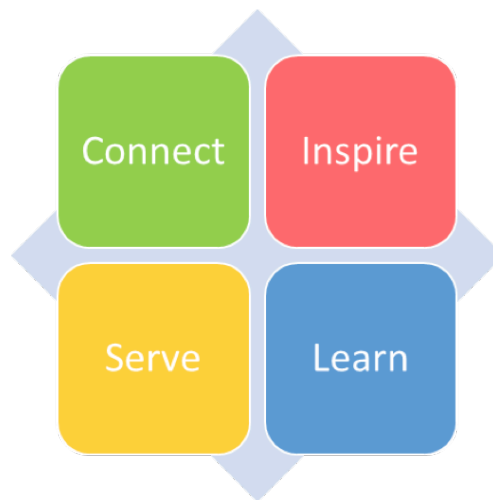




First Unitarian Church
OF PITTSBURGH CONNECT • INSPIRE • SERVE • LEARN

Annual Report

2020-2021



Board of Trustees

Scott Smith, President (2018–2021)
Ebe Emmons, Vice President (2019–2022; resigned 1/2/21)
Heather Masterson, Vice President (2020–2023)
Kyle Gracey, Treasurer (2020–2023)
Eleanor Mayfield, Secretary (2018–2021)
Lee Carnes (appointed 2/21; term expires 2022)
Julie Downs (2019–2022)
Sam Hens-Greco (2019–2022)
Lynne Porterfield (2018–2021)
Kate Snow (2020–2023)
Rev. Constance Grant, Interim Minister (ex-officio)
Kurt Summersgill, Recording Secretary (ex-officio)



First Unitarian Church
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From the President of the 2020–2021 Board of Trustees

Well, has this been a strange year or what? Last year at this time, who'd have thought we'd spend the next 12 months meeting on Zoom, watching services on YouTube, sharing joys and sorrows virtually, masking up, socially distancing, voting by mail, picking up groceries curbside? And who'd have ever predicted that your Board president would grow a ponytail to rival Ward Kelsey's?



To say it's been challenging may be the understatement of the year. Yet, as a church, we've made it through, haven't we? So far at least, I believe we have.

Still a church

Every time a Zoom meeting flickered into existence, and your smiling faces began popping onto the screen, Brady Bunch style... every time Ellen Gozion's hands danced across the keys as she sang a song of hope... every time Erica Shadowsong recited a poignant, thoughtful story... every time Kris Rust performed all the parts of a round, even accompanying himself on piano or drum... every time Reverend Connie said, at the beginning of each service, "While our building may be closed, our church is not"... every time Jim Cunningham opened our covenant group by saying, "Phyllis, would you like to check in?"... every time Chris Beregi closed our UU Christian Fellowship Group meeting with, "Have a great week everyone!"... every time something like this happened, I felt a shiver of appreciation, a surge of life-affirming happiness. Because although we might have been physically distanced, we are still close at heart. We are still vibrant. We are still a church.

Sincere thanks

...to **Rev. Connie** for her leadership in helping us to weather this storm; to Ellen and Kris for inspiring us; to Erica for somehow managing to find a way to continue dynamic religious education programming for both kids and adults; to our commissioned lay minister Stephanie Pawlowski for ably stepping in to give Connie an occasional rest; to the liturgists, the other musicians, and the technical team for doing their part to make sure we stayed strongly connected; to all the other leaders in the church for keeping their committees and teams and groups heading in the right direction. Thank you all so very much.

Prioritizing health and well-being

As you know, the Board of Trustees has taken a cautious view of the pandemic. As former Board President Martin Schmidt said at last year's Annual Meeting, "We have prioritized the health and well-being of our community above all else." We have protected our members, friends, visitors, and staff. Yet we see hope on the horizon, as the Safe Reopening Task Force (Peggy Parsons, Shelley Ross, Kirk Striebich, and LRED Erica Shadowsong) uses sound judgment, science, and health policy to advise the Board on decisions around how and when to reopen our building. Additionally, the Board has created a Reopening Implementation Working Group to turn the task force's suggestions into action. One day soon, we'll meet in person again.

Going into the pandemic, the Board had serious questions about our church's financial outlook. Knowing we would lose rental income and other sources of funding, we took out a Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loan last spring as an insurance policy in case we were unable to afford to retain our staff or meet other obligations. Thus far, we have been able to keep all staff employed with full compensation and to pay all our bills, and we were able to repay the PPP loan in April. We could do this because of the hard work and ingenuity of the Finance Committee and the Annual Budget Drive Committees and, of course, because of the abundant generosity of every member of our congregation. Heartfelt thanks to all of you who have contributed your support.

Looking to the future

...the Board has approved the formation of a Reimagining Fundraising Task Force to think creatively about how our church might optimize its fundraising efforts. We look forward to seeing where this initiative leads us.

