

# First Unitarian-Universalist Church of Detroit

4605 Cass Avenue  
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May 1, 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

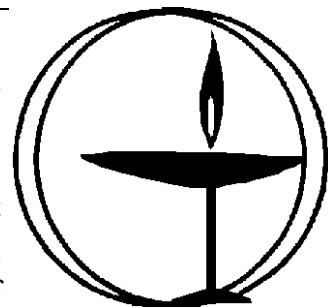
*Robert Johnson*

#### Worship Services

held every Sunday at  
11:00am.

## Celebrating Transitions

I begin with a hearty “thank you!” to everyone involved with making our 95th Anniversary celebration of First Church’s life on its little corner of Detroit a success. We had a joyful, tender, and spirited day of memories and gratitude, and I felt blessed to be a part of it. Our work together this year has been about beginning to reimagine and create the First Church of the future. You know that the viability of the congregation rests in its ability to significantly change how it operates and for what ends it exists. With so much time spent maneuver through the anxieties of change, it can be easy to forget to celebrate all that the church is. Our 95th Anniversary was a celebration of how the church has blessed its members and community, and what a great morning and afternoon we had together.



And yet sadly, we are nearing the end of our year together. My last Sunday in the pulpit will be the last Sunday in June. By that time, the Board expects to have presented the congregation with an option to release yourself of the unmanageable financial burdens that operating your current campus of buildings imposes on you. In addition to dramatically leading you toward financial self-sufficiency (which is the most important thing you can do for your congregational health) it will allow you to develop your ministry at the size that you are. You’ll focus less on being a struggling landlord and more on the thriving ministries of the congregation. The incredible congregational leadership that focuses on your enormous building and financial dilemmas right now will, in the future, be focused instead on spiritual growth and social justice. The power of your ministry will expand, even as your physical campus, or at least your immediate ownership of it, recedes. That is clearly the larger transition before you.

And yet as we move into our own ministerial transition, I am saddened at the thought of not being with you next year. You’ve blessed my life and ministry in profound ways. At the same time, I am excited for my unknown colleagues who will be fortunate to serve as your ministers in the future. Your celebration of 95 years of ministry in this location brought to my mind all the blessings you’ve offered me during our 1 year of shared ministry. We can’t change the interim circumstances that brought us together, but we can be grateful that we were brought together at all. And I am grateful for that each day of our shared ministry and will be for the rest of my vocation. Change is constant, but even during transitions of ministers, members, and buildings, there is always so much to be grateful for. Let’s take that spirit of gratitude into the ending of ministry together, into the beginning of a new one for you and a blessed colleague, and into your larger transitions of buildings and space.

## **President's Soapbox**

Last Sunday's celebration of our sanctuary's 95 years was a spectacular send-off into our future as a congregation. What a joy it was to watch the slide show of First Churchers through the ages. How bittersweet it was to see photos of friends who have left us, including most recently Dave Robinson, whose touching memorial service was held just the day before. Two days of feasting and fellowship made for a memorable weekend.

The common theme in our congregational life seems to be food and fun. What a lot of meals we have consumed over the years. The photo collection compiled by the excellent committee that produced the birthday party will be on display for awhile. A CD of photos that were in the slide show can also be obtained from Robert Johnson.



Please thank the 95th Anniversary Planning Committee: Kathleen Jacobs Johnson (chair), Sharon Mills, Ruth Seifert, Maysel Brooks, Toni Tront, Lencha Acker, Colleen Dolan-Greene, Robert Johnson, Kathe Stevens and Al Acker. These folks know how to throw a party.

Coming up next . . . The Canvass for the 2011-12 Fiscal Year kicks off on May 1st. I know we were just canvassed, but that was for the present fiscal year, to return us to the annual canvass that was shelved for the rolling canvass that didn't work so well. The Board continues to restore some of the traditions and rules we followed in the past. In that regard, you will be given a proposed Bylaw change to be voted on at the Annual Meeting to restore the financial integrity of the Church Trust while funding the Endowment from another source. The idea to transfer a fixed percentage of the Trust funds into the Church Endowment was based on a wholly unrealistic projection of membership growth and would have resulted quickly in the demise of the Trust, which was the plan. The Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, May 22nd following the potluck.

The Board of Trustees has received several proposals in response to the RFP. A sub-committee of the Board is reviewing these proposals, and the Board will be making a recommendation to the congregation in June. The congregation will vote on disposition of First Church buildings at a special congregational meeting on June 12th. Rev. Bill Neely's last service is set for June 26th to be followed by a party in his honor. Finally, the same committee that found Bill is looking for another interim, and we will know the results of their search soon.

This has been a wonderful church year. The future looks very promising.

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## **Welcome Everyone to the Sacred Waters: 40/40 Challenge for Earth.,**

Your 40 days of action begin this Sunday, April 17, 2011. See me for ideas of what you can do to help conserve and learn about the issues of water. We need a few more people to sign up to meet our goal. Please encourage your friends.

Mary Lou

## **May 2011 Worship Calendar**

May 1, Julie Brock

May 8, Heaven, Rev. Bill Neely

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

May 15, Mary Lou Malone and Lencha Acker

May 22, Robert Johnson Ayn Rand vs Altruism ... the final showdown?

May 29, Memories of Love, Rev. Bill Neely

On Memorial Day weekend, we'll honor those who died in battle as well as all of those who are gone but not forgotten in our lives. Join the First Church family for a service of memory, love, and peace.

