

Celebrating 95 Years at the corner of Cass and Forest ...

## **First Unitarian-Universalist Church of Detroit**

*An Urban Center in Detroit for Spiritual Renewal and Social Justice*

---

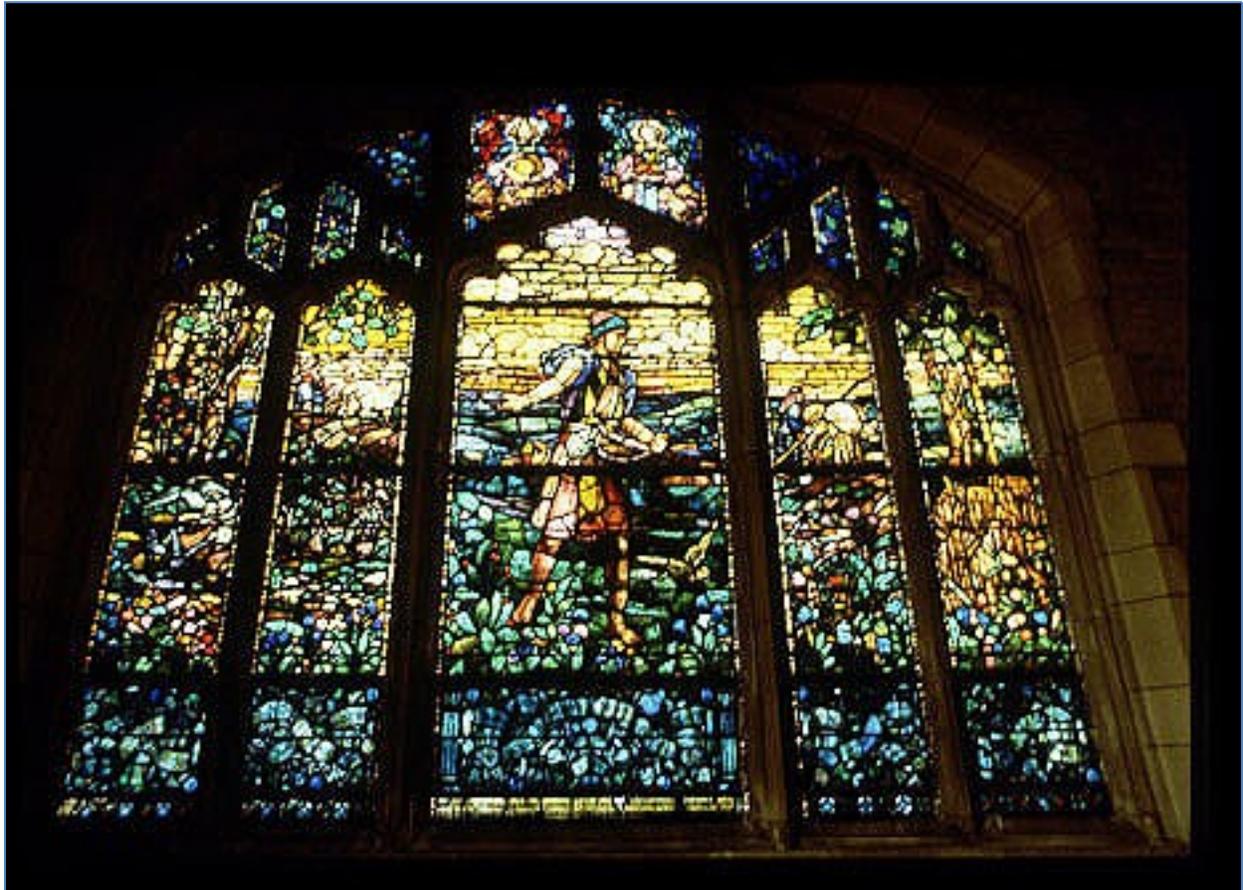
Order of Service and Commemorative Program