Throughout the year, Rev. Connie, the Board, and other church leaders have addressed a number of other significant issues. We completely overhauled our church's Bylaws and governance policies. We extended the term of the Board an additional month to June 30 to create a transition period where overlap in leadership and knowledge-sharing can occur. We also considered a request to ordain Jessica Halperin,

a former youth leader in our church. While Jessica has put this request on indefinite hold, the Board nevertheless learned a lot about ordaining Unitarian Universalist ministers.

Improvements have been made to the church building and property—something to take note of when the building reopens. It also appears that the church was successful in helping to influence a city proposal to retain parking on Ellsworth Avenue while also better accommodating bicyclists. The currently favored proposal would reduce both the quantity and speed of vehicular traffic on Ellsworth, which could make it safer for parkers and pedestrians alike. And as a church, we accomplished so much more, the details of which are outlined in the reports that follow.

Deep gratitude

I would be remiss if I didn't express my deep gratitude to the other members of the Board of Trustees: Vice-President Heather Masterson; Secretary Eleanor Mayfield; Treasurer Kyle Gracey; Board members Lee Carnes, Julie Downs, Sam Hens-Greco, Lynne Porterfield, and Kate Snow, as well as Ebe Emmons, who served as vice president for a good part of the year; Rev. Connie as ex officio member; and Kurt Summersgill, who served as recording secretary. Every single one of these folks stepped up and took ownership of a piece of the leadership puzzle. I'm not exaggerating when I say that there were about a dozen Board presidents who contributed at different times during the year—that's how important each individual was to our church leadership.

Soon, we will bid goodbye to Rev. Connie. We owe Connie a deep debt of gratitude for her steady guiding hand in shepherding us through these last two years and for working to restore the trust we must necessarily have in anyone called to ministry at our church. Her presence at our church will leave a lasting impression on our congregation. We are a stronger religious community because of her time here. After the service on June 6, we'll celebrate Rev. Connie with a special event.

New settled minister

That brings me to First Unitarian Church's biggest news of the year: ***We have called the Rev. Dr. Kate R. Walker as our new settled minister, to begin serving on August 1.*** As you likely know by now, Rev. Kate was approved by 100% of those voting.

The calling of a new minister is by no means an easy process. Over the past year, the Ministerial Search Committee put in countless hours, untold creativity, and boundless energy in determining the congregation's preferences in a minister, showcasing our church for ministerial prospects, interviewing and evaluating candidates, securing an agreement with the top candidate, introducing the candidate to the church, and calling

for a vote—all the while keeping the congregation informed of its progress. We sincerely thank search committee members Chris Beregi, Mary Denison, David Doorley, Brian Junker, Peggy Parsons, Jim Reitz, and Michael Safran. It was a labor of love the likes of which we have rarely seen in our church. Rev. Kate promises to bring renewed synergy, dynamism, and growth to our church. Our future is certainly very bright!

So, yes, it's been a challenging year—but also a year of renewal. We faced fear and uncertainty with courage and grace. We learned a lot about who we are. We lost some deeply loved friends and gained some new ones. The year ahead will be one of continued challenge but also of increasing hope. Together, all of us at First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh will continue working to build the Beloved Community to which we aspire.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Scott Smith".

Scott Smith
President, Board of Trustees
2020–2021



First Unitarian Church
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Minister's Report to the Congregation

May 23, 2021

It has been pointed out that this time we have spent together as interim minister and congregation —nearly two years!— has not been what any of us expected. But, as expected, this time has been transformational as well as transitional. We've gone from "there," where we were, to "here," where we are. And we are ready to move forward to where we are going!

We have figured out new ways to be a community using technology: livestreaming worship services and memorial services; zooming meetings, social time, and other gatherings. The building has been closed, and the community has been open. Physically distant, and socially connected.

None of this would have been possible without amazing volunteers and staff. Tech experts Paul Cunningham, Brian Junker, Will Snavelly, Emily Sweeny, and Andrew Papale have devoted many hours to ensuring high-quality production of livestreamed services via YouTube. (Your YouTube channel currently has 301 subscribers. I never expected to be a televangelist!) Program staff members Ellen Gozion, Director of Instrumental Music; Kris Rust, Director of Choral Music; and Erica Shadowsong, Director of Lifespan Religious Education, have brought their talents to create meaningful worship services. (And of course Erica offers religious education programming for children, youth, and adults, as detailed in her own report.)

Your administrative staff members have also stepped up to do what needs to be done, as they always do. Rita Gates, Business Manager; Cicely Moultrie, Communications Coordinator; and Dan Laity, Sexton, have been working from home when possible and coming in to the office when necessary, to keep the building safe and to support the work of the congregation.

Your Safe Reopening Task Force, consisting of Peggy Parsons, Kirk Striebich, Shelley Ross, and Erica Shadowsong, has been analyzing information in order to make recommendations about when and how it will be possible to gather in person in the church building.

