

The First Unitarian Church Of Providence

Resource Book 2023-24
Seek. Connect. Serve.



Our Covenant

We the members of the First Unitarian Church of Providence, with respect for the worth and dignity of each person, with wonder at the light we know by many names, and with gratitude for our deep connection to each other and to the larger web of existence, covenant to walk together in our search for truth, seeking the paths of wisdom, compassion, and justice.



Graphic by Luca Salerno

MEET OUR STAFF



**Rev. Liz Lerner
Maclay, Senior
Minister**

Rev. Liz has been with us since 2017.

She is deeply invested in building multi-racial, multi-cultural community within and beyond our congregation. She lives in Lincoln with her husband, Tim, and two friendly flat-coated retrievers. They have two adult children.

min@firstunitarianprov.org



**Rev. Roger
Peltier,
Assistant
Minister**

Rev. Roger has

been a UU parish minister for 20+ years. He serves one-on-one pastoral needs, manages the Pastoral Care Network, Care Crew, Buddy Program, and grief support. Roger lives in Cranston with his husband, John Hickey, and their yellow lab, Pete. pastoralcare@firstunitarianprov.org



**Mandy Neff,
Interim Director
of Religious
Education**

With 20 years experience as a

religious educator, Mandy is the author of two youth curricula and recently served as president of New England Chapter of LREDA. She lives and hikes in Massachusetts with her husband, Andy Gatchell. They have 3 young adult children, a cat, and a delightful rescue dog. dre@firstunitarianprov.org



**Beth Armstrong,
Interim Music Director**

Beth joined First Unitarian and its choir in 2001. A choral director by profession, she has helped out in the music

program when needed, most recently as the sabbatical music director in the fall 2019. Beth and her husband Stew live in Warren

musicdirector@firstunitarianprov.org



**Nancy
Forsstrom,
Director of
Operations**

Nancy joined our staff in 2018. She keeps track of the

day-to-day life of the church, working closely with the minister, Prudential Committee, and staff team to keep things running smoothly.

admin@firstunitarianprov.org



**Jennifer Nardone,
Membership
Coordinator**

Jenn has been attending First U since 2000 with her husband, Jon, and their two sons. She

served on the Membership Committee for as long as she can remember, and became Coordinator in 2011. Jenn has also taught in the Sunday School and participates in a Chalice Circle.

mem@firstunitarianprov.org



**Jaime Durango,
Building Manager**

Jaime has been with the church since 2001. He is in charge of all maintenance of the Meeting House

and the Parish House as well as daytime security. Originally from Colombia, he lives in Pawtucket with his wife Maria; they have two adult children.



**Walter Sotelo,
Administrative
Assistant**

Walter came to First U in 1998. He oversees all

financial aspects of church operations, maintains the database, and provides technical support. He is originally from El Salvador and has lived in Providence since he was 16. He has two adult daughters.

assist@firstunitarianprov.org



**Pedro
Vasquez, Sun
& Eve security**

Pedro has been with the church since 2009. He

and his wife live in Pawtucket; they have 3 grown children.



**Amy Alberg, DRE
Assistant**

Amy joined the part-time staff with the Spiritual Pathways program in 2022. She is

a lifelong UU and lives in Smithfield.

dreassist@firstunitarianprov.org



**Asa
Spring,
Youth
Music
Director**

Asa joined the part-time staff in 2023 to assist with music for all ages. He lives in Harmony, RI. firstuymd@gmail.com



**Kelly Coccio,
Communications
Assistant**

Kelly joined the part-time staff in 2023. She has extensive experience in all

aspects of communications and will be helping with our newsletter, website, and other initiatives.

frontdesk2@firstunitarianprov.org



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Welcome to First U

A MESSAGE FROM THE SENIOR MINISTER

Hello and welcome to a very special year at First Unitarian!

Our church has always been a place for spirit and action, love and renewal. Our work last year to establish priorities for our present and future is really coming into shape. We have an intentional strategic plan that charts our course forward into even greater breadth and depth of experience for all ages and identities of beloved people.

The energy, intent, and creativity already flowing through our members and friends, programs and leadership is so exciting to experience and build on. Our gifted staff team, devoted lay leaders, and fellow congregants are all ready to welcome you – and each other – back to this home for community, connection, service, and inspiration.

We have a lot to look forward to – and much of it is in this guide to the year ahead. Please read it carefully for information about religious education for all ages, special programs, small group ministry experiences, our powerful justice initiatives, and the many ways we are living our faith together, both here at First Unitarian and out in this world that so needs our progressive, relevant beliefs. Keep it somewhere handy as we move through the year. And hopefully, very soon...

... see you in church!

Warmly,

Rev. Liz



OUR SHARED MINISTRY

The professional ministers, religious educator, music director, director of operations, membership coordinator, support staff and volunteer leaders work together to serve the congregation's mission.