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### **95th Anniversary Celebration Wrap-Up**

#### **Summary Thank You's**

Pat Pilafian for playing piano and Lee Thume who was willing but not able to play piano.

Colleen Dolan Greene and Trey Greene for donating new flatware, providing linens, as well as providing the delicious cake.

Lencha Acker for providing the beautiful flowers, not only on our chancel, but the 95 white carnations representing each year in the sanctuary, and centerpieces on each table.

Sharon Mills and Maysel Brooks for planning and coordinating our lovely potluck and making everything extra special.

Ruth, Sandra, and Maya for being super helpers jumping in whenever they could to help set-up and clean-up the potluck.

Al Acker and Kathe Stevens for designing and printing (in color too!) our beautiful keepsake programs.

Kathleen Jacobs Johnson for putting together a fabulous photo display commemorating our 95 years of togetherness in and out of the Sanctuary.

Todd Ballou who performed some amazing works on our precious organ as well as conducted our superb choir.

Sharon Mills, Al Acker, Dan Wiest, and Rev. Bill Neely whose words made us laugh, cry, swell with pride as we relived each memory shared.

Robert Johnson and Dan Secrest who helped make our memories larger than life with the slideshow of photos and coordinating the open microphone for more memory sharing.

Sharon Mills and Robert Johnson who have created a heart-warming keepsake booklet of our memories shared.

and a BIG Thank You to everyone who came to part-take in a historic day.



Clean Up Day (April 9th) Thank yous

A big THANK YOU to the following people who participated in Clean-Up Day on Saturday April 9th: Bill McKnight, Art Gabhart, Ruth Siefert, Carolyn Ludwig, Mark Schwin, Robert Johnson, Kathleen Jacobs Johnson, Sherri Wells, Dan Wiest. Together they spruced up the church to help the church sparkle in preparation for the 95th Anniversary celebration.



Gluing tiles in McCollester, scrubbing the hallway floors, raking leaves, organizing the children's play area in McCollester, replacing lightbulbs, sweeping and dusting - and to think the only payment were some donuts and bagels! Once again, thank you all for helping to make our church so beautiful!

### **Standing with our brothers and sisters of other faiths**

This past April 21st a number of 1st UU's, including Rev Neely, gathered together with a host of people from other faiths under the roof of a mosque in Dearborn to lend our voice to the support of our Muslim friends who were being assailed by hatred, racism, and ignorance. This was an interfaith response to Terry Jones and his assault on Islam and was well attended by people of many faiths. It is a gift to see that there is still hope for peace and understanding amongst people of widely different beliefs. It is a pity that it sometimes takes ugliness and hatred to remind us of this.

### **Canvas kick off**

May 1st on you will find a number of board members sitting at a table in McCollester Hall during social hour. They are not sitting there just because they enjoy each others company. They will be handling the new canvas and hope to see you at the table talking about your next pledge. So please come up and say hi and chat a spell.

### **Congregational meeting**

Just a reminder this May 22nd there will be a congregational meeting. There will be some very important issues that will require a vote. So we need as many people to show up as possible to help determine the course of the congregation at this time. Oh and it's a potluck too.

### **Pridefest is coming**

Just a reminder that Pridefest is just around the corner (June 4-5). We hope to have a booth and representation so think about signing up. Details to follow.

### **Describe your life in six words**

According to legend Ernest Hemingway was once challenged to write a book in just six words. Supposedly he came up with: "For sale: baby shoes, never worn ." This has given rise to a trend on the net and in literary circles of people trying to write the story of their own lives in just six words. I tend to think we UUs can be a creative bunch so lets give it a try ourselves. Send me the novel of your life in just six words. I will choose a some samples to post in the next newsletter and we will see if anyone can recognize the authors. Send these novels to hurin2@gmail.com or hand them to Robert Johnson.



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April 17, 2011

Dear Friends,

How sorry I am to not be with you today as you celebrate 95 years of your history in Detroit! Alas, the installation of a first-ever called minister in Danville, Indiana, scheduled four months ago was on my calendar first.

But that does not diminish my congratulations and appreciation to you on this day. For nearly a century, you have provided a home for those seeking our religious message here, in the heart of Detroit. You have stood on this corner of Cass and Forest, bringing our beacon shining brightly to the area around. You stood for the acceptance of women in leadership, for integration and civil rights, for end to unjust wars, for those who needed help to live. For 95 years, you have lived our Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist values.

I remember well when I found your congregation. As a youngster (14!), I knew that I wanted something more in my life, and so my mother and I began attending in 1967. From the first moment, I knew this was where I belong. Despite the occasional admonishment from those who did not always understand barefoot youth, I still felt welcome and embraced. You provided space for me and my friends to discover ourselves, to act on important issues, and to have a religion that believed in us as much as we believed in it. You gave us both roots and wings.

And I'm certain that what you did for me and my generation, you've also done with those before, and those after. Many of you have found both solace and challenge, found affirmation and admonishment in appropriate doses, a place of laughter and tears within these walls. You know how precious and special this congregation has been. I'm not telling you things you don't already know; instead, I'm reminding you of who you have been, who you are, and who you can be: people who see the world as it is, but work to make it the world for which we strive.

On behalf of the 53 other congregations in the Heartland District, I give you our deep felt thanks, and our hearty congratulations as you celebrate these past 95 years. May you know joy today, and remind each other of where you have been as you now dare to dream of where your future takes you.

In faith,

Rev. Dr. Lisa Presley  
District Executive



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