Thanks to volunteers Mark Whitaker and Nancy Latimer, your website has been revamped with a new platform and template, making information about the church more accessible and attractive.

As part of your preparation to welcome a new minister, we held a workshop, "Moving Forward Into 2021 and Beyond," for church members to further process the departures of ministers from First Unitarian Church in recent years. Discussion focused on these questions:

Are there things you wish had been different or that you had done differently? Even if you have mixed feelings, is there appreciation that you would still like to express to any of the ministers who have left? Are past experiences keeping you from moving forward? Will you be ready to welcome a new minister?

Here you are, and you are ready!

Congratulations to the Rev. Dr. Kate Walker, to the Ministerial Search Committee, and to the congregation on calling Rev. Kate to be your next settled minister!

In faith and hope,

Rev. Connie Grant, Interim Minister



Treasurer's Report – Fiscal Year 2020

The church's finances ended 2020 healthy overall, having weathered the first nine months of the pandemic. Losses due to the church's closure were buffered by strong savings and responsible financial management in recent years.

Financial Position, Budget Variance, Investments

Fund balances as of December 31 2020 were \$377,410.33. This included spendable money due from our endowments, but not the money in the endowments themselves. Total liabilities were \$324,052.68. This included the Paycheck Protection Act loan of \$71,200, which has since been repaid. This left us with \$53,357.65 in unallocated funds. Assets and liabilities both increased from the beginning of 2020, but liabilities increased more, leaving us with \$8,385.35 fewer net assets than at the beginning of the year.

Our income ended the year at 96% of what we budgeted for (\$503,065.45 vs. \$523,670), and 92% of planned spending (\$511,450.80 actual versus \$547,404 budgeted). Our primary loss of income came from no or low events, rentals, Giant Eagle card sales and plate cash. Our primary reduced expenses came from not having in-person activities and lower buildings & grounds costs. Overall, the good news is that we did not have as much of a net loss as we had expected in the budget (we budgeted for a \$23,734 loss), but the bad news is that we still had an \$8,385.35 loss.

Our endowments and other long-term investments remain healthy, providing a modest source of income to our general expenses, capital projects and programs. In most cases, we are substantially limited in how much of the balances we can access from these investments. Our Endowment stood at \$1,167,447.46; Harkcom Fund \$70,155.12; Memorial Trust \$64,596.88; Mullins Memorial Endowment \$455,732.91; Simon Income Fund \$187,212.95; Goldsmith Concert Fund \$82,211.28; Campus Ministry Endowment \$181,554.31; Music Endowment \$165,313.61; Social Justice Endowment \$286,921.56; Endowment for Ministry with Children and Youth \$39,233.95; Goldsmith Targeted Fund \$145,202.59; Goldsmith Growth Fund \$192,781.76; Simon Future Fund \$111,116.81; Donaldson Fund \$55,935.88; and Schnurer Capital Fund \$404.44 (this has since been spent). The net total of our endowed and restricted funds was \$3,205,821.53.

Finance Committee

In addition to monitoring our finances over the past year, the Finance Committee made substantial progress on an overhaul of our financial policies and procedures. This overhaul, once completed likely later this year, will allow staff and volunteers to manage our finances with less effort, more clarity, and more transparency.

Investment Committee

The Investment Committee successfully navigated the turbulent market shifts brought by coronavirus's economic upheaval. Markets had fortunately recovered by the end of the year, and the Committee's steady hand meant that we did not suffer long-term damage to our investments.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the many staff and members who contributed their time and talents to these efforts, including: Claus Makowka, Margaret Stevens, Ward Kelsey, Rev. Connie, Rita Gates, Pat Schuetz, Gordon Hargreaves, Stuart Hastings, Randy Weinberg, Bob Mitchell, Gail Pesyna, and Brian Rohleder.

May 2021

Submitted by: Kyle Gracey, Treasurer

Church Committees and Activity Teams

Connect Council

Lay leader: Joan Harvey
Staff: Rev. Constance Grant

Hospitality Ministry

Membership Team: Joan Harvey joanhv@gmail.com
Amy DeChicchis
Ushers and Greeters*: Rob Schwartz rob.j.schwartz@gmail.com

Pastoral Care Ministry

Pastoral Care Team: Kathy Miller kathymillerotter@gmail.com
Jim Cunningham cunni@comcast.net
Medical Equipment
Loan Program: Jim Reitz j5650r@comcast.net

Small-Group Ministry

Covenant Groups Team: Alice Bright ab03@andrew.cmu.edu
Lynne Porterfield ljporterfield@yahoo.com
Gathering of Men: Jim Reitz j5650r@comcast.net
WomanSpirit:
(evening group) Pat Schuetz patschuetz@verizon.net
Women's Alliance: Alice Carnes alice.carnes51@yahoo.com
(daytime group)
Kathy Fein kathyrsp@comcast.net
Addictions Ministry: Jim Pashek jimpashek@gmail.com
Transitions Group: MR Kelsey maryruthkelsey@gmail.com
Bob Sullivan r.sullivan13@verizon.net
Humanist Group: Stuart Hastings sph@pitt.edu
John Hooper johnbhooper@comcast.net