Worship, programs, efforts, and events are organized into four ministries. All are welcome and encouraged to participate. Opportunities are waiting for you!

Spiritual Development
(see pages 6-8)
Lifelong faith engagement - newborns to adults

Community Life and Heritage
(see pages 10-11)
Connections within the congregation and community

Social Justice
(see pages 12-13)
Values into Action for our community and beyond

Stewardship
(see page 14)
Health and Growth of our Congregation

COMMUNICATION

FIRST U TIMES

The church distributes weekly emails to everyone on our contact list with information about opportunities for worship and faith development programming for all ages. Monitors in the Parish House display updated announcements.

THE CHURCH WEBSITE - www.firstunitarianprov.org

The church website provides general information about the church, its staff and programs, as well as postings of the weekly e-news and recent sermons.

CONGREGATIONAL DATABASE / DIRECTORY

Our church database, Realm, gives church members the ability to update their own personal information, check on the status of their pledges, and find contact information for other members. Password must be created for access; contact Walter in the office for help.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Our church has a public Facebook Page with updates, useful links, photos, and more! Type 'First Unitarian Providence' in the search box and "like" us. There are several Facebook Groups run by separate committees/groups in the church. Instagram: firstuprovidence

SPIRITUAL PATHWAYS NEWS

Weekly e-messages are sent to volunteer teacher teams that share updates and resources to support the program.

All are welcome at First U - we look forward to meeting you!

ACCESSIBILITY

- ◆ Accessible Parking Spaces are marked in our lot next to the Meeting House and on Benevolent St.
- ◆ Hearing Enhancement Devices and Large Print Hymnals are available in the Meeting House.
- ◆ Gender Neutral Bathrooms are located in the Parish House and on the second floor, via elevator or stairs.
- ◆ There is wheelchair access to the Meeting House and the Parish House. Accessible bathrooms are located in the Parish House.

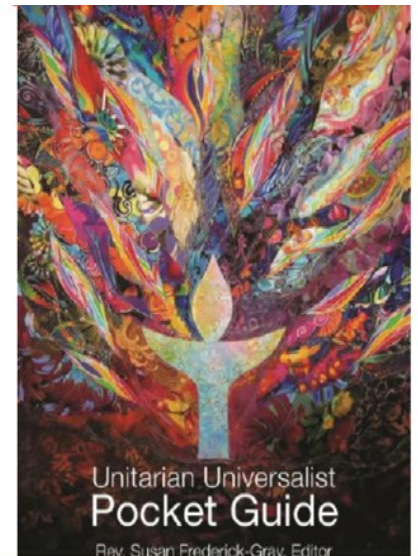
MEMBERSHIP

We are a covenantal community who enter into a promise to be present to one another, to help each other by learning and engaging in this congregation where we commit, grow, and participate in worship, connection, and service.

The Newcomers' Café in the Parish House Paneled Parlor located behind the fireplace, is a welcoming space for those new to our UU congregation to meet people and ask questions. Members and staff facilitate informal connections and provide information about the church as you navigate congregational life. There are two welcome tables, at the entrances of the Meeting House and the Parish House where you can find name tags, learn more about UUism and First U, and sign up for our communications.

Path to Membership classes are offered several times a year, with the first opportunity in early fall. The sessions offer insights into Unitarian Universalism and our congregation. Please let the Membership Coordinator know if you are interested in attending. Dates will be posted in all church communications. At the end of each class, people are invited to sign the membership book and make a financial pledge of support to the congregation in order to become a voting member. Voting members steer priorities and resources.

Contact: Jennifer Nardone, Membership Coordinator,
mem@firstunitarianprov.org, or leave a message in the church office,
401.421.7970.



WELCOME TO UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM

The First Unitarian Church of Providence is a member congregation, New England Region, of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations. The primary purpose of the Association is to serve the needs of its member congregations, organize new congregations, extend and strengthen UU institutions, and implement its principles. Supported by our contributions, the UUA strengthens Unitarian Universalism by raising our collective voices to advance social justice, training and equipping religious leaders, and creating tools and curricula for local congregations and beyond.

We Are Unitarian Universalists:

We are brave, curious, and compassionate thinkers and doers. We are diverse in faith, ethnicity, history and spirituality, but aligned in our desire to make a difference for good. We have a track record of being on the side of love, justice, and peace.

We have radical roots and a history as self-motivated spiritual people; we think for ourselves and recognize that life experience influences our beliefs more than anything. We need not think alike to love alike. We are people of many beliefs and backgrounds; people with a religious background, people with none, people who believe in a God, people who don't, and people who let the mystery be.

