

1st Unitarian Universalist Church of Detroit 2010-2011 Annual Report



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President, Marilyn Mitchell

My report to the congregation this year is decidedly happier than last year's report.

The congregation has been fortunate in the ministry of Rev. Bill Neely, who brought us his considerable skills as a preacher and leader and helped us heal. The Board of Trustees and officers of the church have worked cooperatively with each other and with the minister to confront the hard decisions concerning the disposition of the congregation's buildings. The congregation, in turn, has been receptive to the Board's initiatives.

For the most part, we have retained our membership through trying times and have emerged stronger for the experience. The church has also attracted new members and friends. We are confident that the membership will grow as we divert our attention from building issues to programs and services.

I would like to express my special thanks to each member of the Board of Trustees. Each person gave of their time and talents generously and repeatedly. I give special recognition to Dave Lingholm, who took on the thankless job of treasurer, and was able to straighten out the accounting mess and settle financial issues with the last minister, with the assistance of Linda Darga and Rev. Lisa Presley. Special recognition goes, as well, to Dessa Cosma, who crafted the Request for Proposals on short notice and directed the process that resulted in a number of interesting proposals. Thanks to Kathleen Jacobs Johnson, who accurately took the minutes of every meeting and chaired the committee for the celebration of the church's 95th year. Thanks to Robert Johnson for his availability to deal with renters, rental problems and general building and computer issues. Thanks to Bill McKnight who repeatedly volunteered to serve on sub-committees and the interim search committee in addition to his duties as trustee and who has continued as a trustee of the Church Trust. Thanks to Sally Borden for her continuing good and wise counsel and for once again chairing the interim search committee. Thanks to Julie Brock for taking responsibility for the 2010-2011 Church Canvass and getting the 2011-2012 Canvass off to a good start. No president ever had a better Board to work with.

Finally, I thank the people of our congregation who given me appreciation and encouragement. There is no better congregation anywhere!



Interim Minister, Reverend Bill Neely

Please excuse my variance from what appears to be the standard Annual Report form. As your Interim Minister, a different model will work better.

Goals:

I have had five goals in my ministry with First Church over the year:

- 1) Partner effectively with the congregation, particularly with the Board, in directly addressing the congregation's enormous financial and building concerns.
- 2) Bring consistent leadership to the congregation's high-quality worship life.
- 3) Supervise staff well.
- 4) Help the congregation develop or expand one additional signature ministry (social justice, religious education, pastoral care, etc.), and more broadly, mirror back to the congregation what seems to be working well and not-so-well, programmatically.
- 5) Have a healthy good-bye.

Progress/Setbacks

- 1.) This has gone well. The Board zeroed in on the most important questions facing the congregation and has made incredible progress toward becoming a financially self-sustaining congregation. We have developed a very effective partnership; disagreeing well, agreeing often, and laughing more than necessary (a strength, in my book). I've felt trusted and respected in my work with the Board, and have been inspired by their courageous commitment to radically shift, and strengthen, the congregation.
- 2.) Similarly, this has gone well. The Worship Committee this year has been well-volunteered and outstanding in its work. First Church has a long history of quality worship, due to both consistent professional ministry and, I assume, Worship Committees of excellence. They understand liturgy, flow, the arts, and making worship appeal to the visitor. Additionally, I was not expecting the level of success that the Wednesday evening programming enjoys. This is due to the talents of the Worship Committee, but I was happy to help as asked. As I've said numerous times, First Church is a great place to preach.
- 3.) Day-today supervision has been fine. The staff functions very well in their respective positions, and the church seems to receive their talents with appreciation. The larger questions have been about the level of staffing. First Church is very over-staffed for a congregation its size. Remedies abound, but all are on hold until the congregation decides the future of its buildings. If the congregation divests of its campus, many current staffing positions will be unnecessary. If the congregation decides not to divest, considerable staffing reductions will nonetheless need to be considered. One model exists in the



healthy reduction of ministerial compensation that First Church offered from 2009/2010 to 2010/2011, and continued planned cuts in ministerial compensation in 2011/2012. These reductions make sense, given the congregation's overall financial picture. First Church currently has the overall staffing obligations of a congregation 3-4 times its size; a luxury that one way or another, the congregation can't afford.