Inspire Council

Staff: Rev. Constance Grant
Ellen Gozion, Director of Instrumental Music
Kris Rust, Director of Vocal Music

* Inactive this year

Worship Ministry

Worship Team: Stephanie Pawlowski sbpawlowski@gmail.com

Music and the Arts Ministry

Art Committee: Ali Masalehdan ali@masimex.com

Dance Choir: Mary Pat Mengato mpmengato@gmail.com

UU Singers: Kris Rust kdrust@aol.com

SongSpace

Concert Series: Brian Junker junkerb@gmail.com

Serve Council

Staff: Rev. Constance Grant

Social Justice Ministry

Green Sanctuary Team: Peg Schmidt pegchmidttoo@gmail.com

Barbara Litt brlitt@gmail.com

PIIN Core Team Sandy Woolley sandy.woolley@gmail.com

UUJusticePA: Becky Studer rkstuder@gmail.com

UUs for Justice in the

Middle East Ali Masalehdan ali@masimex.com

Humanitarian Service Ministry

Alternative Gift Market Team: Karen Burns burnskaren00@gmail.com

Nancy Latimer nlatimer@gmail.com

East End Cooperative Ministry

Homeless Shelter Meal

Coordinating Team: Mary Denison marydenison@gmail.com

Habitat for Humanity Team: Marty Lieb liebm38@yahoo.com

Khasi Hills Partnership Team: Karen Litzinger litzingerkaren@aol.com

Learn Council

Staff: Erica Shadowsong, Lifespan Religious Education Director

Learning Ministry for Adults

Adult Library Team: Mary Denison marydenison@gmail.com

Lynne Porterfield ljporterfield@yahoo.com

Sunday Morning Forum

Steering Team: Kim Francis uusundaymorning-forum@gmail.com

Learning Ministry for Children and Youth

Children's Library Team: Mary Denison marydenison@gmail.com

Family Ministries Team: Jenn Layman, Heather Masterson

Board Committees

Vision, Identity, and Mission Committee (VIM)

Endowment Committees

- Campus Ministry
 - Ministry with Children and Youth
 - Music
 - Social Justice
-

Church Administrative Staff

Business Manager: Rita Gates

Communications Coordinator: Cicely Moultrie

Sexton: Dan Laity

Building Security Provider: Kensie McElfresh

Connect

Connect Council

Hospitality Ministry

Membership Team

Members: Amy De Chicchis, Joan Harvey (co-chairs), Nancy Latimer, Lauren McVay, Mark Whittaker, with support from Rev. Connie Grant

As part of the Connections Council, the Membership Team helps members and potential members connect with the church community and discover and pursue their own path to spiritual growth.

The Membership Team has met monthly throughout the year, including by Zoom since March 2020. We have held regular sessions in the ***Path to Membership*** series.

- ***Introduction to UU*** sessions are currently scheduled the fourth Sunday of each month. Any visitors can sign up ahead of time and are placed in a Zoom group at the Coffee Hour with Rev. Connie and 1–2 members of the Membership Team.
- ***RU a UU?*** orientation sessions have been held 3–4 times via Zoom.

We welcomed the following people as new church members during the past church year:

Bryan Bandli	Anna Skoda
Madeline Darnell	Matt Skoda
Annika Froese	Sonia Wellington
Douglas Penhallegon	Jolene Zywica
Jennifer Rich	Matt Zywica

We have also rewritten relevant sections of the First UU web page and the Visitors' Form and held two "Virtual Potluck" gatherings for new members to connect with each other and with other church members.

Volunteering with the Membership Team provides an opportunity to help others become more deeply connected to the church in a way that is meaningful to them. We welcome new members to join us! Many opportunities exist to contribute to the work of the Membership Team. Several tasks involve a small time commitment but are very meaningful. Other tasks involve overseeing particular pieces of membership or joining the leadership team in monthly meetings. Volunteer opportunities include

- Staffing the Welcome Table on Sunday mornings,
- Helping with database maintenance,
- Following up with church visitors and new members,
- Helping with the celebration of new members,
- Organizing and hosting periodic potluck dinners for new members,
- Participating in new member orientations, and
- Helping to organize Activities Fairs that showcase the many and varied opportunities that our church offers to engage with others, advance one's spiritual growth, and contribute to our church community, the Pittsburgh community, and the UU denomination.

If any of these activities is a good match for your interests and time, the Membership Team welcomes your participation in helping people to connect, be inspired, serve, and learn within our beloved community.