We are Unitarian Universalist: Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Humanist, Jewish, Muslim, Pagan, atheist and agnostic, believers in God, and more. On the forefront of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer inclusion for more than 40 years, we are people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. We seek to welcome you: your whole self, with all your truths and your doubts, your worries and your hopes. Join us on this extraordinary adventure of faith. - From the Unitarian Universalist Association, Boston MA

For more information, please visit <http://www.uua.org>



SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY

The Spiritual Development Ministry offers a nurturing community that facilitates a lifelong journey of Unitarian Universalist faith development through communal worship, music, religious education, and spiritual practices.

Contact: Alison Green, alisonmaragreen@gmail.com

Programs & Teams:

Worship Committee, Music Committee, Choir and Junior Choir, Spiritual Pathways Program and Team, Campus UUs, Adult Faith Development, Small Group Ministry: Soul & Chalice Circles

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (DRE) SEARCH TEAM

As we close out our Interim time in religious education, the DRE Search Team will gather input from the congregation about its future hopes for the Spiritual Pathways program. Over the course of this year, the team will create a packet about First U, including a job description and posting, and complete a national/continental search for a settled Director of Religious Education. They will recommend a candidate to the Prudential Committee (PruComm) by May, 2024.

Contact Chair Heidi Vazquez if you have any questions:
heidivazques57@gmail.com.

MUSIC AND WORSHIP

WORSHIP

The Worship Committee works with the Senior Minister to foster our shared worship experience and is responsible for planning and hosting Summer Services.

Contact: Neil Bartholomew, ngbart@gmail.com

MUSIC COMMITTEE

In partnership with the music director, the music committee sets goals for a vibrant, spiritual music ministry program that enhances and complements worship services and the spiritual pathways program, and serves the church's goals. With the music director they recruit people to participate in musical groups and projects, help interested newcomers find a place in the music program, assure protection and maintenance of the organ and musical instruments, maintain hymnals and printed music collections, provide music communication updates, formulate an annual music budget, and facilitate special fundraising that benefits the music program.

CHOIR and JUNIOR CHOIR

The Choir is always seeking new members as our community continues to flourish! If you have an interest in being part of our growing music program, **contact Beth Armstrong, Interim Music Director**, musicdirector@firstunitarianprov.org

Our Junior Choir sings from time to time in the Meeting House, often during multigenerational services. All young people in the Spiritual Pathways program are welcome to join. **Contact Asa Spring, Youth Music Director**, at firstuyumd@gmail.com for more info.

SPIRITUAL PATHWAYS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Based on our First Unitarian mission, principles, and values, we welcome people in love, creating connections, and fostering inclusion for people of all identities and abilities. We facilitate lifelong learning and help people cultivate spiritual practices through social action and faith development. We recognize that this is a journey that we walk together, in compassion and justice.

First Unitarian offers a comprehensive faith development program for children and youth from infancy through early adulthood during the school year. In the summer, a program for young children is provided each Sunday.

Most Sundays during the church school year, young people age pre-kindergarten through seventh grade will first go to their individual classrooms to check in and then go to auditorium for a chapel worship before returning to their classrooms. On holidays and other important Sundays, youth join adults in the Meeting House for a multigenerational service.

Chapel services incorporate a blend of music, art, meditation, stories, celebrations, and listening. Classes are taught by a dedicated group of volunteers who teach in teams.

Spiritual Pathways is pleased to open registration for our 2023-24 programs. We begin on September 19 and programs will run from 10:30am-12pm.

Nursery Care will be available in the Earth Room, floor 2, for children ages 0-3.

Children and youth meet in their classrooms at 10:30am. Our elementary children join for weekly **Children's Chapel** in the Auditorium to explore the big spiritual questions of life, make meaning, create community belonging, and learn about our Unitarian Universalist values. In 2023-24 we will have a special justice focus in the fall on peacemaking, and in the spring on climate issues.

Spirit Play [<https://spirit-play.com/>] is our new program for PreK. This story-based program gives young children the time and space to explore our Unitarian Universalist stories and make their own activity choices from specially curated activities guided by spiritual "Wondering Questions."

K-1st graders will be in the Sky Room, floor 2. They continue their beloved program **Creating Home**, with new supplements from Spirit Play this year.

Our 2-3rd graders will meet in the 3rd floor Moon Room. This year's program is the UUA's **Love Will Guide Us**. Our children will join in the conversation on the Article II proposal about our new values statement, which holds Love as our central spiritual value. The 2-3rd graders also plan to help lead the congregation in special multigenerational climate justice activities from UU Ministry for the Earth this spring.

Crossing Paths, our world religions program for 4-6th graders meets in the Diversity Room on floor 3. This special program uses hiking as a metaphor to guide the children on a year-long exploration of the history and beliefs of UUism and other religions, including monthly visits to local houses of worship.

The **Coming of Age** program for middle schoolers, a UU Identity-building program with special mentors from the congregation, meets in the first floor Haynes Room. This program helps budding youth explore their place in the congregation through volunteer service, worship, and spiritual practices. These youth and their families will host the annual winter Taco Supper as a fundraiser for their UU History learning trip in spring 2024. You can look forward to their worship service in spring 2024 as well!

