



first **UNITARIAN**
CONGREGATION | *Est.*
OF TORONTO | **1845**

Committed to love and justice, we
Seek to understand the meaning of our lives,
Connect with others as we are, and
Serve life to build a better world.

ANNUAL REPORT

2019 – 2020

Ministers' Messages

Rev. Shawn Newton, Senior Minister

As I have contemplated the writing of this report to you, I have found myself reflecting on both the 1918 Pandemic as well as some, hopefully, far distant day when the world will almost certainly be forced to contend with another global health crisis. I have found it helpful to read words written over a century ago, particularly words written about First Unitarian, that detail how the people of that time responded to the challenges they faced. To wit, it's been interesting to learn that in that previous pandemic, while the Anglicans and Catholics took steps to try to mitigate the risks of spreading the virus—such as varying service times and shortening the length of sermons!—the Unitarians in Toronto simply closed their building for the duration, much as we have opted to do today. While confirmation has been hard to come by, it seems our congregation fared well relative to other congregations in the city a century ago, though the young woman who was the organist of First Unitarian died in the winter of 1919 from the virus.

With an eye to the future generation of leaders at First, I have thought about what I would most want them to know about how we have managed in these times—in hopes that some piece of wisdom from our day, passed along in this imperfect time capsule, might help them in some way. So, to those of some future day, I want you to know that our congregation has been incredibly resilient as this pandemic has unfolded. We suspended in-person meetings and worship services in mid-March and have continued to gather online on a meeting platform called Zoom. Despite all of the technical challenges it presents, we have managed to bring together most everyone who wishes to be with us on Sunday mornings; indeed, our online attendance even doubled for a time. We have also connected with each other online in our smaller Journey Groups, which have provided people with opportunities to reflect with one another about these challenging times we are living through. In all of this, the members and friends of our congregation have stretched themselves, proving themselves to be flexible and creative and committed to sustaining First Unitarian through these difficult days.

It should also be said that this has been a year when the congregation has been incredibly bold. We sold our building at 175 St. Clair Avenue West without knowing where we would move to next. Only a courageous and confident congregation could take such a step.

It is my honour and privilege to serve as one of your ministers. I am especially grateful that I do not do this alone. My deep thanks, as always, goes to the wonderful team of leaders on our Board and on our staff.

In faith and love,

Rev. Shawn Newton, Senior Minister

Rev. Lynn Harrison, Associate Minister

While it has always been a privilege to serve First Unitarian Congregation, that has never been more true than this year.

The profound and rapid changes to our ministries, in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, brought a renewed sense of connection and purpose to my role as Associate Minister (a change in title made this year, reflecting my broad scope of activities within congregational life).

In the Fall of 2019, I continued to take part in the majority of Sunday worship services, offering messages of inspiration, contemplation, and original song. I continued to offer the “At First” workshops (co-facilitated by Angela Klassen) and monthly Newcomer Information sessions (with Diane Wagner). This year, 27 new members joined the Congregation (up more than 50% from last year). Also, I co-facilitated with Jeanne Van Bronkhorst the new Spiritual Care Salons which led to new capacity within our Pastoral Care Teams and I continued to lead the vibrant Journey Group at the Christie Gardens retirement residence.

With the advent of the pandemic in mid-March, my focus turned largely toward maintaining connections within the Congregation, through the Caring Connections outreach effort, the development of online worship services, leadership of the Thursday night online drop-in, and an increased amount of pastoral care by phone.

As I write this message, we all are continuing to learn how to be an online congregation. While some of our activities have changed or paused, many others are flourishing, and there has never been a greater need for inclusive spiritual community.

Rev. Lynn Harrison, Minister of Community Engagement

President’s Message

While there was never any doubt that my first year as President would be a challenging and interesting time, who could have imagined what 2020 would hold for us all? We began the year with our remarkable professional team and very capable Board ready to focus on updating policies, enhancing existing programs, and building our focus on diversity and inclusion; with new office and custodial staff getting settled into their roles so they could expand their accountabilities; and with lots of work on the horizon to prepare for our future relocation. As we finish this congregational year, our Board and staff have turned their attention swiftly and creatively to managing our response to a worldwide pandemic, redesigning worship and programs to be delivered via Zoom; we

have had to say goodbye to admin and custodial staff due to closing our building; and the Board is reviewing policies and procedures we didn't know we'd need. We can't see enough of the future to start preparing for our move yet and other things, including a newly energized environment for social justice activities, are more pressing anyway.

Yet I am blessed to be able to record, here in our official record, that one aspect of our roller coaster ride does not surprise me one bit: we are proving that we are here for each other, and that we are fulfilled in being so, through all the twists and turns. Of the dozens of documents that I created this year to take into meetings that guide our work and monitor our situation, my favourite is the one below, representing the words of covenant collected from small groups at a Congregational Meeting in May 2020.



Thank you to all of our staff and Trustees and volunteers and members and friends, for being such generous, creative, and pleasant company on this ride. We have much to do together and I look forward to our continuing work of all kinds.

Karen Dunk-Green, President, Board of Trustees

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Our congregation gathers on the traditional lands of the Anishnaabe Mississauga, the Haudenosaunee, Ojibway/Chippewa, and Wendat peoples. This territory was the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, and is also covered by the Upper Canada Treaties. As a congregation, we are striving to help heal the wounds of our past and our present, in the essential and ongoing work of reconciliation.



