, Love Wins, Rev. Bill Neely

A new book by Rob Bell, a very influential Christian preacher, has led many to consider Universalism, or the belief that all souls return to God at some point in eternity. Sound familiar? It should - it's been our take on the afterlife for 2,000 years. Let's take a UU look at the questions raised in this popular book.

April 17, A House of Spirit and Service, Rev. Bill Neely and several 1st Church faithful

Come celebrate the 95th Anniversary of the church's life in its beautiful, current building. Special music, several reflections, and some thoughts about the future will center our gratitude for the church's home for nearly a century. Stay after the service for a special potluck celebration.

April 24, Easter Sunday, Rev. Bill Neely

Unitarian Universalist Christians try to "worship God, and follow Jesus." This classic sentiment of Unitarianism challenges us to model life after a prophet of tremendous justice, compassion, and service. Without needing to worship him, what would "following Jesus" look like today? How would it inform our political structures, our corporate entities, and our own unique lives?



## **We Need a Few Good People**

This is a crucial year in the life of our church community, so more than ever we need Board members who are truly committed, responsible and caring.

The Nominating Committee is looking for suggestions: church members who would like to serve on the Board themselves or who would like to suggest other possible candidates for Board positions. Candidates must be members of our congregation. We must have your suggestions by April 15, 2011.

Please understand that our by-laws state that "The Nominating Committee shall nominate candidates for President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Trustees and Nominating Committee." In other words, the Committee will carefully consider all suggestions and will then prepare a final list of candidates for presentation at our annual Congregational Meeting in May. Nominations from the floor are welcome at that time.

If you are interested in suggesting yourself or someone else for a Board position, please contact a member of the Nominating Committee: Ivan Cotman at [detivan@aol.com](mailto:detivan@aol.com), Katherine Maurer at [katherine.d.mau@gmail.com](mailto:katherine.d.mau@gmail.com). Edie McKnight at [ediemcknight@gmail.com](mailto:ediemcknight@gmail.com) or 734-420-2174, Ruth Seifert at 313-340-0671, or Toni Tront at 313-274-2171.

We also need delegates to the General Assembly (June 22-26 in Charlotte, NC) and to the Heartland District meeting.

Many thanks,

Your Nominating Committee

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## **Upcoming Events**

### **95th Anniversary Celebration April 17.**

Join 1st UU in celebrating 95 years in this wonderful building on April 17. There will be a special service and memories will be shared.

### **Finding the Sermon in You**

Join Rev. Bill and several 1st Church'ers in an exploration of sermon writing and delivery. We'll begin developing some ideas that you have for sermons, as well as talk about future preparation and delivery. We'll also watch a few preachers in action and consider their strengths. The workshop will be on Saturday, April 16 from 9 a.m. (prompt) to noon. All are welcome!

### **Wednesday, April 6 Program - The Latter-day Saints: The Basics**

Join Rev. Bill for an introduction to the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints, commonly known as the Mormon Church. Using videos and texts, we'll cover basic beliefs, history, sects, and some of the changes in the church over the years. Come for dinner at 5:30, Vespers at 6:30 and the program from 7-8:30 p.m.

### **Clean Up Day – Saturday April 9th 9am – 1pm**

Save the date! Our spring Clean Up Day will be Saturday April 9th to help spruce up the church. Many hands make light work! - Kathleen Jacobs Johnson



# DETROIT STREET RETREATS

## SOCIAL ACTION THROUGH BEARING WITNESS

**Join us for an experience of bearing witness to homelessness on the streets of Midtown Detroit.**

"When we go... to bear witness to life on the streets, we're offering ourselves. Not blankets, not food, not clothes, just ourselves."

*-Bernie Glassman, Bearing Witness*

We will experience homelessness first-hand, begging for money, finding places to get food and shelter, to use the bathroom, etc. By bearing witness to homelessness, we begin to recognize our common humanness.

We will stay together as a group and participate in silent meditation and reflective sharing based on inspirational readings from authors of varying faith traditions. All funds will be donated, ½ to Homeless Service agencies in Detroit and ½ to Action By Presence, Inc., the non-profit forming to address causes and find solutions to homelessness in Detroit. Contributions may be tax-deductible. As a participant, you are required to *beg* for the fee from friends, family and whomever else you choose. Be creative. For example, consider building a mala (prayer beads representing your benefactors) to remember them on the retreat.

### ONE DAY STREET RETREAT

**Saturday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011 7 am – 5 pm**

Registration and payment deadline is Friday, March 5, 2011. The retreat is limited to 16 participants on a first come, first served basis.

Hwa Haeng Jeanie Murphy O'Connor and Mike Horlocker will lead the retreat.

The donation for the one day retreat is a minimum of \$75.

To learn more about this experience, read Bearing Witness by Bernie Glassman.

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### WEEKEND STREET RETREAT

**Thursday, May 19<sup>th</sup> – Sunday May 22<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

Registration and payment deadline is Monday, May 2, 2011. The retreat is limited to 12 participants



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