Youth Group for high schoolers will meet in the basement level Youth Room. Our youth develop their own deep (or sometimes silly) "Mondo Cosmic Questions" to discuss; attend and even host regional Youth Cons; participate in service projects and learning; and lead worship and music for the whole congregation.

To register, sign into onrealm.org and look for Spiritual Pathways in the 'registration events.'

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

We offer a vibrant small group ministry program for new or long-time members that provides opportunities to become more connected and engaged. Groups meet twice monthly, in person and virtually, to explore topics of importance and interest. Church members are trained as facilitators who plan, lead, promote, and oversee the program, meeting monthly with the Assistant Minister for support. Groups share a common format: chalice lighting, check in, sharing of responses to a topic or a reading, check out, and closing. Members develop a covenant for how they will relate to each other and to the larger community. Watch for fall and spring opportunities to try a "Circles Sampler."

Soul Circles focus on a single topic for long and deep exploration. Some examples are Creative Aging, Living LGBTQ, and the Grief Journey. Groups also participate in service projects together.

Chalice Circles focus on topics that inspire and reflect on daily lives, providing an avenue for religious growth and spiritual meaning. Groups meet on varying days and times for two hours per session. People are asked to commit to 8-10 sessions.

Contact:

Janet Downing Taylor,
jdtaylo39@verizon.net

SOURCES OF WISDOM

Unitarian Universalists draw wisdom and meaning from many sources. These are the six sources our congregations affirm and promote:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- Words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
- Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

ADULT FAITH DEVELOPMENT

TREATING BELOVED BOOKS AS SACRED

Our Sacred Texts discussion group meets weekly on Monday nights at 7:15 pm. We begin with a bit of socializing, then discuss a book series that has been important to many to find new meaning through a closer, more thoughtful read. Join us as you can; we welcome anyone who is interested even if you have not previously read the books. Starting in the Fall of 2023, we are reading the *His Dark Materials* trilogy by Phillip Pullman. For an idea of what we are doing/why, check out the podcast that inspired us: "Harry Potter and the Sacred Text."

Contact: Lisa Maloney, lisaloon42@hotmail.com

BENEVOLENT ST. ZENDO - AN ONGOING ZEN MEDITATION GROUP

Meets in person the 2nd Monday of the month at 7:00pm. Practice leaders: Cindy Bapties, Michael Lapidés, George Beshers; benzen.pvd@gmail.com. Benevolent Zen, ongoing sangha, presented by members of our congregation and a Zen master. Dharma talks and opportunities for spiritual direction are provided monthly. Please visit benevolentzen.org.

TIBETAN MEDITATION

Guided meditations based on Tibetan practices of Loving Kindness and Compassion that have been adapted by Westerners of all faiths. No previous experience is required; for the full benefit of this practice it would be helpful to come regularly for a few weeks. Our group meets on Wednesdays at 7:00 pm. You don't need to bring anything with you; we have both cushions and chairs. Wear whatever is comfortable for you. Check the website: <https://sustainablecompassion.org/audio/>.

Unitarian Universalism draws wisdom from many sources... including our own members!

UU MEN

Meets the 2nd Sunday, September - June, 7:00pm. The Men's group has met monthly for more than 30 years. We welcome men of all ages and stages in life to conversations about the personal and cultural challenges and opportunities of being men, following ground rules that encourage confidentiality, free-flowing discussion of topics selected by rotating volunteer facilitators. Contact: Burr Harrison, burrharrison@gmail.com, and David Riley, davidpriley@aol.com.

SPIRIT IN LIFE

The Spirit in Life group meets every other week to explore experiences important to members of the group. Our meetings usually begin with someone telling a story about an experience that has made an impression on them and strikes them as important. With this as our starting point, we talk about how the story resonates within us. What does it tell each of us about ourselves? About our relationships, our community, or our broader society and culture? The group strives to practice deep listening and careful speech. There is a Tuesday group and a Wednesday group. The first two meetings of each group will be open to newcomers after which the groups will be closed until next Fall. If interested, please contact Tony Allen tonyallenri@gmail.com or Barbara Zdravesky barbara.zdravesky@gmail.com.

PHOTO GALLERY - LIFE AT FIRST U!



Clockwise, from top left: Stew Armstrong serves as Auctioneer for our 2nd Annual Marketplace; Christmas Eve services were inspiring and joyful; First U members rally for responsible gun legislation at the State House; The Mitten Fence, providing warm wear for whoever needs it; community members write to Congress asking for responsible gun legislation; the cast of the First U Talent Show (photo by Courtney Taylor Cohen).



SAVE THE DATE!

Mark your calendars now for the first annual First Unitarian All-Church retreat, May 24-26, 2024.

This will be a weekend of fun, fellowship, connection, activities, creativity, worship, camp fires, music, and more.