– *Joan Harvey, Amy de Chicchis* (co-chairs)

Ushers and Greeters Team

Due to the closure of the church because of the pandemic, the Ushers and Greeters Team did not have any responsibilities this year. However, in anticipation of the church reopening in the fall, the team is looking forward to again fulfilling its mission of building community at our worship celebrations by offering hospitality, providing information about the church, and helping to ensure the safety of everyone present.

It's hoped that all previous members of the team – as well as any new folks who are interested in participating – can be counted on to provide a warm welcome throughout the year to all who attend our Sunday morning worship celebrations, as well as our Winter Solstice and Christmas Eve worship celebrations, collect the morning offering, and record attendance at each worship celebration. Once a date is determined for the resumption of in-person Sunday services, please expect an email with information about usher and greeter refresher training.

– *Rob Schwartz*

Pastoral Care Ministry

Pastoral Care Team

Members: Chris Beregi, Jan Carlino, Julie Childers, Jim Cunningham (co-chair), Kathy Miller (co-chair), Bob Sullivan

Working with the minister, the Pastoral Care Team extends the pastoral care of the congregation in a ministry of presence and support to those who are in particular need

because of illness, loss, isolation, or other life situation or event. Team members share in moments of joy, celebration, and sorrow, and assist people in finding community resources. Pastoral Care Team members provide nonjudgmental, empathetic listening and support. During this time when we are unable to meet in person, we keep in touch with congregants by phone and email, paying special attention to those who may be alone and in need of support.

We are developing lists of potential volunteers who are willing to help fellow congregants with transportation, providing a meal for an individual or family, shopping, bringing a food item or assisting with set-up or clean-up for a memorial service reception, or ushering at a memorial service. Contact minister@first-unitarian-pgh.org or pastoralcareteam@first-unitarian-pgh.org if you have a need or to volunteer.

– *Rev. Connie Grant*

Minister's Benevolence Fund/Marion's Purse

The Minister's Benevolence Fund, known as Marion's Purse, is used to help congregants in temporary financial need, to help with such things as a utility bill or emergency car repair. The Minister maintains an overview of needs in the congregation in order to make an equitable distribution of funds.

Formerly known as the Minister's Discretionary Fund, the account was revived in 2012 with a significant donation from the Women's Alliance to honor the participation and financial contribution of longtime member Marion Schnurer. The fund continues to be supported by individual congregants and by periodic allocations from the Women's Alliance.

Donations may be made to the fund

- By writing a check to the church with "Marion's Purse" or "Minister's Benevolence Fund" in the memo line;
- On the church website at <https://www.first-unitarian-pgh.org/make-a-donation.html>; select "Marion's Purse/Minister's Benevolence Fund" from the dropdown list; or
- By texting "give" to 412-435-1050 with the designation "carefund."

As of December 31, 2019, the account balance was \$843.53. Donations totaled \$8,988.99. Disbursements totaled \$2,965.00. As of May 15, 2021, the account balance is \$6,867.52.

– *Rev. Connie Grant*

Medical Equipment Loan Program

The Medical Equipment Loan Program has been in existence for 8 years and has helped a great many of our church members, friends, and family members.

Currently we have the following equipment available: 7 walkers, including one with a seat; 1 nebulizer; 1 plastic bed pan; 2 shower/bath seats; 4 canes; 5 sets of crutches; 2 portable potty chairs; 1 raised toilet seat; 1 plastic bed pan; 1 air cast for a left foot, size medium; 1 sling; 1 adjustable bedside table; 1 tub-side, clamp-on handle; 3 regular-size and 1 child-size wheelchairs; 1 back stabilizer with straps; 1 long-handled grasping tool (for, e.g., a sock-aid); 1 device for icing a swollen knee; 1 glucometer; and additional items are added from time to time.

When someone is in need of a medical assistance item, they can contact Jim Reitz, J5650R@comcast.net. They will be provided the name(s), telephone number(s) and email address(s) of the person or persons who have such items to loan. It is up to the person making the request to arrange to pick up the item(s) at the owner's home. The persons receiving the loaned item(s) are asked to report when they have returned the items to the owner, so the list can be kept current.

Several basic items are kept at church (a wheelchair, walker, cane and crutches) in case of sudden need during a service or event. It's important that members know where these items are kept. They do get moved around from time to time. When last located, the walker, cane, and crutches were in a cabinet in the Schweitzer Room; the wheelchair, under the coat rack in the basement, near the restrooms.

From time to time when people have medical assistance items that they cannot keep at their homes, the items are brought to church and then taken and donated to Global Links, which distributes them to countries in need around the world.

—Jim Reitz

Small-Group Ministry

Covenant Groups Team

Members: Alice Bright, Mary Ruth Kelsey, Lynne Porterfield, Jim Reitz

Currently 98 members and friends of First Unitarian Church participate in 13 covenant groups. One new group was formed and one group disbanded during the year. Approximately 7 people were successfully placed into covenant groups during the past church year.