Our Leadership Team

2019 – 2020 Board of Trustees

- Karen Dunk-Green, President
- Terri Marks, Vice President and FMC Liaison
- Nathan Cox, Secretary
- Darryl Neate, Treasurer
- Bill Dunk-Green, Real Estate Task Force Rep
- Sorlie Maddox
- Sabina McAllister, Safe Steps Liaison
- Mary Anne Roche, interim member of the Executive Committee
- Greg Suttor, Real Estate Task Force Rep

Staff

- Shawn Newton, Minister
- Lynn Harrison, Minister of Community Engagement
- Angela Klassen, Director of Lifespan Religious Education
- Dallas Bergen, Director of Congregational Music
- Veronica Antipolo, Director of Administration (from May 2019 to May 2020)
- Daniel Grzymisch, Senior Bookkeeper
- Carmen Schultz, Junior Bookkeeper
- JC Morrison, Senior Custodian (to May 2020)
- Diego Maggs, Assistant Custodian (to May 2020)

Lay Pastors: Mike Stroh, Jeanne Van Bronkhorst

Lay Chaplains: Karen Dunk-Green, Sue Meggs



June 28, 2020 – the first online (Zoom-based) Annual Meeting of the Congregation, necessitated by the Covid-19 global pandemic

Staff Reports

Congregational Music

Thank you to the many people who contributed to the musical life of our congregation in 2019-2020. Here are some of the notable events:

Water Communion

Our Water Communion service featured *The River*, a favourite of the choir and congregation. The melody was weaved throughout the service, as choral anthem, congregational song, and instrumental interlude.

Choir Retreat

The choir welcomed guest clinicians Ross Lynde and David Lane from *Cadence* who stretched the choir creatively and vocally, introducing techniques for vocal technique, vocal improvisation, and even beat-boxing!

Christmas Eve

Choral works on Christmas Eve included *O Magnum Mysterium* (T L Victoria), *O Nata Lux* (Morten Lauridsen), *Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella* (Parker & Shaw), *In the Bleak Midwinter* (Harold Darke)

Solstice / Eulogies / All Kinds of Love

Over the past few years our Solstice Service has become one of the highlights of our worship calendar. Harpist Sharlene Wallace has become our regular musician for these special services. January and February featured two services with a greater amount of music than is usual: Our third annual Eulogies service which paid homage to notable figures who passed in 2019 and our All-Kinds-of-Love service prior to Valentine's Day.

COVID-19

The choir suspended choir rehearsals prior to our March 12 rehearsal due to the pandemic. We look forward to the time when we can gather -- and sing! -- together again.

Thanks also to our incredible team of 2019-2020 musicians!

Congregational Pianist: Adam Sakiyama

Guest Pianists: Michel Ross, Gregory Oh

Resident Musicians: Joanne Chapin, Tahirih Vejdani, Gabrielle Byrnes, Danny Fong, Lucas Marchand, Tom Lillington

Dallas Bergen, Director of Congregational Music

Lifespan Religious Education

We would have never imagined, in the fall of 2019, what lessons - in the spiritual disciplines of *letting go of attachment* and *living in the moment* - 2020 would hold for everyone across the lifespan at First Unitarian when our momentum was interrupted by COVID-19.

Our programs for children, youth and adults were full of vigour in the fall and winter thanks to the skill and commitment offered by the many teachers, facilitators, organizers, youth mentors and guest speakers who have guided us in deepening our UU identity. Although space doesn't permit naming everyone individually, we owe a debt of gratitude to all those who contributed to making learning engaging and fun, and who delivered OWL as the major theme for children and youth!

Highlights of the year included:

- Our group of 17 Grade 5-6 kiddos reached the midway point in OWL sessions facilitated by Kelly Ferguson, Meridith Morrissey, Jeremy Powell and Leslie Solomonian
- 8 Junior High youth were within 6 Sundays of completing the Grade 7-9 OWL year with facilitators Sasha Akhavi, Gen Iacovino, Julie Matheson, Chantal Pigeon, Diana Sargant Gibson and Lo Stevenson
- Our *Family Ministry* sessions included "Parents as Sexuality Educators" led by our Adult OWL Facilitator, Leslie Solomonian as well as a Positive Discipline workshop with guest presenter Julie Binmore at our Winter Family Retreat.
- We thanked Portia Dodds, our lead Youth Advisor for 8 years, for her service as she passed the baton to Lisa Trentin, who was joined by LY Kaniah and Terri Palmer in facilitating meetings with our Youth Group. Our plans to host a Grade 10-12 OWL Con, "Myth BUUsters", on April 23-25 were sadly postponed. A small but dedicated group of youth continue to meet with Advisors via zoom.
- 60 children and adults had a blast at the *21st Annual Winter Family Retreat* thanks to organizers Andrew and Sabina McAllister and Janet McCausland.
- Our Young Adult Dinner Group enjoyed delicious soups and stews made with love by Sue Meggs Becker. Alternating between Journey Group and activity evenings, Jason Burton and Jeunsung Kim provided co-ordination and leadership.
- Our Adult OWL leadership team expanded with four new facilitators completing training in March: Alezandria Coldevin, Gen Iacovino, Julie Matheson and Sarah Winward. We're eagerly awaiting the time when this new team, along with Leslie Solomonian, can take up their OWL ministry to our Adults, Young Adults, and Older Adults.
- Our *Wise Elders* group continued into its seventh season of monthly meetings filled with humour, and readily migrated to meeting via Zoom beginning in March.
- Approximately 125 people are registered in our Journey Groups, which, along with many of our affinity groups, have migrated to online meetings.

This year, more than any other, I'm eternally grateful for my staff colleagues, Dallas, Rev. Lynn and Rev. Shawn, as well as the many members whose spiritually grounded presence has helped to weave new webs of connection in the transition to community life lived out online.

Angela Klassen, Director of Lifespan Religious Education

Committees and Projects of the Congregation

Nominating Committee Report

The Nominating Committee is a committee of the Board and consists of five voting members of the congregation elected at the Annual General Meeting. Our bylaws outline the duties of the Committee. Terms of office are two years.

The current members of the Committee are: Paul Bognar and Sharon Mourer, each having completed the second year of their 2-year term. Additional members are Peter Brydon (completing a one year term) Helen Iacovino and Janine Gliener, who will remain on the Committee for an additional year.

The Committee submits the following nominees for election this year:
For the Board of Trustees (3-year terms): Sarah Moara Barrett, and David Priebe.
Nominees for the Nominating Committee are: Owen Smith, Felicia de Jonge, and Lis Kean.