Plan to gather at Camp Aldersgate, in North Scituate for deepening relationships and lots of relaxing.

Stay tuned for more program info and registration details.



COMMUNITY LIFE AND HERITAGE MINISTRY

The Community Life and Heritage Ministry develops and maintains a culture that fosters strong and authentic connections within the congregation and a sense of belonging to our larger community.

Contact: Katy Killilea, katykillilea@icloud.com

Programs and Teams:

Caring Community, Women's Alliance, Connections Committee, History Committee, Irene's Book Nook, Art in the Atrium, Community Band, Transylvania Partner Church Committee, Young Adult Group

OUR CARING COMMUNITY

First U Pastoral Care Network is a network of support available for members and friends of the congregation in times of illness, stress, or transition, as well as practical assistance with transportation or other daily needs. In addition to our Assistant Minister for Pastoral Care, Rev. Roger Peltier, we offer a Buddy Program to pair folks in supportive relationship, a Caring Crew to assist with rides, meals and other practical support, and unparalleled grief support.

For more information contact Rev. Roger Peltier,
pastoralcare@firstunitarianprov.org

BUDDY PROGRAM matches parishioners, in pairs, who commit to call each other once per week to check-in. This hugely popular program has been the basis for some deep friendships. You may request a buddy at any time.

CARING CREW provides help with logistical needs: rides, meals, and errands. Parish Care volunteers do not receive special training. They are simply folks willing to help others in times of need in concrete ways. It is a ministry of "doing" rather than simply being present.

LAY MINISTRY TEAM is a small group of volunteers, invited and trained to assist the Assistant Minister with congregational pastoral needs. Their work complements, does not replace, the pastoral care offered by our ordained ministers. This confidential ministry is grounded in being present and listening, rather than doing or fixing. Lay Ministers are not professional counselors or therapists but trained individuals who understand that all may need help at times, whether in an important life transition, a serious health condition, or another personal struggle.

MINDFUL GRIEVING is a five-session small group that meets periodically throughout the church year. Groups are led by skilled volunteers and use many tools to help deal with significant loss. After completing Mindful Grieving sessions, participants are invited into the continuing, Grief Journey Soul Circle.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT

THE WOMEN'S ALLIANCE

The First U Women's Alliance was established in 1882, incorporated in 1904, and affiliated with the church in 2014. The mission is to: offer enrichment through timely and informative programs; nurture opportunities for friendship, inspiration, and support among the members; and contribute to community organizations benefitting women, children, and families through fundraising activities and service. Meetings are first Mondays each month, October through May with an annual outing in June. Meetings, recently, are hybrid with gatherings in the church Auditorium and screened via zoom to members at home. Membership dues support programs and administrative expenses. All fundraising profits, like the annual "Antiques and Uniques" Indoor Yard Sale, benefit selected charitable organizations supporting women and families. For more information and how to join please **contact: Janet Downing Taylor, membership coordinator: jdtaylo39@verizon.net President: Nancy Safer ndsaffer@gmail.com**

ART IN THE ATRIUM

First U's Art in the Atrium inspires the community by producing five to six exhibitions each year which encourage us to interact with artists' diverse viewpoints of the world and motivate us to see, think and feel on a deeper emotional and spiritual level. Artists who want to exhibit and friends who want to help support the cost of the "Art in the Atrium" exhibitions can join the Art Collective by completing the membership form and paying annual dues of \$25. **Contact: Greg Kniseley mkniseley@me.com or Nancy Worthen nancy.worthen4815@gmail.com**

FIRST U COMMUNITY BAND

We create relationships, learn and make music together, and share with the congregation. **Contact: Kate Bowden, kbowdenesq@gmail.com**

CONNECTIONS COMMITTEE

This group supports the work of the Membership Coordinator in welcoming newcomers, integrating new members, and building community. These initiatives include supporting Hospitality Teams, Newcomers' Café, the Path to Membership Classes, and sponsoring congregational events. They meet monthly for planning. **Contact: Jenn Nardone, mem@firstunitarianprov.org**

HISTORY COMMITTEE

The History Committee gathers and maintains church historical records and shares its 300-year history with the congregation. In 2016, they hosted the 200th anniversary celebration of the Meeting House and produced a booklet on its history. Publications include "Pastors' Rest," describing the church's five-acre Swan Point Cemetery burial ground. In 2020 the History Committee and the 300th Anniversary Committee celebrated 300 years of the congregation with banners, performances, and commemorative items. The Committee continues to support the efforts researching the church's involvement with the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and the Business of Slavery throughout RI. To help support this publication, The History Committee will have a sales table monthly with merchandise from the 300th Anniversary and booklets, cards, and framed photos of the Meeting House. Interested church members and friends are always welcome to join the Committee. **Contact: Janet Downing Taylor jdtaylo39@verizon.net**