- 4.) I developed the opinion early in my ministry here that to focus on developing a signature ministry would divert necessary energy and leadership from focusing on building and financial questions. As long as worship has gone well, the Board has worked well, and the congregation has fostered a caring attitude, I haven't wanted to ask for congregational leadership in any other areas because it would have taken leadership from people already committed to the congregation's most important work. As such, I dropped this goal midway through the year. I believe that the congregation's culture would support an active social justice program and might find use in a more formal pastoral care network once the leadership isn't focused where it is right now. The Membership Committee needs to be re-formed (in my opinion, this is the most important need). This could happen next year, or in the next few, after a bit of rest and when the Settled Minister Search concludes (that's up to the future ministers and lay leaders.) First Church's leaders are committed and very capable, but in my ministerial leadership here, I decided to focus (and admittedly perhaps over-focus) on helping the congregation make significant progress in its most important area, even to the exclusion of addressing other genuine congregational needs.
- 5.) It's too early to tell, but things are looking good ...

Conclusion

My impression is that we near the end of our year having accomplished much. First Church is poised to become much more financially self-sufficient than before, the leaders are directly and fruitfully addressing the most important questions before the church, and the members are courageously assessing the congregation's ability to survive, and thrive, without ownership of its current campus of buildings. Our work has been leading to the consideration of major changes in the life of the congregation, and we have worked well together and made good progress. The staff is capable and flexible, and First Church's reputation in the city as being an institution of service and justice is well-deserved by decades of commitment and effort.

A reimagined First Church, should the congregation choose that path, would need to focus on Membership Development, Social Justice, and consider some sort of CYRE program. These are all needs that we won't address this year, but should be faced soon. Fortunately, the Church has a strong history of success in all three areas to build upon.



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And personally, it has been a joy to work with these leaders and members and to worship here each week. First Church is an outstanding worshipping community, and I have often made the five-minute walk home after Sunday worship full of gratitude for being here this year.

Additionally, I have been inspired by the member's steady commitment to their city and congregation, even through tumultuous times. The spirit here is strong and resilient, as are the members, who refuse to give up on the potential of First and the city. It's been a blessing to be a part of that; to witness the Holy moving through the lives of these people in this place; to see them blessing each other and their community; and to have my ministry deepened by their faith, hope, and love. I near the end of my Interim year full of gratitude for this church, belief in its future, love for its people, and faith in its ministry within and beyond these walls.



Treasurer, Dave Lingholm

This has been a year of exceptional vision and courage, sprinkled with the occasional tumultuous meeting. From my perspective, if the church does accept a proposal to divest itself of building ownership, this congregation will be able to focus on the idea of being a relevant community partner once again.

To address one of the larger issues facing the church when I started, we did enter into mediation with the former minister, Rev. Johnston, over issues he had with the amount the church paid him. We agreed to use the person and process he suggested. We were even willing to settle for the amount suggested to settle his alleged claim; however he rejected the potential settlement citing a flawed process. At this time, I firmly believe he has been paid fairly and this issue should no longer concern the church.

In an attempt to avoid similar disputes in the future, we have sought the counsel of a CPA firm. They have helped ensure our payroll for all employees is accurate, that all taxes are paid correctly and are currently assisting us in fighting an \$18,000 tax bill from the IRS. The charge for these services has been less than \$1,000 this fiscal year, a solid investment for the peace of mind they have given the church.

Being a part of the RFP process for the church building has taking an inordinate amount of time. This has been time well spent if it means that the church can return to being a thriving church community once again, but it did consume quite a bit of time that your next Treasurer will thankfully not have to invest.