Paul Bognar

Real Estate Task Force

In 2018, the RETF and the Board achieved a key step in the congregation's Real Estate Strategy by reaching an agreement to sell our building at 175 St. Clair Ave. W. By the end of 2019, we had received the income from our purchaser, established a lease, and watched the ownership of that lease (and the property) change hands.

The year has been spent searching for a suitable property on which to establish our new home. Excitement grew in February when we placed conditional offers on two buildings – located miraculously close to our existing home – and began due diligence work to assess the viability of a project on either site. We were disappointed to have to

conclude that the higher-than-previously-estimated cost of construction made a project unviable financially on either site.

In May of 2020, we were introduced to a not-for-profit organization, Trinity Centres Foundation, which has a stated mission to “solve the problem of religious properties in Canada.” At this time, we are just beginning to explore sites and partnerships and strategies. The task force members are committed to carrying on with this work until a satisfying solution is found.

Karen Dunk-Green, Chair, RETF

Save a Family from Syria (SAFFS)

Current Sponsorship:

On June 6, 2019, two newcomers were welcomed by our team to Toronto. The 12-month sponsorship period is complete, and all would agree this has been a very positive experience. They have worked hard and are well-positioned for employment. While sponsorship is over, friendship will continue.

Pending Sponsorships:

1. In October 2016 an application was submitted to sponsor a Syrian family in Yemen. Since no applications were being processed from Yemen, this family of six made the decision to leave Yemen for U.A.E. in July 2019. They interviewed with Canadian officials in U.A.E. in September 2019, and there is as of yet no decision on the application.
2. In August 2019 applications were submitted for a Syrian family of 6 living in Egypt, and their brother, living in Lebanon. Those applications were advancing, and the best guess of arrival, pre-COVID, would have been summer 2020.

The pending applications are stalled due to the global pandemic. There are many considerations – health and safety in the countries of residence and of Canadian immigration officials, air travel restrictions, etc. The applications will remain in the queue and will not be cancelled – so these families will arrive at some time in the future.

Beth van der Weerd, Chair, Save a Family from Syria

Committee Reports

Property

It has been an interesting year from the property side. With an understanding that we are intending to vacate the building in the near future, we have done our best to keep maintenance costs minimal over the past year.

- The Narthex, entry lobby and office entry area were painted in the fall of 2019. Many volunteers made light work of the day.
- We converted the office entry men's washroom into an all-access washroom in the spring of 2019. Great thanks to Craig Mahood and Rino Randon for their work.
- We erected an information screen in Workman Hall to broadcast updates during coffee hour.
- The elevator was repaired and an enhanced maintenance agreement was confirmed to ensure that weekend and evening emergencies would be serviced immediately.
- The toilet in the small second floor washroom was replaced.
- We had water damage in one of the third-floor rental offices, which was repaired.
- The HVAC had a major component failure which was solved by a friendly HVAC technician and a collector of discontinued HVAC parts (really).
- Custodian JC Morrison performed herculean tasks and brought our floors back to good finish. This involved the purchase of a new wet/dry floor vacuum.

As things currently stand, our building at First Unitarian is asleep. Most systems are in away / vacation mode. Huge thanks to all volunteers who have helped us keep our home as ship shape as we can for now.

Dominic Stones, Property Coordinator

Denominational Affairs

Canadian Unitarian Council



The Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) is our national organization, made up of Unitarian and Universalist member congregations, acting to enhance, nurture, and promote our faith in Canada.

Each year, delegates from member congregations come together for the CUC's Annual General Meeting (AGM). This

year, the AGM was held entirely online (using Zoom) on May 10.

The delegates from our congregation were Bill Dunk-Green, Julie Matheson, Calvin Drake, Margaret Bryant, Margaret Kohr and Richard Kirsh.

First Unitarian Toronto's Tanya Cothran completed her term as a CUC board member for the Central region. Among Tanya's many contributions, she served as the CUC's Treasurer, overseeing the introduction of a fairer method of determining the Annual Program Contributions ("APC") each congregation sends to support the on-going operation of our national organization. Thank you, Tanya, for all your hard work!

Our congregation has a long tradition serving on the national UU stage. Margaret Kohr continues that tradition. We are fortunate in having Margaret take up the mantle as our Central region board member, duly elected at the same meeting. Congratulations Margaret!

Vyda Ng, the CUC's Executive Director presented the [2019 Annual Report](#), describing the multitude of tasks undertaken by CUC staff and volunteers throughout the year in the areas of congregational sustainability, health, growth and vitality; Youth & Young Adult Ministry; and Social Justice.

Vyda went on to present the financial statements for 2019. While revenues were up slightly (3.6%), expenses were up by 8.5%, resulting in a year-end deficit of almost \$68,000 (versus a budgeted deficit of \$31,000).

Each year, the Council votes on the strategic goals and priorities for the CUC for the following year. The priorities for 2020–21 are:

- A. Ensure sustainable revenue generation
- B. Optimize communications capabilities
- C. Advance specific social justice initiatives
- D. Encourage innovation and sustainability in the growth and development of UU communities

In addition, the Council voted to allow a Board member to stand for a third consecutive 3-year term if their first term was less than three years (e.g., they were completing the term of another board member who didn't complete their term.)

The budget for 2020 has been recast (still balanced) to take into account the anticipated impact of COVID-19 on both revenues and expenses. No travel is anticipated by CUC staff, at least for the rest of the calendar year. CUC in-person events, such as the Fall Gatherings, have been cancelled. Trainings and consultation will continue online. The draft 2021 budget envisages a deficit of \$23,000.

The Annual Program Fund (APC) is the amount each congregation pays to support the on-going operations of the CUC. The APC is based on a Per Member Rate (adjusted each year for inflation) plus a Revenue Sharing Amount (based on a congregation's total contributions received for their Operating Fund). For 2021, the Adult Per Member Rate will increase to \$52.64 (+1.89%), and the Revenue Sharing Amount remains unchanged at 3.8%.