IRENE'S BOOK NOOK

Irene's Book Nook is open in the Atrium most Sundays, offering a variety of titles, including Unitarian Universalism, inspiration, Buddhism, Bible studies, environmental concerns, children's stories, poetry, family life, recent titles from Skinner House, Beacon Press, and Skylight Paths as well as the UUA Common Read. Irene & Tony Allen established and ran Atrium Books for 12 years; it was Irene's initiative, thus renamed in her honor. Irene died in 2020, leaving a memorable legacy. A small committee manages operations, welcoming new volunteers to help in this joyful work. All profits benefit the church. **Contact Betty Finn with questions; finnbettyog@gmail.com.**

TRANSYLVANIA PARTNER CHURCH COMMITTEE

Partnership between First U and the Unitarian church in Szentegyhaza, Transylvania (Romania) is supported through communications and visits. We celebrate Partner Church Sunday each January with songs, stories, and greetings. Through fundraising efforts our church helped fund the construction of their church bell tower and a loft visitor apartment. The meditation garden kopjafa/memorial post and joys and sorrows wooden candlestick are handmade gifts from our partner church congregation. The congregations meet monthly on Zoom. Members of our partner church hope to visit RI in Fall, 2023. First U members traveled to our partner church in 2006, 2012, 2015, and 2019. Co-Chairs: Tom Getz & Janet Taylor

YOUNG ADULT GROUP

A group of 20- and 30-year-olds who meet occasionally for informal gatherings including potlucks, brunch, and local events. We communicate primarily via WhatsApp - **contact Catherine, cacj77@gmail.com or Svetlana, svetlanagoretaya@gmail.com for info.**



SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY

The Social Justice Ministry moves our values into action within our community, city, state, and the world.

Contact: Lisa Voutes, lvoutes@yahoo.com

Programs and Teams:

Community Food Share Pantry,
Side With Love, Mosaic Steering Team, The Girl Effect Task Force,
Green Team, Knitting for a Better World, The Peace Flag Project,
Neighborhood Social Justice, World Affairs Committee,
First U Legislative Ministry

No matter what your particular focus, First U works for justice in the community and the world.

COMMUNITY FOOD SHARE PANTRY

Community Food Share Pantry
Distribution day: Third Monday, monthly, in the First Unitarian Parking Lot.
The First U Community Food Share Pantry, CFS, has continuously operated a food distribution site monthly for over 20 years. An Agency of the Rhode Island Food Bank, CFS provides free food and household products to low-income families in the greater Providence community. The CFS Committee oversees and operates the CFS Pantry. They purchase food from the RI Food Bank and accept donations from individuals and community groups. The CFS Committee recruits a large team of volunteers who procure, set-up, and present the food, coordinating the distribution each month. The Pantry is endowed through a generous bequest from the late Dino Germani. **Contact:** Amy Grant, amyinprovidence@yahoo.com

SIDE WITH LOVE

Side With Love is a denomination-wide social justice advocacy and public witness campaign, inspired and guided by UU principles, working to affirm unconditional, universal love as a foundation for our actions in the world. We strive to be of service to our communities and advocate for change on local, state, national, and international levels. The Side with Love campaign amplifies the voices of the oppressed through online media; shows up in partnership at justice events in our state; lobbies local and national leaders on immigration reform, racial justice, equality for LGBTQ+ people, religious freedom, and more to make love real in the world. Facebook: Side With Love at First Unitarian, Providence. All people, not just UUs, are invited to join, speak, worship, march, and live on the side of love.

KNITTING FOR A BETTER WORLD

Knitting for a Better World currently meets most weeks via zoom on Tuesday nights at 7pm. The group serves as an online support for those who knit, craft or like to be with crafty people. **Contact:** Katherine Ahlquist, katherine.ahlquist@gmail.com

WORLD AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The World Affairs Committee does not have a specific focus, but rather explores topics of current interest through a variety of formats such as hosting speaking events after worship or at Parish Suppers. Recent event topics have included Ukraine and the Rhode Island Congressional primary election. Meetings are held on an as-needed basis, and all are welcome.

GREEN TEAM

The Green Team believes that taking action to create a more sustainable way of life will move us toward a healthier, fairer, and more compassionate world. Toward that end, we educate the church community about environmental issues and promote green practices, at church, at home, and in the broader community. We guide efforts by First Unitarian to reduce its carbon footprint -- and inspire members of congregation to do the same at home. We seek to involve individual members and committees in our efforts. Recognizing that members of frontline communities often experience the most severe impacts of environmental injustice, we also reach out to activists from those communities for inspiration and guidance. **Contact: Zak Mettger** zmettger@verizon.net