There have been a number of positive changes that don't make much of a difference to church members as a whole, but the changes were necessary to improve our processes and help align our finances with our principles. Soon, there will be a procedure manual that will make handling money easier to monitor. And before I leave, we will be banking with a co-op based in Metro Detroit so that our money is staying the in community it was donated in.

Going forward, there are a number of issues your next Treasurer will be dealing with. Questions like staying with Quickbooks which doesn't really meet our needs or migrating back to Power Church must be dealt with. Again, this might not seem like it is a major issue but the implications of time and accountability should warrant your attention. Working with the Trust and a newly reconfigured Endowment Committee will also be time consuming.

In that vein, I ask you to please support your new Treasurer in any way possible. Your financial health as an institution depends on you all becoming more informed and engaged.

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First UU Detroit	
Profit & Loss	
July 1, 2010 - May 1, 2011	
	Total
Income	
Donations-Other	18,901.67
Fundraising/Event Income	2,294.70
Offerings	2,418.76
Pledges	52,465.40
Rental Income	45,934.50
Trust/Endowment Income	67,453.67
Total Income	\$189,468.70
Gross Profit	\$189,468.70
Expenses	
Bank Charges	40.00
Commissions & Fees	299.63
Community Event	3,279.91
Contract Services	13,607.48
Dues & Subscriptions	2,035.00
Equipment Maintenance	949.86
Fundraising/Event Expenses	489.00
Health & Related Insurance	12,950.38
Hospitality	494.08
Insurance	12,934.84
Interest Expense	25.00
Legal & Professional Fees	300.00
Office Expenses	829.23
Payroll Expenses	63,708.77
Payroll Tax Expense	2,481.38
Professional Expense Reimbursements	7,415.87
Program Supplies	327.64
Rent or Lease	8,672.52
Repair & Maintenance	10,594.03
Retirement Expense	1,834.00
Salary & Wages	25,691.46
Utilities	27,759.33
Total Expenses	\$196,719.41
Net Operating Income	-\$ 7,250.71
Other Expenses	
Miscellaneous	590.00
Penalties & Settlements	131.01
Total Other Expenses	\$ 721.01
Net Other Income	-\$ 721.01
Net Income	-\$ 7,971.72



Membership Committee

1. What is working well in your committee or group (include accomplishments or other successes)?

The committee became inactive in December 2010 in part due to both chairs, Nora Holt and Erin Martinez, stepping down as well as difficulty finding new members to serve. Remaining members were still interested in serving, but none took on chairing the committee.

In the time that the Membership Committee was active, they held a Membership Picnic at the end of August in the church parking lot. It was very memorable with a large table of food, music, and was attended by members, visitors, and past members. The Membership Committee also scheduled a 2-Sunday “All about UUism”, led by Rev. Neely as an opportunity to learn about UUism and First Church. Only one person attended. The Committee also discussed and planned making up new Visitor and Membership folders/packets, but this was not completed before the committee’s last meeting. Nora Holt made up some packets; Sally Borden is making up more packets to be placed in the file cabinet in McCollester in May 2011. While inactive, Nora still checked for filled out blue visitor forms as well as made phone calls to members who haven’t attended in a while. Sally Borden continued to manage the Pot Luck list and phone tree.

Five new members signed the book this year.

Membership procedures/Bylaws are in writing and Membership policy is still on the church website.

2. What would you like to change?

As stated in the previous Annual Report, the committee needs more members, both young and new, to bring new energy to the committee.

3. How are communications working? Could you improve?

Minutes were taken at each meeting on a volunteer basis from the committee. Phone tree and Pot Luck lists need to be updated as there are still some gaps. Not all members have email accessibility, which makes it a little harder to communicate with the committee at large.



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4. What changes do you suggest?

The procedures and policies of this committee focus on recruiting new members while many members of the church assume that the committee is responsible for all social activities for members. Rev. Neely stated that these could be two separate committees: one for recruiting new members and one for sustaining current members.