Rev. Julie Stoneberg (Peterborough), co-chair of the Dismantling Racism Study Group that was commissioned at last year's AGM, reported that its work had been slow getting off the ground and has only been able to launch an online questionnaire (still on-going) for members of congregations to provide personal experience and opinion.

The CUC's Erin Horvath and Amber Dawn Bellemare provided an update on the Truth, Healing and Reconciliation (THR) program. The program is now in Phase II, and was fortunate to receive external funding. It continues to provide Canadian UUs with learning opportunities and resources, and intercultural dialogue.

Members of the Polyamory Task Force, Rev. Beckett Coppola, Rev. Meghann Robern, Shoshanna Green and Margaret Kohr presented their report and recommendations. The Task Force was formed in 2018 to examine polyamory in the context of Canadian Unitarian Universalism, and to develop position statements and resources that will help the CUC and Canadian congregations proceed on this matter.

The above reports can be found in the [annual report](#).

The AGM on the Saturday was followed by the cross-country service on Sunday. Despite challenges with Zoom, almost 1,000 attended the service online. Due to COVID-19 scuttling the plans for 2020, the CUC hopes to host the 2021 Annual Conference & Meeting in Halifax. Stay tuned!

If you are interested in engaging in UUism beyond our own congregation, please contact [Kalvin Drake](#).

Kalvin Drake, Denominational Liaison

Unicamp

Unicamp brings people of many faith backgrounds to the principles of UU and continues to draw in campers of all ages from several USA states, western Canada, Nova Scotia, Quebec, south western Ontario, Niagara, Central and Eastern Ontario. Many campsites, bunk beds and cottages were not booked up throughout the year. But the Anniversary weekend brought old campers travelling great distances to honour those who have gone before us and celebrate community in ways unique to UU.

In August 2019 on the 50th anniversary, Unicamp dedicated a new permanent sign erected at the entrance, which acknowledges that the land had been shared territory

between several indigenous peoples. As an organization, Unicamp continues to educate ourselves to become a more accessible, inclusive, and empowering space for people who have experienced the brunt discriminatory practices. With stewardship of 50 acres of forest located in the UN Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve, Unicamp Directors are fund-raising to maintain our beloved pond and manage the sewage-handling where 13 fresh water springs bubble up through the rocky surface.



Iris Murray, Unicamp Liaison

Technology

- Since COVID-19
 - Matt Rideout's support for First's online services with Zoom have been very successful, and Matt deserves all the praise for this effort.
 - My involvement has been minimal due to competing priorities
 - First continues to stream services to YouTube supporting members and friends, and currently has 459 subscribers. COVID-19 has seen an increase in views with 115 to 285 viewers for each service just on YouTube. This in addition to the participants in Zoom, and a great result.
- A request for increased building security was reviewed, focused mostly on making it easier to know if someone was entering the building when the Administrative office was open; this was put on hold due to COVID-19
- First upgraded desktop hardware with Windows 10 to align with the phase-out of Windows 7 in January 2020, at almost no cost by using donated equipment.
- The aging network infrastructure at First still requires investment. The main Cisco RV320 router is out of support.
- Wireless infrastructure at First is still under-provisioned. However, cabling infrastructure is not up to modern standards any many parts of the building are prone to issues; this is unlikely to be resolved before the congregation moves.
- Further investment in refreshed hardware at 175 St. Clair West for streaming is required to provide a better experience to remote viewers.
- A discussion about a competent Event management system was initiated but not pursued.

- A discussion around moving QuickBooks to their cloud product was investigated but this would be a significant undertaking as the desktop and cloud product are not feature equivalent.

Andrew McAllister

Lay Pastors and Pastoral Care

In 2019-20, the Pastoral Care Teams at First continued to provide very valuable support to our members. Through our new Spiritual Care Salons, we hosted dinner conversations on spiritual care-related topics for a wide range of people within the Congregation, which led to the welcoming of three new members to the PCT. In part due to the pandemic, direct pastoral care from the Ministers became especially important this year; however, compassionate listening from the Lay Pastors and Pastoral Care Team volunteers continued to play an important role in the ongoing well-being of the Congregation.

Rev. Lynn Harrison, Associate Minister

Lay Chaplaincy

The continuing members of the committee are Peter Brydon (chair), Jennifer Drinkwater, and Margaret Kohr (LC liaison). We welcome Mary Anne Roche (Board rep) and Juleth Dawson to our search committee to select a new Lay Chaplain.

During 2019 our Lay Chaplains, Sue Meggs, Jan Crowley and Karen Dunk-Green performed 17 weddings and 12 memorials for a total of 29 services, an increase of about 33% from 2018. We accepted Jan's resignation as of September 30, 2019, and Sue and Karen now continue as our Lay Chaplains.

A search for a new Lay Chaplain was commenced early in 2020, but has been suspended on account of the pandemic. Also, our Lay Chaplains are anticipating very few services in the coming months, until the situation has changed substantially. In light of this, and to give adequate time for the selection and training of a new Lay Chaplain when things improve, the committee has decided to extend the terms of Karen and Sue for one year longer than the usual six-year term. Karen and Sue are both in agreement with this extension.

Peter Brydon, Chair, Lay Chaplaincy Committee

Newcomer Services

Until March, 2020, Newcomer Information sessions continued regularly on the first Sunday of each month, offering an introduction to UU Principles and Sources and providing a friendly and personal welcome to the Congregation. Diane Wagner and I co-facilitated these sessions, which will resume again in August, 2020 after migrating online. “At First” sessions were also offered this year, and will be integrated into the Newcomer sessions in the near future, until they can be provided in person once again. Throughout the year, we have been grateful for the warm welcome provided to newcomers by the Greeters, Ushers and Engage & Connect teams, who continue to reach out to members of the Congregation to help them feel at home.