THE PEACE FLAG PROJECT

The Peace Flag Project is a pro-peace nonprofit that provides an opportunity to create flags that reflect our deepest hopes for the world. Our major event has traditionally been the September Peace Month, expanding our celebration of the UN Peace Day. This commemoration unites us with peacemakers all over the world, all celebrating on the same day. This September our main event will be celebrated with the Intention Fest for Wellness and Peace (<https://intentionfest.info>). Ginny works with schools and community groups to talk about peace and make Peace Flags. We are working on getting back to our normal schedule, which was disrupted by the pandemic. **Contact: Ginny Fox**, ginfox32@gmail.com



THE GIRL EFFECT TASK FORCE

The Girl Effect Task Force raises funds to support girls' education where it is most needed and has the greatest impact. We are inspired by the guiding principle of the global non-profit, Girl Effect, "Girls are the most powerful force for change on the planet." Education gives a girl

more control over her life, helps delay marriage and pregnancy, and improves future earnings, her own health, and the health of her children. Our most recent donations were to the Kibera Girls' Soccer Academy (KGSA) in the Kibera informal settlement in Nairobi, Kenya and to four female San Lucas Toliman Scholars in Guatemala. **Contact Polly Walker**, polly41walker@gmail.com

MOSAIC STEERING TEAM

This advisory committee to the PruComm is dedicated to promoting a multiracial, multicultural community at First U. We look forward to connecting with congregants and ministries throughout the church to learn how we can partner with you in working towards racial justice, antiracism, and inclusion.

Leaders: Louise Sloan, Claire Rosenbaum, Kate Niles, Lee Rodman. **Contact** FirstUMosaicTeam@gmail.com

LEGISLATIVE MINISTRIES

Our team campaigns for social justice in the "public square" and we are connected to other congregations through the UU Legislative Ministry-RI (UULM-RI). Activities include letter-writing, attending hearings and rallies, and testifying at the State House. Priorities include access to health care, housing, gun safety, immigrants' rights, and racial, economic, and environmental justice.

Join us! We meet after the service on the second Sunday of the month. Consider participating in activities based on your issue priorities and time availability. There are many options: Join us at the state house during hearings, rallies, and advocacy days; help staff letter writing tables in the atrium; organize meetings with your state legislators; recruit others to join; bring your ideas to planning meetings and strategy sessions. **Contact: Kate McGovern**, katemcgovern61@gmail.com

NEIGHBORHOOD SOCIAL JUSTICE

The NSJC was founded to provide volunteer opportunities to work beyond our church doors with those who have been socially, economically, or legally marginalized. The NSJC sponsors monthly missions to various shelters in Providence. We deliver food, clothing, and respectful companionship to those in need. We are also an active member of the Loaves and Fishes Rhode Island (LFRI). **ALL ARE WELCOME!** Volunteers are needed, please consider helping us help those in need. **Contact: Joe Salvatore**, joesuu@gmail.com



Above: A photo collage of NSJC volunteers and their projects in 2022-23.



FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR MEMBERS, FRIENDS, AND NEIGHBORS OF FIRST U

Thanks to generous donors from our church, we have two funds that help those in need.

The Pastor's Fund comes from a longtime endowed donation. It is available to provide financial assistance to folks with ties to the First U community who might need emergency funds to cover basic food or shelter. If you are in need, don't hesitate to let us know; we are glad to help. **Please contact Nancy in the church office:**
admin@firstunitarianprov.org

The Minister's Discretionary Fund depends on ongoing donations from current members or friends of First U as well as special collections such as the Christmas Eve offering. This confidential fund has a broader range of uses at the minister's discretion; it might help with the costs of attending General Assembly, or a medical bill or an urgent, unexpected family expense. If you would like to donate to the fund, donations are always needed and very welcome. For donations or requests, please **contact Nancy in the church office,**
admin@firstunitarianprov.org

STEWARDSHIP

Sustaining and growing our church -
The Stewardship Ministry focuses on generosity in support of the health and growth of our congregation and its mission.

Contact: Andy Wilby, adwilby@gmail.com

Programs and Teams:

Annual Commitment Drive, Planned Giving, Finance/Investment Committee, Finance/Development Committee, Building and Grounds Committee, Financial Assistance

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND GIVING

ANNUAL COMMITMENT DRIVE

Members and friends of First Unitarian are urged to make a fair share commitment of their financial support for the church each year. The amount pledged during the Commitment Drive becomes the basis for the Budget Committee's recommendations for support of church staffing, ministry activities, and infrastructure for the year ahead. We continue a strategic effort to reduce our reliance on the endowment to support our annual operations. Through collective ownership of this goal we can achieve long-term financial health and sustainability for this congregation and honor our responsibility to those who will inherit it.