---

*“A House of Spirit and Service“*

Reverend Bill Neely

April 17, 2011



**The Necomb Memorial Window: “The Sower”**

**Liberate Truth ... Radiate Kindness ... Love Courageously**



## About The Sower...

---

The Newcomb Memorial Window was unveiled and dedicated on Sunday April 16, 1916. Quoting from the dedication folder that was handed out that day, "The Newcomb Memorial Window is from an original painting of THE SOWER, by William Willet and Annie Lee Willet, the artists who also made windows for the West Point Military Chapel and the dining hall of the Post-graduate College of Princeton. This window occupies the front gable of the beautiful building erected by Donaldson & Meier, and the predominant color tone is a golden glow which is made to vibrate with the rich bits of ruby, pink, green and purple of the oriental draperies and the flowers and leafage of the foreground, while the tracery openings are rich with the glorious Chartres blues for which these artists are noted.

The window is most successful in the play of color and light, and in the symbolic use of the figure as a decoration, and is made throughout of the costliest, imported, antique glasses, superimposed one upon the other, to secure depth of tone and is enriched with stains and acid work after the manner of Albrecht Durer and others of the ancient glass artists whose work has stood the test of centuries. As the dedication brochure boasts, "there is absolutely nothing in this window to fade or decay; hence it is a permanent expression of that form of art which is in itself a symbol of the Christian hope, tinged with the tints of the rainbow by the light of the 'sun of heaven' and in the dark night made visible and beautiful to the world by the light from within the church."

It represents the "Parable of the Sower," as told in the Bible's Book of Luke. The central opening depicts the sower scattering seed, a symbol of the Word of God, across the field at sunrise. In three of the four side panels, some seed has fallen along the wayside and is being devoured by birds, while other seed has fallen on stony ground or among thorns where it will either wither or be choked. The panel at the far right pictures the golden wheat that will flourish on the fertile field, symbolizing the virtuous life. Angels of the sun and rain appear in the upper tracery openings. Inscribed below are the scriptural verse of the window's theme and the names of Cyrenius Adelbert Newcomb and Mary Eliza Haskell Newcomb, in whose memory the window was dedicated.

## SINGING TOGETHER

---

### *Seeds of Faith* (tune of #163) ••• Words by Rev. Drew Johnston

1. We plant seeds in hope of something; what might grow we do not know.  
Darkness holds unknown potential; we cannot reap unless we sow.
2. Seeds are many shapes and sizes; and they travel far and wide;  
Some blow in from far off places; some seeds may take root at your side.
3. Nourishment comes from within us; and from what grew here before;  
Faith is what we truly nurture; as we plant seeds and hope for more.

### *Four Tops Medley* ••• Brian Holland, Lamont Dozier, and Eddie Holland

*Baby, I Need Your Lovin'* (1964):      Oooo--- Ooooo---  
Baby, I need your lovin', Got to have all—your lovin'.  
Baby, I need your lovin', Got to have all—your lovin'.  
Oooo--- Ooooo---

*Reach Out, I'll Be There* (1966)      Now if you feel that you can't go on  
Because all of your hope is gone  
And your life—is filled with much confusion  
Until happiness is just an illusion,  
And your world around is crumblin' down,  
Darlin' Reach out, Reach out!  
I'll be there--- with a love that will shelter you---  
I'll be there--- with a love that will see you through  
I'll be there-----

*It's the Same Old Song* (1965)      Now it's the same—old song,  
But with a different meaning since you've been gone  
Now it's the same, same old song  
But with a different meaning since you been gone.  
Wohhh-- Wohhhh--- Wohhhh-- Woh, oh yeah!

*I Can't Help Myself* (1965)      Sugarpie honey bunch, you know that I love you.  
I can't help myself, I love you and nobody else.  
In and out my life, you come and you go,  
Leavin' just your picture behind  
I've kissed it a thousand times  
Burnin' in my heart, tearin' it apart  
No matter how I try, my love I cannot hide;  
'Cause sugarpie, honeybunch-----

## ENTERING

---

Chimes & Lighting of Candles  
Singing Together\*  
Welcome – Marilyn Mitchell, Trustee

## CENTERING

---

Prelude  
Calling To Worship  
Kindling the Flame

Opening Hymn\* #290 Bring, O Past Your Honor  
Choir Anthem Todd Ballou, First UU choir director