5. What are your goals for the near future?

There should be a new meeting in the Fall 2011 to see if there is any interest to restart the committee or maybe even start a new committee (possibly under a different name) with new tasks and procedures.

6. Comments on review process?

Perhaps add/change so that there is a section to offer a brief summary for the year.

Submitted by Kathleen Jacobs Johnson.



The New Alliance

1. What is working well in your committee or group (include accomplishments or other successes)?

In Fall 2010, The Alliance reformed and renamed themselves “The New Alliance”. Carolyn Ludwig volunteered to chair for a trial period which lasted the year. The New Alliance now allows both women and men, although after a couple of meetings there have not been any men to attend. They changed their meeting times to be once a month, on the third Sunday after pot luck so that they no longer had to hold a luncheon. During the year, The New Alliance has organized a couple of play events, as well as had three speakers. They have accumulated some money.

2. What would you like to change?

There needs to be more planning. Some members think Wednesday evenings after Vespers would be better, but there are often too many activities going on, so that may not work.

3. How are communications working? Could you improve?

Communications work ok, but they need to be more cohesive. There is a lot of relying on Carolyn.

4. What changes do you suggest?

None at this time.

5. What are your goals for the near future?

The New Alliance will not be meeting in the summer. At the next meeting, they will begin to plan for Fall 2011.

6. Comments on review process?

None.

Submitted by Kathleen Jacobs Johnson.



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The New Alliance

We organized and elected officers in November 2010. Since then we have cleaned out and organized the closet near the kitchen, including selling items no longer needed and had a table for Noel Night. Other events were attending two plays, dinner together, and presenting three programs with speakers on Sunday afternoons.

We have plans for an Art Walk in July and potential plans for an incinerator discussion in August. In early December, we plan to have an Art Institute visit and other events are being investigated.

We have increased what was a small bank account; due to help from Sheri Wells' book sales and Margaret Beck's book and theater ticket sales.

Current plans are to reach out to nearby churches and the community to share in our events.

Submitted by Carolyn Ludwig, President



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Social Justice Committee

For the 2010-2011 fiscal year, 1st UU was involved in several social justice endeavors as a congregation, even though our official Social Justice Committee has been on hiatus. Beyond the regular workshops, discussions and sermons on social justice themes, 1st UU members have been active with MOSES (a local interdenominational faith organization working on food justice, transportation, immigration and health care) and as math, reading, and ESL tutors at Siena Literacy Center. Last June, 1st UU showed our LGBTQ pride at Motor City Pride, tabling and handing out literature about our faith. At the annual *Dally in the Alley*, 1st UU had a table, reaching out to passersby with information about our social justice values and principles. For the last 4 months, we've shown a social-justice-themed movie once a month and invited discussion on the topics covered, which included, education reform, water rights, and global warming. In conjunction with the UU Ministry of Earth, a 1st UU member spearheaded the 40/40 Sacred Water Challenge and garnered much support from congregants. Several 1st UUs attended the peaceful vigil in opposition to the Quran-burning and bigoted pastor, Terry Jones, who visited suburban Detroit in April. 1st UU has maintained its dedication to recycling despite the lack of curbside pick-up and held successful clothing and toiletries drives for Ozone House, a teen shelter nearby.

Submitted by Dessa Cosma



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Church Trust

The Trust (four active church members, with one vacancy) continues to manage assets which produce income solely for the benefit of the Church.

As of April 29, 2011, Trust assets were \$184,056. This is significantly less than in previous years. As recently as December, 2006, Trust assets stood at \$670,000. The Trust investment strategy is to produce maximum income, consistent with reasonable safety. Trust assets currently have an overall yield of 6.49%.

All income produced by Trust assets is immediately passed to the Church. In the last twelve months, income of \$12,753.85 was delivered to the Church Treasurer.

In addition, the Trust advances money from principle to help fund Church operations. In the past 12 months the Trust has advanced \$86,000 to the Church. The total value of advances since May, 2000 stands at \$476,316.