PLANNED GIVING

Our congregation has a long tradition of planned giving. The first bequest was in 1803, and generous members have been following in that tradition ever since. We encourage all supporters to consider including the church as a beneficiary of their retirement plan, life insurance, or Last Will and Testament, thus automatically becoming a member of our Benevolent Society. A booklet with more information is available from **Director of Operations, Nancy Forsstrom,**
admin@firstunitarianprov.org

FINANCE / INVESTMENT COMMITTEE and FINANCE / DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES

These committees were created by PruComm policies to help advise the Treasurer and PruComm on varied financial assets of the church. The Investment arm meets to review our endowment funds and investment strategies. These volunteers also review the fund manager's performance. The Development arm, chaired by the Assistant Treasurer, investigates vehicles for church fund-raising. They also advise and support church planned giving programs, such as the Benevolent Society.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

This religious community has the stewardship responsibility for maintaining one of the most iconic, historic structures in the state of Rhode Island. In continuing that responsibility, this committee enlists the many technical and skilled talents of our membership as a "B & G Resource Group" to consult in this task, including safety, comfort, energy efficiency, and green efforts.

GOVERNANCE - LAY LEADERSHIP

The congregation operates under a system of congregational polity as defined in the church's constitution and by-laws. Voting members of the congregation hold the right and responsibility to decide major issues which affect the church including calling a minister, electing members to leadership positions, and adopting an annual budget. The congregation conducts its business at an annual meeting in June when it elects board members, officers, and deacons, and approves an annual budget. Special meetings are called as needed.

These volunteer teams help provide leadership to hold the congregation's mission and vision.

PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE

The Prudential Committee (PruComm) is the governing board of the church. It is composed of six officers and six other voting members of the church. PruComm members are elected to three-year terms; officers are elected annually to one-year terms (Clerk, Treasurer, and Assist. Treasurer are renewable). Four committee members serve as liaisons to the four ministries of the church: Spiritual Development, Community Life and Heritage, Stewardship, and Social Justice. They gather the ministry around common goals and support groups and leadership. The PruComm sets policy, long-term goals, establishes committees, hires professional staff other than the minister, manages the operating budget in accordance with the by-laws, and performs other necessary duties.

Hillary Salmons, President

Karen Silva-Sabironi, Pres-Elect

Joan Richards, Past President.

Kate Niles, Clerk

Katy Killilea, Community Life

John Dooley, Treasurer

Chris Campanile, Asst. Treasurer

Lisa Voutes, Social Justice

Alison Green, Spiritual Dev.

Andy Wilby, Stewardship

Dana Borrelli-Murray, Personnel

Peter Laarman, Strategic Planning

Youth Rep - TBD

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The six-member Nominating Committee is responsible for identifying and developing church leadership. Members are elected for two-year terms. In addition to recruiting for elected positions, the committee helps identify committee chairs. Committee members have an understanding of the structure and work of the organization, specific leadership needs, and special qualifications needed for elected and appointed positions.

Rebecca Alberg, Richard Boober, Michael Currier, Svetlana Goretaya, Cynthia Rosengard, Sandy Schacht

DEACONS

The Deacons support the ministry by promoting connection, spiritual well-being, and a sense of belonging. They seek to support communication and understanding, increase awareness of needs, and enhance the sense of community as a safe environment for spiritual growth. Activities have included ushering/greeting on Sunday mornings, checking in on members and friends, assisting orientation of new members, sponsoring events like Wassail Party and May Breakfast. The congregation elects three Deacons every year who serve three-year terms.

Tony Allen, Joyce Boober, Sorrel Devine, Amy Grant, Nancy Green,

Steve McCloy, Arlene McGonagle, Charlie Ortman, Dave Spremulli

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Personnel Committee is composed of a liaison from the PruComm, at least two other church members approved by the PruComm, and the Minister as ex-officio. They review Personnel Policies and Procedures annually and recommend changes to the Prudential Committee. In consultation with staff, appropriate committees, and the Minister, the committee oversees non-ministerial employee evaluations and recommends salary increases. Committee members may assist in the selection process to fill vacant, non-ministerial staff positions.

RIGHT RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Chair: Jay Glasson

DON'T MISS ANY CHANCE TO PARTICIPATE!

The First U Fellowship Dinner to kick off the Commitment Drive featured a potluck-by-table theme, with each table choosing its own approach to food and decorations. Good meals and fellowship were followed up with dancing and celebrating.

Don't miss your chance to participate in some of First U's many fun and inspiring opportunities!



Important Dates:

September 10	Homecoming and Water Communion Multi-Gen; Strategic Plan update
September 16	Alliance Indoor Yard Sale; Spirit Play training for PreK-1st grade teachers
September 17	Spiritual Pathways programs begin; parent/guardian orientation
September 24	Spiritual Pathways Teacher Ingathering, Spirit Play Basket-making
October 1	Congregational Conversation with the Music Committee
October 8	Joint service at Bethel AME Church
October 11-25	Partner Church visit
Oct. 25 - Nov. 3	Online Auction
October 28	Path to Membership Class
November 4	Live Auction
December 24	Christmas Eve fire-side chat, 10:30am; services, 5:00pm and 9:00pm
January 27	Coming of Age Taco Supper fundraiser
May 24-26	All-church retreat