Rev. Lynn Harrison, Associate Minister

Worship

Last year First experimented with an elaborate long-range team approach to creating Sunday services. The *Worship Design Model* was well received by the congregation, but required more volunteers, technology, organizing time and, most importantly, more of our Ministers' energy. In August 2019 it was agreed the new method was unsustainable and the congregation should return to the “tried and true” planning process that has always served us well.

We are grateful to our 2019-2020 Worship Leaders for their ongoing commitment to serve at Sunday Services. The roster this year included: Leslie Solomonian, Moara Barrett, Melissa Lobo and Donald Cole, with occasional help from Margaret Kohr.

Sharing the Plate - As of January, First began designating one charity each month to share our Sunday collections. Unfortunately, Covid-19 interrupted the program but we did manage to collect funds for *Flaming Chalice International* in January, the CUC's *Sharing Our Faith* program in February, and *Thunder Woman Healing Lodge* in March.

This year, Matt Rideout our AV Engineer was already busy upgrading our sound system and supporting Sunday services & special events. Then came Covid-19 and Matt proved he is worth his weight in gold. When quarantine was suddenly implemented, Matt quickly facilitated our transition to on-line services. Since then, he has gamely supported our staff, musicians and volunteers with training, feedback and equipment recommendations. We are grateful for his expertise and his ability to troubleshoot with patience and good humor. As time passes the Congregation is finding more ways to stay virtually connected and Matt has helped us do that.

Since March 14th our Worship Services and coffee hour have been conducted on-line. The *Time for All Ages* story-telling segment is being offered at 10am through one link, then the service is offered through another link at 10:30am. Attendance at these online

services is essentially double what it was prior to the pandemic, with online links bringing people together safely and conveniently from their homes in Toronto and far and wide.

Beth Ann McFadden, Worship Coordinator

Fundraisers and Social Events

MANY volunteers worked together to offer events that brought our generations together, exchanged our talents, and raised our fun quotient.

- Thanks to Margaret Bryant and her team of volunteers who ran a marvellous and fun “Raffle Extravaganza” fundraising event in December 2019
- The annual musical event involving the Choir and the annual Euchre & Games night were sadly, cancelled due to the pandemic
- Thanks to Barb Syer for managing our Dinner Series and to all the hosts who arranged for shared meals and conversations in their homes prior to the pandemic
- Thanks to Sue Berlove for organizing a giant team of volunteers to create multiple joyous and delicious potluck events

Executive Committee

Engage & Connect

The Engage and Connect Team helps members and friends feel more connected at First and offers them meaningful ways to contribute. Our team members are Kate Cottington, Susan Phillips, Mary Anne Roche and Sheila Riddell.

From April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020, Engage and Connect linked an average of one person per Sunday to a group, event or cause. This is consistent with 2018/2019 numbers. We recruited eight volunteers for the coffee team, connected six people who wanted to assist with the Syrian newcomers, and directed six to Journey Groups. There was also interest in young adult events, social justice groups and helping out with special events.

At the moment, in the midst of the pandemic, the Team is relatively dormant, but Sheila is still able to assist with connections via email.

Sheila Riddell, Engage and Connect Coordinator

Team Generosity

We strive to inspire members and friends to fully fund our programs and staff so that we can be fiscally secure, socially responsible, and spiritually responsive to meet the needs of our shared faith community. For the 2019 year:

- 311 households financially supported their First Unitarian Toronto community
- 214 households made formal Pledges
- Total Pledged was \$422,887
- Total Given was \$454,897



The increase in giving has been welcome! We still rely on rental income and other sources to meet our needs and we need everyone to Pledge to Give and to Give sustainably. We greatly appreciate everyone's generosity in doing the best they can.

This past year marked a transition in the Pledge timing from Fall to Spring. In the Fall, we asked members and friends to carry over their donations to June 2020. With the COVID pandemic, we've launched a virtual Pledge Campaign. So far, 173 households have Pledged \$332,000. Team Generosity's key goals remain:

- Inspire people to Pledge and to Give generously
- Ask people to sign up for monthly automated donations
- Connect with donors to ensure sustainability and growth

Catherine Lake, Team Generosity Chair

Greeters and Ushers

The greeter team was working well up until March, when the pandemic struck and we were shut down. When we do finally get back to in-person services, we will look at rebuilding the team for our new situation. Thank you to our consistent and dependable regular greeters for their service.

Linda Brown, Greeters Coordinator

The Usher Team had a successful year without major problems, until the Covid-19 pandemic hit. Since then, of course, regular in-person services, with ushering, have been suspended. The Usher Coordinator, Jim Mason, has continued to maintain the on-line Service Log on the Sync/SHADOW system. It is kept in two different file formats, an Excel spreadsheet and an xhtml table suitable for displaying with a web browser. If you would like read access to the Service Log, please contact jmason37@gmail.com

Jim Mason, Ushers Coordinator

Bookstore

Until services moved online in March, the bookstore was open each Sunday during coffee hour. The bookstore sold used books, CDs, and DVDs donated by the congregation; printed sermons and church directories; and UU resources from the UUA Bookstore in Boston. Members were able to sell their own works via the “Local Authors” table. During January and February, the bookstore sold 18 copies of *White Fragility* in preparation for a course to be offered by Shawn.

Although it is primarily a service to the church community rather than a fundraiser, during the period September 2019-February 2020, the Bookstore made a profit of approximately \$100 per month.

Lynn Hughes, Bookstore Coordinator

Library and Issues & Ideas

This year our circumstances have greatly changed. We operated normally for most of the church year, but, with the pandemic, our book circulation activities have been closed down. We do not know when it will be safe to resume. Added to this is uncertainty about how a library may or may not be accommodated in a new church building—given our collective realization that building a new home for our congregation may be more expensive than we thought.

The size of our committee has dwindled. We have lost members to death and increasing disability and have not succeeded in attracting replacements. With the departure of Gerta Moray, the committee is now Lynn and myself. We wonder about the future of Gerta's popular, well-attended program, Issues and Ideas, which will need a new coordinator.