## DEEPENING

---

Silence and Prayer  
Musical Meditation

*Congregation may sing along, remain seated*

The Blessings of First Church – Al Acker, Dan Wiest, Sharon Mills  
Message  
Celebration Communion

## RETURNING

---

Offering  
Closing Hymn\* #143 Not in Vain the Distance Beacons  
Benediction\*  
Recessional

*Congregation may exit to McCollester Hall for a potluck celebration and coffee. The 95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Planning Committee thanks members Lee Thume and Pat Pilafian for providing music during the potluck.*

(\* indicates times to stand in body or spirit)

### *Today's Music*

<b>Prelude:</b>	<i>Finlandia</i> (Jean Sibelius)
<b>Choir Anthem:</b>	<i>We're Not Lost, We're Here</i> (words by Philip Littell, music by Robert Seeley)
<b>Chalice Song:</b>	<i>Night and Day</i> (Andrew Backus)
<b>Musical Meditation:</b>	<i>Spirit of Life</i> #123 (Carolyn McDade)
<b>Offertory:</b>	<i>Toccata in D Minor</i> BWV 540 (J. S. Bach)
<b>Recessional:</b>	<i>Prelude in F# Major</i> (J. S. Bach)



### About the Committee ...

---

The Congregation extends its deep appreciation to members of the 95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Planning Committee, who made this celebration possible: Kathleen Jacobs (Chair), Sharon Mills, Ruth Seifert, Maysel Brooks, Toni Tront, Lencha Acker, Colleen Dolan-Greene, Robert Johnson, Kathe Stevens and Al Acker.



### About the church buildings ...

---

First UU Church has been Detroit's home for liberal religion for 95 years. The historic property runs along Cass Avenue, between Forest and Prentis, the sanctuary on the north end, the church house on the south end, and a fellowship hall/classroom complex between the two buildings. The sanctuary was designed by the architectural firm of Donaldson and Meier in the Neo-Gothic style with exposed timber trusses and beams. The walls are trimmed with

Indiana limestone. The church house was built by a lumber baron named McAdow in the late 1800s, and is a registered historic landmark. In 1917, McCollester Hall (named for Lee Sullivan McCollester who served as minister from 1882-1912) was erected on the site of the former McAdow carriage house. McCollester Hall contained an auditorium and underground gymnasium.

### **A brief history of First Unitarian-Universalist Church of Detroit ...**

In the early 1800s Universalists arrived in Detroit and were served by circuit-riding ministers to the few settlers scattered through the Northwest Territory. In 1846, a prominent local merchant bought and donated a small frame church to serve the Universalist congregation.

In 1850 the First Congregational Unitarian Society of Detroit was organized. This was known as the "Railroad Church" because 35 of the 75 men who signed the roster were employees of the Michigan Central Railroad. The Unitarians erected a simple frame church at the corner of Lafayette and Shelby in 1852.

In January 1880, Universalists incorporated as the First Universalist Society of Detroit; they held their first service at the Whitney Opera House and then built the Church of Our Father at Grand Circus Park and Bagley. The Unitarians built a church at the corner of Woodward Avenue and Edmund Place in 1889.

In 1913 the Universalists sold their property and purchased the McAdow House at Cass and Prentis, in which services were held until the present church building was erected in the former rose garden of the McAdow house in 1916.

The First Unitarian Universalist Church of Detroit resulted from the merger in 1934 of the two separate liberal faiths. This merger began (as temporary) because the Unitarian Church building was cut off when Woodward Avenue was widened at the same time that the Universalist minister left for another congregation. Thus, the Unitarians sold their building and the Unitarian minister served both congregations. Two years later, a legal agreement was signed, joining the Unitarian and Universalist congregations.