The use of Zoom has made it possible for most of the groups to continue to meet once or twice a month during the pandemic. The groups have mostly thrived this year although many are very much looking forward to meeting in person once again. The Team provides support by monitoring the healthy functioning of all covenant groups

and leading them to resources for discussion such as Soul Matters and the UUA Small Group Ministry Network.

– *Alice Bright*

Addiction and Recovery Ministry

The Addiction and Recovery Ministry of First Unitarian Church serves the needs of those in the congregation, including family members and friends, who have been touched by addiction. We understand “addiction” in its broadest sense to include both substance abuse and behavior addictions. About 1 in every 6 people is struggling with some form of addiction. Our group at First Church is not a 12-step program but rather a listening group that shares experiences.

We have not met since the closing of the church in the spring of 2020 but are looking forward to returning to face-to-face meetings soon. We are a small group of about half a dozen regulars and an equal number of others who attend occasionally. We meet on the 4th Sunday of the month about 30 minutes after the church service. We meet to be there when the next person needs to talk about the impact addiction is having on their life.

The meeting coordinator is Jim Pashek. You can reach him at 412-606-1813 or jimpashek@gmail.com.

– *Jim Pashek*

Women’s Alliance

The Women’s Alliance (WA) of the First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh was founded in 1891, funded by bequests from Irene H. Haney and the Semple Family. Those, and subsequent additional funds obtained by bequest, are administered by the WA Bequests Committee, according to the provisions of the bequests. The WA, a dues-paying organization, was granted 501(c) (3) status under the Internal Revenue Code and is thus entitled to the tax benefits available to charitable organizations, pursuant to Internal Revenue Service regulations.

Mission Statement

The WA’s mission is to enable Unitarian Universalist women and those who share our values to join together for mutual support, personal growth, and spiritual enrichment. Through our combined strength and vision, we work toward a future where all women will be empowered to live their lives with a sense of wholeness and integrity in a world of peace that recognizes the worth and dignity of each individual.

Board Members

Alice Carnes – Chair

Kathy Fein – Co-Chair

Madeline Darnell – Secretary

Margaret Stevens—Treasurer

Denice Galpern – Program

Alice Bright – Membership

Delia Parks –Social Responsibility

Linda Fleming and Peggy Bonnell – Hospitality

Pat Schuetz – Bequests

Christine Michaels – Poet in Residence

Meetings

Meetings are scheduled on the first and third Thursday of the month and on the fifth Thursday when one occurs. Prior to the pandemic, the Program Chair would invite speakers to each Alliance meeting, except for the December and May Luncheons and fifth Thursday meetings when field trips or workshops were planned.

At the start of pandemic mitigation measures, all previously scheduled in-person meetings and activities were cancelled. Chair Alice Carnes took immediate action, established a Zoom account, and resumed regularly scheduled Alliance meetings on Zoom. From March until June 2020, Alliance meetings consisted of a “members’ check-in” whereby members had the opportunity to connect and support each other. Those unable to attend the meeting on Zoom, shared their news online with Alice, who reported to the membership, enabling us to stay in touch with one another other. Members found the mutual support of the twice monthly check-ins to be of great emotional and spiritual benefit.

In June 2020 the WA resumed programing on Zoom, including programs that involved discussions and other interactions among the membership, as follows:

WA Programming for 2020-2021

June 2020: Maureen Porter: report and update on Khasi Hills, First Unitarian’s connection and contribution.

Janet McCall, Society for Contemporary Craft: presentation on “The Healing Power of Art”

Brian Junker, Ministerial Search Committee: process and procedure, timeline and congregational participation.

October 2020: Anita Kulina, author and publisher: discussion on “Writing Family Stories.” Suggestion: “Start with food.”

November 2020: The election: candidates, issues, important dates, and voting information.

December 2020: Creative Zoom holiday party, organized and presented by Linda Fleming and Peggy Bonnell, Hospitality Committee co-chairs. The party included individually crafted "Secret Santa" Christmas cards, carol singing and refreshments. Games were played in Zoom breakout rooms, and everyone received a festive decorated bag, provided by delivery or pick up to each member. The bag contained party foods, craft materials, and even a small gift. All in attendance greatly enjoyed this wonderful holiday celebration.

Because of pandemic restrictions, instead of the annual crafts project usually offered in January for the residents of POWER (Pennsylvania Organization for Women in Early Recovery), WA prepared and delivered on Christmas Eve the fixings for Christmas dinner for POWER's residents and staff, with ample leftovers.

January 2021: Laura Zurowski, "Mis Steps": Presentation on Pittsburgh's many public stairways, including the mosaic-decorated steps on the South Side.

Annual Book Discussion Group: *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kemerer.

February 2021: Presentation and group discussion on gratitude, led by Kathy Fein.