A few ideas for rethinking the library:

- 1) Separate Issues and Ideas from the library.
- 2) Form a task force to consider what the church wants from its library.
- 3) Make it similar, only revitalized. Only if we have good space in the new building and a new committee can be organized.
- 4) Make it smaller. Cull out older, non-classic titles.
- 5) Eliminate books not about Unitarianism. The collection could be made a reference resource that could be accessed upon request. Other collections—social justice etc.—would revert to their committees.
- 6) Combine library and bookstore. Cuts down on staff and space, places the library in a higher traffic location.

Peter Hughes, Chair, Library Committee

Arts Committee

Members: Kate Cottington (chair), Jean Galt, Judy Clarke, Carol Harrison, Wendy Dines, Susan Richardson, Brigitte Nowak

Sunderland Hall's monthly art exhibitions provide a welcoming atmosphere and the opening receptions and artists' talks attract new visitors to our congregation. 2019 Commission fees (20% of sales) totaled \$501 and \$50 exhibition fees totaled \$300. The 2019 exhibitions in Sunderland Hall were:

January – Willowdale Group of Artists
February – Sheryl Keen
March – Members and friends of First group exhibition
April – York Artists Guild
May – Bill Ross and Randall Brown
June – Rama Fayaz
July and August – Avenue Road Arts School
September – Jeff Mann
October – Phyllis Gordon
November – Sereen Azizz
December – Debra Vincent

Kate Cottington, Chair

Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice

Toronto First members-at-large are involved in local, regional, national and international dialogue and action in matters of social, economic, environmental and political justice. We maintain a bulletin board listing local events and actions, as well as global news. We post articles and events to the Eco-Social Justice and Green Team listservs and on *First Light*.

The CUSJ banner was raised in the past year at Climate, Indigenous and International Women's Day Marches. Members regularly attended student 'Fridays for Future' rallies at the Ontario Legislature. The last global climate march took place on September 27th, 2019. We also raised our banner at the Feb.21st teachers' strike to protest provincial cuts to education.

CUSJ Toronto First members work closely with 'Climatefast', a locally based activist group, which hosted an 'Earth Day 2020: Towards a Green & Healthy Recovery' webcast with eminent Canadian climate activists. We also took part in and promoted 'Kitchen Table Climate Conversations' last fall. The toolkit is available at climatefast.ca. As a member organization of Climate Action Network Canada we promote a made-in- Canada Green New Deal. ClimateInteractive.org facilitated a workshop which included a climate teaching toolkit 'En-Roads Climate Solutions Simulator' available to anyone.

The 'Great Pause' we are collectively experiencing, due to the human caused corona virus Covid 19, is a onetime opportunity to reflect, then act on climate change solutions. This moment in time to connect, collaborate and mobilize with other justice seeking organizations and to strengthen our resolve as UUs to bring about a loving and just world, is a gift. Let us use it wisely!

Lastly, UUs from coast to coast, are working closely with WorldBeyondWar.org and others to renew the peace movement in Canada and to shut down North America's largest, annual arms trade fair CANSEC2021 in Ottawa. Together, we can be the change we seek!

Love, Peace & Justice!!!

Margaret Rao, CUSJ Toronto First member and President, CUSJ

Reconciliation Working

The 2019 Final Report on The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was promulgated within the congregation; we also attempted to inform sympathizers re Parliamentary Bill C-262 alignment with UNDRIP (the Senate halted progress.) We were part of the celebrations of National Indigenous Peoples Day at Fort York along with NaMeRes and Mississauga of the New Credit. Some of us attended a Scarborough community meeting along with Indigenous friends. Police had to protect TWHLS Pres. Pettigrew from hecklers, but we were able to voice the positive contributions TWHLS would bring to the area with facts that no violence has been caused by such a facility in the past. The Committee of Adjustments eventually

approved Thunder Women's purpose for 2217 Kingston Road; Firster's weighted in with many letters of support.

In July, we celebrated resiliency of Residential School Survivors and their families at Nathan Phillip Square festivities. August had us search for financial advisors for TWHLS; there are some in the Congregation. We put articles and videos in First Light to drum up awareness of urban First Peoples as neighbors in the GTA.

As part of the new "Share the Plate" program, TWHLS Pres. Pettigrew spoke to the congregation on March 1st, then had a Q & A session (an Indigenous woman catered lunch.) Privately, before anything started, Rev. Newton followed Tobacco Offering Protocol to the President in his office. TWHLS received about \$1,004.00 from the Congregation. We have continued to attempt transactional work among groups within First, including more input in First Light, and we are Zooming along.

Amnesty International Group 142

Amnesty Group 142 campaigns to stop and prevent human rights abuses with our primary focus on the rights of Indigenous Peoples.



The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) calls on all states to honour treaties and agreements with Indigenous Peoples, protect Indigenous languages and cultures, and uphold Indigenous Peoples' rights to lands, territories, and resources.

We urged federal and provincial governments in Canada to end violence against First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women, girls, two-spirit people, families, and communities. We sent letters to candidates in Canada's federal election urging support for human rights including Indigenous rights and to commit to supporting the adoption of a legislative framework for implementing UNDRIP. We called on the Prime Minister to deal with the mercury crisis in Grassy Narrows including cleaning up the river and providing a specialized health facility for the community. We called on the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 50% by 2030 and to support Indigenous Peoples' initiatives to develop mechanisms to cope, adapt or mitigate the effect of climate change on their livelihoods and environments.

We organized Amnesty Sunday to celebrate International Human Rights Day when we signed 505 letters to support the rights and actions of young people under the age of 25 who are leading the fight for change in Canada, Iran, Nigeria, South Sudan, Egypt, Greece, Mexico, China, and Belarus. Members of the congregation generously donated \$1,015 to Amnesty Canada.

We are thankful for the ongoing support of the congregation for the extremely important human rights work of Amnesty International.