First UU has been actively involved in social justice and activism. In 1949 the Service Committee was established to work with the national Unitarian and Universalist Service Committees to bring displaced persons from Europe. The 1960s was an active time for the members of the church, who sponsored the largest Vista volunteer project in the city of Detroit. The project included a residents' organization and a food co-op. Members and friends during this time included activists, such as civil rights martyr Viola Fauver Gregg Liuzzo, and Vic Schumacher, who worked with Bayard Rustin to integrate the segregated dining hall when he was in federal prison for being a conscientious objector during World War II, marched with Martin Luther King Jr. and was a union organizer; and pioneers, such as Judge Wade McCree, the second African-American solicitor general in the history of the United States.

Between 1998 and 2004, a 501(c)(3), UU Community Place, was formed and operated as an umbrella organization for neighborhood activism and grant funding source. Various organizations benefitted from UUCP, including: C.A.M.P. Detroit, Cinema Café, The Learning Center, Black Folks Arts, Digital Video Studio, Detroit Summer, Food Not Bombs, Center for Women's Culture, Detroit Women's Coffeehouse, Kwanzaa Movie Festival, Wisdom Institute for Teenage Mothers, Urban Visionaries, and Blue Triangle.

Community involvement continued through the 2000s. After September 11, 2001, over 50 First Church members held a vigil outside the Islamic Center, our neighbor across the street, after a vandal destroyed one of the mosque's windows. Church children made drawings to

cover the broken windows. Before September 11, the two congregations had cooperated on other issues, including a march in support of Iraqi children. In 2002, the nationally known speaker and philosopher, Rev. Dr. William Jones, conducted a workshop titled “Oppression/Neo-Racism – How It Operates in Society.” In 2003, First UU was a founding member of Michigan UU Social Justice Network. In 2004, a Get out the Vote Workshop (sponsored by the UU Social Justice Network) was held at First Church. M.O.S.E.S. (Metropolitan Organizing Strategies Enabling Strength) was formed when we joined with 55 other churches, unions and schools to confront local and state officials about health care, affirmative action, job training and immigrant rights. The Church served as host in 2005 for both “Road to Detroit” and its cross-country biodiesel bus tour and the Bioneers Conference which showcased local chefs serving locally grown, organic food at a luncheon. A “Street Retreat” for the homeless was coordinated by Alex Darr, Outreach Minister from Faithful Fools Street Ministry of San Francisco, as part of the ordination of First Church member Lynda Smith, who was ordained jointly by Northwest Unitarian Universalist Church and First Church.

Rev. Drew Johnston was appointed as interim minister in January 2007. In April 2007 he was appointed Senior Consulting Minister. A congregation-wide appreciative inquiry was conducted between February and April of 2007 to assess the attitude of those who remained active members of First UU. In 2008, Rev. Lynda Smith was appointed Assistant Minister at First UU. In January of 2010 the Church Plan for the Future was adopted at the congregational meeting.

Finally, in September 2010 we welcomed Rev. Bill Neely to our pulpit as Interim Minister. We are grateful for his leadership during our 95<sup>th</sup> year at the corner of Cass and Forest.



### **Current community involvement ...**

---

In keeping with our history, “Sacred Waters and the 40/40 for Earth Challenge” is our 95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Social Justice Project (<http://www.uuministryforearth.org/node/159>).

For Earth Day 2011, UU Ministry for Earth is asking congregations to celebrate the sacred waters that sustain us and to commit to 40 days of actions that will make our world more just. We need 40 members to commit to 40 days of action concerning water issues. The 40 days begin today, so sign up for the 40/40 for Earth Challenge at the Social Justice table today during the potluck.



### **Ministers of First Unitarian-Universalist Church from 1940 to the present ...**

---

1940-1967 Dr. Tracy Pullman  
1969-1972 Anthony Perrino  
1972-1973 John Nichols Booth (Interim)  
1973-1983 Rudolph Gelsey  
1985-1988 Dr. Stanley Aronson (Extension)  
1988-1990 Dr. Richard Hasty (Interim)  
1990-1993 Teresa Cooley  
1993-1995 Bruce Johnston (Interim)  
1995-2004 Larry Hutchison  
2004-2005 David Parke (Interim)  
2005-2006 Diana Heath (Interim)  
2007-2010 Drew Johnston  
2010-2011 Bill Neely (Interim)