Submitted by Bill McKnight



Buildings & Grounds

1) What is working well in your committee or group (include accomplishments or other successes)?

Successful cleanup day. Did repairs on outdoor parking areas. Painted the Red Door red. Dealt with a number of leaks and floods. Sold a quantity of furniture at the rummage sale. Relocated archives and Ministers office in order to further rent out the second floor. Cleared books from the library. Maintained furnace. Maintained wireless network and enabled tenants to use it. Contracted snow removal due to Joe no longer being able to do heavy lifting. Dealt with breakdowns in the kitchen, namely the stove and oven. Evaluated handicap access and safety issues in the sanctuary. Rewired the sound system in the sanctuary to fix shorting in the microphones. Repaired sanctuary door (Cass Entrance). And our trash dumpster has inexplicably been painted gold.

2) What would you like to change?

We need more committee on the committee. We also need a more established knowledge base.

3) How are communications working? Could you improve?

We need more clarity of instructions and more direction from the Board.

4) What changes do you suggest?

None at this time.

5) What are your goals for the near future?

To improve sound systems in sanctuary, improve Wi-Fi access throughout the church, and find out who painted the dumpster gold.

6) Comments on review process?

None at this time.

Submitted by Robert Johnson



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Newsletter

1) What is working well in your committee or group (include accomplishments or other successes)?

The newsletter was restarted and published on a semi-regular basis.

2) What would you like to change?

We need to set regular periods for gathering articles and publishing dates.

3) How are communications working? Could you improve?

We need the leaders of various groups to be aware of the message they wish to present in the newsletter and take a part in its development, need contributions to be regularly submitted with proper subject lines via email and need to communicate more clearly the publishing date.

4) What changes do you suggest?

Establish fixed dates for publications and call times for articles.

5) What are your goals for the near future?

Timelier publication dates and to add more photos and editorial flourishes.

6) Comments on review process?

None at this time.

Submitted by Robert Johnson



Wednesday Night Activities / Adult Religious Education

1. What is working well in your committee or group (include accomplishments or other successes)?

Kathleen Jacobs Johnson took on trying to schedule and coordinate activities for each week. Rev. Neely led the first Wednesday of each month on the topic of Adult Religious Education ranging from Islam to sermon writing to Mormonism to UUism. The Singing Circle has continued to shine at their weekly meetings. Board meetings were on second Wednesdays and Worship Committee meetings were on Third Wednesdays so other than the meetings, Singing Circle was the activity. Fourth Wednesdays had an assortment of fun activities from game night to movie night to party preparations for Halloween and cookie decorating for Christmas Eve.

The attendance was small (maybe 15 at most, the most in the fall and petering out over the year) but appreciative. I know that there are problems with busy schedules as well as a good portion of members who do not like driving at night, which prevents them from coming on Wednesday nights. I also know that members of the Singing Circle are sometimes frustrated because they sometimes want to participate in the other activities but don't want to miss singing either.

2. What would you like to change?

I would like for there to be more activities and a broader range of them offered at the church. It was difficult for me to find people willing to lead activities as well. Since I was tied up in both the Board and Worship meetings, I wasn't available myself those Wednesdays to lead something.

3. How are communications working? Could you improve?

Communications can always be improved on. Most advertisement was in the Order of Service which few seem to read. Sometimes activities were announced by fliers on McCollester Hall tables, in the newsletter, or over the list-serve. I started to list a couple of activities at a time, but when Second and Third Wednesdays were dedicated for the year to meetings, I only included announcements for that week.



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4. What changes do you suggest?

Perhaps we can start going back to making more announcements in McCollester Hall, for starters. Announcements need to be talked up face-to-face to get buzz going. For now that seems to be the key: one-on-one contact, because otherwise, most ignore the written announcements.

5. What are your goals for the near future?

Worship will likely still take place during the summer, so I or someone else will likely continue on trying to plan something. Any suggestions?

6. Comments on review process?

None.

Submitted by Kathleen Jacobs Johnson.