Ted Wood, Chair, Amnesty International Group 142

Central America Community Development

Prime Contact: Richard Kirsh, richardkirsh@sympatico.ca

Supporters: Sue Berlove, Art Brewer, Peter Brydon, Judy Clark, Wendy Dines, Margaret Kohr, Johanna Lanfranco, Nancy Lee, Terry Lee, Wendy Peebles, Ulla Stenman, Ted Wood, Harold Wright

Our goal is to build understanding between people and help improve the social, economic and living conditions in Central America. We do this primarily by helping with the construction of community facilities requested by indigenous NGO's in Honduras and Guatemala.

In 2019/20, in Honduras, 17 people, including 1 member of First and Unitarians from Guelph and Edmonton, helped build a house for a needy family, and a one room primary school which will give over 30 children a year the opportunity to get a better education.

We also collaborated with World Accord and CHYM radio to promote the Construction Expeditions in the KW area.

Finances

The \$100 operating budget was not spent as we had leftover candy, decorations and a piñata to use for Central America Sunday. The special collection generated \$1,916.55 in donations which helped fund two \$1,000 youth bursaries. The bursary fund has a balance of \$5,512 for use in future years. Thank you for the generous support.

Other Activities

On Saturday, Sept 28th, we decorated First for Central America Sunday, the next day.

On May 2nd, we held a planning meeting with World Accord for the 2020 trips.

In September and October, we sponsored 3 coffee hour information tables to help promote participation in the trips.

Since 1997, over 500 Canadians have participated in our Construction Expeditions, including over 100 Unitarians – approximately 60 from First – representing 23 congregations (Saint John to Vancouver), have built 48 community facilities, contributing 1,000-person weeks of volunteer labour and many hundreds of thousands of dollars for construction materials. They each had a rewarding firsthand experience working with local people in the mountains of Honduras and Guatemala building schools, training and community centers, and houses.

Richard Kirsh

Green Sanctuary Group

Prime Contact: Marg Wiebe

Supporting Members: Linda Heron, Kate Chung, Cathy Brown, Sorlie Madox, Helen Kong, Anne Eriksen, Suzan Vaile, Jean Baillargeon

The GSG prepared and submitted an application for re-accreditation as a Green Sanctuary. We received a letter of acceptance as a recertified Green Sanctuary on October 2, 2019.

Our second congregational Lunch and Learn event was organized for March 8, 2020. Group discussions centred around *Transitioning to a Plant-based Diet*. Ingredients were provided for rolling vegetarian wraps with lots of help from the children.

Free *Feed Ontario 2020* recipe calendars were made available to encourage eating locally.

An information and display table of alternatives to single-use plastics was set up for four consecutive coffee hours.

Information and petitions were made available to support full funding of the city's *Transform TO50* program, resulting in full funding for the first time.

We provided space and materials for making posters to take to climate strike actions at Queen's Park on Sept. 27 and Nov. 29. Many children participated in this effort.

Bullfrog Power for gas usage @\$162.65 per month continues to be paid by generous congregational donations to special Earth Day offerings. We again request the Board to take responsibility for these payments as a token of their commitment to certification as a Green Sanctuary.

The Green Moment continues as a weekly contribution to First Light. Thank you, Linda Heron.

Leslie Solomonian, in conjunction with GSG and the eco-social group, has spearheaded a movement to ask First to endorse the *Just Recovery For All* initiative at the June 28 AGM. We are hopeful that further congregational conversation will lead to more clarity and ultimately to concrete action in the future. The GSG is happy to announce the addition of two new members, Suzan Vaile and Jean Baillargeon, and is always ready to welcome more.

Marg Wiebe, Chair



Financial Reports

Funds Management Committee

The mandate of the Funds Management Committee (FMC) is to oversee the congregation's long-term capital funds in compliance with the [Investment Policy](#) and [Financial Policies](#). 2019 was a good, boring year for the congregation's investments: our investments returned a net gain of 13.4%. The assets at December 31, 2019 totaled \$1,506,608 and comprised nine funds, two of which were newly established and had not yet received any money (the Property Reserve and Operating Allowance Capital Fund). A brief description of each of the funds is provided in Section 6.

The capital funds are segregated from the congregation's operating funds. Each fund is tracked individually and pooled into one investment account managed by a professional third-party investment manager. Our investment manager since 2008 has been Alan Harman at Scotia McLeod, an expert in Socially Responsible Investing ("SRI").

In 2019, the Funds Management Committee comprised:

- Wayne Lepine (from May 2016-May 2019)
- David Priebe (from May 2017)
- Rich Bailey (from May 2018)
- Robbie Brydon (from September 2019)
- Terri Marks (Board Representative, from October 2019)

Funds Management Committee Activity

On a monthly, quarterly and annual basis, the committee reviews the fund reporting received from the investment manager for compliance and performance monitoring.

In 2019, the FMC also:

- Proposed and prepared a full Request for Proposal for investment management services to thoroughly evaluate our current provider in relation to other possibilities. This was launched in early 2020.
- Consulted with the current investment manager about the effect of tripling the congregation's investment portfolio with the influx of funds for the Capital Operating Allowance and the Property Reserve.
- Provided advice to the Board on the change of the congregation's fiscal year
- Provided advice to the Board regarding short-term investment possibilities
- Identified challenges with the policy on sector diversification to be addressed in 2020 (see Section 4 below).

Policy Compliance Issues

At the recommendation of the FMC, the Board revised the Investment Policy (6.3) on sector diversification in 2017 to use the Jantzi Social Index as a benchmark. However, this index has two problems:

1. The congregation has excluded all investments in fossil fuels, whereas Jantzi maintains a large fossil fuel portfolio, and
2. The index focuses exclusively on the Canadian market, whereas one means of reducing risk is to diversify investments across different country's markets.