**In addition, the congregation of First Unitarian-Universalist Church has proudly ordained these four ministers ...**

---

Nancy Doughty  
Susann Pangerl

Emmy Lou Belcher  
Lynda Smith



**Members of the Board of Trustees ...**

---

President:	Marilyn Mitchell
Vice President:	Bill McKnight
Treasurer:	David Lingholm
Secretary:	Kathleen Johnson
Past President:	Dan Wiest
Trustee:	Sally Borden
Trustee:	Robert Johnson
Trustee:	Julie Brock
Trustee:	Dessa Cosma



**Church Staff ...**

---

Interim Minister:	Bill Neely
Music Director:	Todd Ballou
Cantor:	Gwen Foss
Office Administrator:	Jenn Hurtt
Publicist and R.E. Assistant:	Katie McIntosh
Building and Grounds:	Joe Brimmer
Sunday Assistant:	Leonard Swint



**Some excerpts from the Memory Book that have been compiled by the 95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee ...**

---

**The memory that comes to mind** is of my first time standing in the pulpit (Sept. 10) and seeing the beautiful tapestry of faces in the congregation; such warmth, love, witness, and spirit that I felt immediately at home. What a fabulous congregation!

••• Rev. Bill Neely – Interim Minister 2010-2011

**I enjoyed the Saturday Church clean-up days** coordinated by Earl Harvey, the art shows I helped organize and painting McCollester Hall with fellow volunteers. The Sunday service is almost always great!

••• Mark Schwing – member since 1997

**My two first visits to the 1<sup>st</sup> UU** on Cass were by taking the church tours with the Detroit Historical Society. Coming from a religious background which had elaborate church ... accoutrements, the plainness of the sanctuary, the service and the messages... were very refreshing. Later, I met two members who invited me to services. I was introduced to the “principles” and thought they were “right on.” The congregation was unpretentious, the organization committed to social activism and community involvement, and inclusive of all. Shortly, thereafter, I decided to join. I have not regretted that decision.

... Toni Tront – member since April 2009

**I remember the “Sweet Honey in the Rock” concert** in the sanctuary. The place was packed and the music was wonderful.

... Mary Lou Malone – member since 1970

**I remember one celebration of Juneteenth** when we had an impromptu “jam” sing-along during the picnic after church. A warm sunny day, good food, great music.

... Gwen Foss – friend of the church since 2006

**1966:** Moving to Detroit, a strange, huge city, it was heart-warming to know... how to find First UU and which bus to take. **1968:** Sally Borden ... did a Sunday morning talk to the Parents’ Group on “Hard to place children.” (We had adopted our son, Steve, but had been trying for 6 years to get a second child.) Thanks to Sally, we got our daughter, Andrea, in a year. **1969:** Our family, all four of us, were dedicated by the Rev. Tracy Pullman in a beautiful and never-to-be-forgotten Sunday Service. Thank you, First UU for all those memories and all that love!

... Lee Thume – member since 1966

**I remember Emmy Lou Belcher’s ordination.** I remember the beautiful inter-generational Waterloo weekends when we cooked and sang and followed Alex Mercer on his bog walk.

... Marilyn Mitchell – member since 1980

**One of my earliest recollections would be the performances** put on by the children of what was then called Second Story Church. A coffee hour extravaganza comes to mind... I believe spearheaded by Emmy Lou Belcher who was then our RE Director. It was a complete, costumed circus performance inspired by the fact that P. T. Barnum was a UU.

... Al Acker – member since 1978

**Jelly bean communion at a family Easter service** in Pullman Hall. Christmas Eves in our candle-lit sanctuary, singing “Silent Night” in our large circle. So very many thoughtful people. Dick Hasty’s teachings.

... Edie McKnight – member since 1968

**My fondest memory is still ongoing.** Returning from California, I wanted to find a church free and open to individual ideas of religion. It was a welcome relief to find 1<sup>st</sup> UU. I still appreciate it.

••• Maysel Brooks – member since 2004

**June 25, 2010** – I was one of three members of the congregation asked by the Worship Committee to report on our experiences at the USSF (United States Social Forum) held on Wayne State’s campus that week. I had never imagined I would ever find myself in a pulpit prior to finding 1<sup>st</sup> Church.