March 2021: Presentation and discussion of UUA's New Day Rising Conference: Changing White Supremacy, led by WA members who attended the conference.

April 2021: Discussion of WA members' individual histories and stories of their spiritual/religious journeys, especially, how they came to UU and Pittsburgh.

WA Committees

The Social Responsibility Committee recommends worthy causes for support, with funds from the general treasury, consisting of annual dues and gifts, upon vote of the membership, as follows:

2020:

Women's Law Project
Homewood Children's Village
Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank
Casa San Jose

2021:

Women's Law Project
Homewood Children's Village
Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank
Jeremiah's Place
East End Cooperative Ministries

The Bequest Committee recommends contributions for congregational needs, from bequest funds held in investment accounts, in accordance with the terms specified in the individual bequests. Upon vote of the membership, the following contributions were made:

2020 and 2021:

Special music for Sunday celebrations; support of the annual Martin Luther King, Jr., city-wide concerts; and tuning of the sanctuary's grand piano, requested by the directors of choral and instrumental music

Flowers for the sanctuary on Sundays and special occasions, various requests, coordinated by Christine Michaels

Looking Ahead

WA has continued with those activities and programs that are compatible with pandemic restrictions, and looks forward to resuming a full program of activities in the months ahead, as public health requirements permit.

– *Kathy Fein* (co-chair)

WomanSpirit

WomanSpirit is the evening women's group at First Unitarian Church. Currently we have over 150 church members and a few friends on our email distribution list. Our goal is to meet on the second Wednesday of every month.

In "normal" times we met for a potluck dinner in a member's home, often followed by a group discussion on a topic proposed by the host. This past year, we have been meeting via Zoom for conversation and to support each other during what has been a year like no other. We look forward to resuming regularly meeting in person once it's safe to again congregate in groups.

We periodically engage as a group in a social service project and occasionally we devote an evening to political action. We welcome new members and friends of First Unitarian. A WomanSpirit dinner is an easy and entertaining way to meet other women of a broad range of ages and interests.

– *Pat Schuetz*

Gathering of Men

The men's group at the First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh is now in its 30th year. Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., usually in the Priestly Room, although during the past year all meetings have been on Zoom. Attendance averaged 12 members per meeting. Usual summer activities such as hiking and other field trips were cancelled this year.

At each meeting one attendee volunteers to lead a discussion. Volunteer also plan the program. Discussion topics are wide ranging and always very interesting. There is no pressure to be a discussion leader.

Occasionally men who are not church members or do not attend our church attend the men's group meetings. This is one way in which we reach out beyond our members. Although not a "support group," the men's group is definitely supportive, which I believe is one of the reasons many men have attended regularly for years. Members also serve one meal a year at the East End Community Ministry homeless shelter.

Jim Reitz is the group's contact person and coordinator, J5650R@Comcast.net.

- Jim Reitz

Transitions Group

The Transitions Group has been meeting on the second Monday of each month at 11:00 a.m. via Zoom to talk about life transitions and the challenges we face as we get older. We discuss whatever concerns are brought to us by whoever comes to the meeting. These discussions are confidential. The group is essentially a support group or covenant group. It is a constant work in progress. We enjoy one another's company and conversation.

- MR Kelsey, Bob Sullivan

Humanist Group

More than a dozen members of First Unitarian met via Zoom on April 18, 2021, to discuss the formation of a Humanist Group at the church. The group would examine humanism within Unitarian Universalism as a positive life stance focused on improving the human condition—locally, nationally, and worldwide—through science, reason, and compassion, without resorting to supernatural considerations.

Rather than denigrating other world views, including theistic ones, the group would seek to cooperate with other belief communities in our church rather than compete with them. This is in line with the concept of Unitarian Universalism as a "community of communities."

A steering committee was formed consisting of Cinda Beattie, Amy DeChicchis, Stuart Hastings, John Hooper, and Audrey Masalehdan. The committee will plan several monthly meetings beginning in fall, 2021. A different topic will be covered each month, with the schedule arranged well ahead of time. Topics will be drawn from such areas as:

- Humanism and social justice,
- Personal experiences of individuals as UU Humanists,
- The philosophical and sociological underpinnings of humanism,
- Items of current interest from a humanistic point of view,

- The role of humanism in society and in Unitarian Universalism.

Meetings will be announced in the weekly email newsletter, and all members and friends of First Unitarian are welcome to attend and participate in the discussion.

– *Stuart Hastings, John Hooper* (co-facilitators)

Inspire

Inspire Council

Worship Celebrations Ministry

Worship Team

Members: Stephanie Pawlowski, Commissioned Lay Minister (chair), Bryan Bandli, Alice Carnes, Kathy Fein, Louise Jencik, Ward Kelsey, Melody Platz

The Worship Team works with the minister to support Sunday morning worship services. This year, Worship Team members have served as liturgists and have collaborated to create thematic lay-led services, including “Unexpected Gifts Worth the Wait” on November 29, 2020; “Darkness into Light” on December 27, 2020; and “Interdependence Day,” upcoming on July 4, 2021.