As such, the portfolio was consistently non-compliant with this metric throughout 2019. If the Energy sector (fossil fuels and nuclear) was excluded and weights rebalanced across other sectors, the concentration of equities by industry was only slightly beyond the limit set in one sector, Information Technology, which is a large component of the US market and a small component of the Canadian market. The FMC feels that the issue of non-compliance is more a matter of using the wrong metric to measure appropriate diversification than of the congregation's investments being too heavily weighted to one sector. As such, we recommended to the Board to take no action presently and to revise the Investment Policy in 2020.

Performance

The Annual Net Return of the investment fund is the total of all interest, dividends, realized & unrealized gains & losses, less management fees for the calendar year. The Actual Annual Net Return of the investment fund was 13.2%.

Our target return is inflation plus 3.5%. In 2019, inflation was 2.2%, so our target was 5.7%, which was significantly exceeded. Our portfolio did not do as well as the S&P/TSX Composite Index, which increased by 19.1%, but this is to be expected as our policies require that a significant portion of the portfolio be held in fixed income investments to mitigate against market downturns. We also set a Target 5-Year Annualized Return of annualized inflation plus 3.5%. For the period 2015-2019, the Target was 5.3%. Actual 5 Year Annualized Return was 6.8%.

Distributions

The congregation has two types of long-term capital funds: expendable and endowed. For expendable funds, both earnings and capital can be withdrawn. For endowed funds, only earnings may be withdrawn. Any use of withdrawn/distributed money is subject to the terms of each fund. In calculating the amount available for distribution from the endowed funds, it is necessary to retain some of the earnings within the fund to prevent the value of the capital from eroding because of inflation. This adjustment for inflation becomes part of the capital going forward. This process is detailed in Investment Policy 6.8.

Audited Financial Statements

Complete audited financial statements for 2019 were signed off by our auditors, Grant Thornton. No anomalies or issues for correction were raised during the auditor's report to the Board of Trustees. Complete copies of the statements will be distributed with the materials provided for the Annual Meeting on June 28, 2020.

2019 Funds Management Committee Report

Summary of Funds

NAME OF FUND / RELEVANT POLICIES	MANDATE	FUND TYPE → PAYOUT DESTINATION	RESTRICTIONS
Endowment By-law 4.4 Financial Policy 1.2	To help secure the long-term survival and mission of the congregation through long-term accumulation of capital.	Endowed → Endowment Available to Spend	2/3 of members present required to withdraw capital or change bylaws that affect the fund's operation (quorum is 10% of membership). May not be used for normal operating expenses.
Foundation By-law 4.5 Financial Policy 1.3	Restricted for use in religious, charitable or educational purposes of the Unitarian movement.	Endowed → CUC Sharing Our Faith	Capital may NOT be encroached; mandate is based on an agreement with the Ontario Office of the Public Trustee. 2/3 of members present required to change the distribution (quorum is 10% of membership).
Rouff/Mackie-Jenkins / Teaching Congregation By-law 4.6 Financial Policy 1.4.2	To provide grants to ministerial students and assist with the salary of an Intern Minister at First.	Endowed → 80% to CUC Theological Education Fund; 20% to Teaching Congregation (First Allocation)	2/3 of members present required to withdraw capital.
Operating Allowance Capital Financial Policy 1.4.8	To support the operating budget of the Congregation.	Endowed → Operating Budget	
Teaching Congregation (First Allocation) Financial Policy 1.4.6	Used towards the salary of Interns at First.	Expendable (from RMJ / Teaching Congregation Fund)	
Heritage Financial Policy 1.4.1	Purchases of a permanent nature in honour of living or deceased persons.	Expendable	
Endowment Available to Spend Financial Policy 1.4.5 By-Law 4.4	Purposes consistent with Endowment Fund (renovations, outreach, social justice, development of RE curricula, etc.)	Expendable (from Endowment Fund)	Not to be used for normal operating expenses (e.g., shovel snow, pay salaries).
Opportunities Financial Policy 1.4.7	To be used at the discretion of the Board.	Expendable	
Property Reserve Financial Policy 1.6.1	To provide for major maintenance, repair and replacement items.	Expendable	

2019 Funds Management Committee Report

Details by Fund

The table below summarizes the change in value for each of the funds and the real value (adjusted for inflation) of the total amounts previously contributed to the endowed funds. Only the amount in excess of this inflation adjustment is available for distribution. Included in this table is the Ratcliffe Growth Fund, which was wound up during the course of the year. Excluded are the Operating Allowance Capital Fund and Property Reserve which were created in 2019, but received no funds during the year.

	Endowment	Foundation	RMJ / Teaching	Heritage	Ratcliffe Growth	Teaching (First All.)	Endowment Available	Opportunities
Fund balance at Jan 1, 2019	436,119	99,564	291,557	52,302	3,458	19,027	146,542	361,496
Bequests/Donations	-	-	-	7,000	-	-	-	-
Distributions	-	-	-	(660)	(3,908)	-	(31,477)	(131,220)
Total gross income	61,500	14,040	41,114	7,375	488	2,683	20,665	50,977
Management fees	(4,741)	(1,082)	(3,170)	(569)	(38)	(207)	(1,593)	(3,930)
Fund balance at Dec 31, 2019	492,878	112,522	329,502	65,449	0	21,504	134,137	277,323
Real capital value at Jan 1, 2019	450,927	104,306	301,619					
Additional capital to cover inflation	9,158	2,091	6,123					
Changes to capital during the year	-	-	-					
Real capital value at Dec 31, 2019	460,086	106,397	307,741					
Stabilization amount (fund balance less real value)	32,792	6,125	21,761					
Income to be Distributed:								
Retained in fund (stabilization)	6,558	-	-					
Available to spend	26,233	6,125	21,761					

Our bookkeeper, Daniel Grzymisch, regularly tracks the value of individual funds, accounting for donations, distributions and income throughout the year. In his absence this winter, Kathy Thompson (who developed the tracking system) graciously prepared the end of year report. The FMC would like to thank both of them for their work supporting the committee and the congregation.