••• Danny Rebb – member since December 21<sup>st</sup> 2008

**Although I enjoyed everything, my ten years volunteering** each Tuesday in the office were the most fulfilling, and FUN. So many people passed through the door each day, and each one presented a learning experience – and often a challenge. I highly recommend being involved in the day-to-day life at 4605 Cass.

••• Mary Lee Ventzke – member since 1961

**During the summer of 2010,** we had a picnic in the backyard for the homeless. During the Christmas and Thanksgiving Holiday, we gave dinners for the homeless and I thought it was very nice. God Bless everyone in the church.

••• Leonard Swint – member since 2005 and Sunday Assistant

**I have been a part of this church a long time.** There are so many memories, but the most important thing I have ever gotten from this church are my friendships. I have met four of my closest friends here. Despite the status of the church we all stand strong. I could not imagine attending any other UU church.

••• Maya Thottakath – member since 1995

**During coffee hour in May, 1961,** Reverend Dr. Tracy Pullman engaged me in conversation. Helen Mary and I had just become church members, and our young daughter Gloria Trace was “dedicated,” and given a red rose. He asked about my occupation and I told him I worked in railroad yards as a switchman, or yard foreman. He smiled and said we had a connection: his grandfather’s brother had founded the Pullman Sleeping Car Company. I got a kick out of that.

••• Robert E. Neale – member since May 1961

**In June 2010, I attended the Social Forum at Cobo Hall** and experienced Grace Boggs.

••• Ms. Rochelle Jackson – member since 2010

**I remember when I first came to the church in 1990** with my girlfriend, Laura Thompson. We were freshmen in high school, and the high school group had 10-15 people. We had such

great times both as a group as well as part of the Youth Adult group of the Michigan district. Our friendships have continued into our adulthood, and were large inspirations on our lives. We are more than friends – we are family. It was actually through this network that I met my husband, Robert Johnson, from the Farmington church.

••• Kathleen Jacobs Johnson – member since 1993/2009

**We have had so many unforgettable and significant experiences** since being members of this church. We created anti-racist workshops and many monthly book reviews. We presented special Sunday services in February, March, April and June (Juneteenth). We also presented many fund raisers, such as African-American ethnic dinners and the annual Kwanzaa Jazz concert, which grew to become a metropolitan special event for 20 years. So it seems that our unforgettable and significant experiences have been that of service and exchanging ideas with our brothers and sisters. We have enjoyed all of it.

••• Dr. James A. and Mildred Robinson – members since 1985

## About the Skinner Pipe Organ ...

---

The 1915 magnificent 51-rank Ernest M. Skinner pipe organ was brought in from Boston and has wooden redwood pipes from California. This organ was shipped via train from Boston to Detroit in April of 1915. The organ was built in April 1915 and dedicated one year later, in April 1916. Our organ has never been altered, and we have been proud to claim that this is the



earliest example of Skinner's "all-purpose" organ that is still in its original state. However, an older Skinner organ in Chicago has recently been restored into its original state, and can now claim that title.

This organ was dedicated to the memory of Simon Jones Murphy and Ann Dorr Murphy, by their daughter, Annie Door Murphy. This church was built in 1915, but the First Universalist Society was established 36 years earlier in 1879. The first meetings of the Society were held in the Murphy's residence. The Murphy family were lumber barons, with operations in the redwood forests on the west coast. Much of the wood used in this instrument is red wood donated by the Murphy's lumber business.

The organ was selected to represent the work of Ernest Skinner in JAV Recordings' series of "Great Organ Builders of America, because it remains an unaltered example of his work. Dr. Paul-Martin Maki recorded *Volume II, The Ernest M. Skinner Organ Company* on our organ. This is particularly special because as the organ ages, it will be less likely to be used as a concert instrument; thus this recording may become more and more valuable as a historical document.

Helen Fairchild Larsson played this organ for 60 years, from approximately 1935 to 1995. Her story is one of the most important legends surrounding our historic instrument.