– *Rev. Connie Grant*

Music & the Arts Ministry

Music & Arts Team

A few introductory notes from Ellen:

As we know, the way that First Unitarian is able to offer Sunday worship celebrations to the congregation changed dramatically in March 2020! As a result, the way I have spent my time working for First U has changed quite a bit as well. I expanded my audio and video production skills in order to simulate ensemble music-making. I took on administrative support work that didn't exist before the pandemic, and generally filled in where needed even if it would normally be outside my purview. Below is an overview of the work I've produced, as well the members and friends of First UU who have contributed their time and talents to the instrumental music program and wider streaming worship program this past year. Also included are additional notes regarding the work of Kris Rust, Director of Vocal Music.

Throughout our work this year, Rev. Connie Grant has been a supportive collaborator: organized, helpful, appreciative, and generous in the freedom she has allowed us in our planning and performing.

Director of Vocal Music – Summary (from Kris)

Kris's duties as director of the UU Pittsburgh Community Singers have been scaled way back. Although the group has not met in person this year, they have kept in touch via email, participation in music videos, and several Zoom gatherings.

Kris provided live music for several services from March to October 2020 and created several videos for use in services. He has met virtually with program staff and the Ministerial Search Committee on occasion and stayed in email communication with church leaders in order to participate in discussions about various topics, especially worship, the ministerial search, church bylaws, annual canvass, and reopening.

The Music & Arts team has not met since January 2020.

Accompanying and Service Planning

Since March 2020 Ellen has planned, and provided live music for, over 40 streaming services. Planning for services has happened virtually since March 2020, and though the program staff have held fewer meetings, quite a bit of time is devoted each week to communication among us, the tech crew, and other weekly participants for each Sunday service.

Tech Crew for Streaming Services

In March 2020 First U program staff worked with a consultant to advise on streaming techniques and also to provide sound and video training for several Sundays until our tech crew became proficient and independent. The crew mostly work in teams of two each (every!) Sunday. The devoted individuals who have worked to stream nearly 60 services and events have been: Paul Cunningham, Emily Sweeny, Will Snively and Andrew Papale, as well as Joe Jencik (through summer 2020) and Brian Junker (until he began work with the search committee). We could not have any streaming services – or music on Sundays during the pandemic – without these folks!

Substitute Accompanists – Live at First UU

Substitute pianists for live streaming services were Kris Rust, Vocal Music Director; jazz pianist Deanna Witkowski; Kazumi Petineaux; Nanette Solomon; and jazz pianist Dr. James Johnson and his trio.

Participating Musicians – Live at First UU

Musicians from the congregation and hired instrumentalists who have played with Ellen live in the sanctuary are Kai Ballard, drums; Cecilia Caughman, cello; Hugo Cruz, drums; Maddy Izzo, flute; Mimi Jong, erhu; Brian Junker, voice and guitar; Barbara Litt, violin; Danny Rectenwald, classical guitar; and Brittany Trotter, flute.

Video Production and Participants (from Ellen)

Kris and I together have created over 70 music videos during the past 13 months. Initially these included solo videos made at home in quarantine, then alone at First U, and later grew to include virtual ensembles.

Instrumentalists in the roughly 45 videos that I've made include members and friends of the congregation: Hugo Cruz, percussion; Heather, Paul, Julie, and Jackson Cunningham, drums, guitar and electric keyboard; Mary Denison, piano and recorder; Ebe Emmons, flute; Brian Junker, guitar, banjo, mandolin; Nancy Latimer, ukulele; Barbara Litt, violin and viola; Danny Rectenwald, guitar; and Al Schwartz, piano.

Vocalists who have participated in the folk band and other ensemble hymn videos that I have made include Frank Bienkowski; Shelagh Collins; Joe and Laura Conkle; Mary Denison; Simone and Theo Downs; Mary Alice Drusbasky; Ebe Emmons; Brian Junker; MR and Ward Kelsey; Ioulia Kornberg; Hugh McGough; Sue Oerkvitz; Kris Rust; Al, Rob and Charlie Schwartz; Kurt Summersgill; and Jo Ann Wagstaff.

Erica Shadowsong submitted American Sign Language for one of the *Spirit of Life* videos; RE and Family Choir participants contributed to the "Garden Song" crankie; and Audrey Masalehdan and Mary Weidner collaborated on the Typhoid (Water Treatment) crankie video for the 200th anniversary celebration.

Some musicians filmed and edited one or more videos of their own, for which I am very grateful: Heather and Paul Cunningham; Mary Denison; Brian Junker; Danny Rectenwald; Al, Rob and Charlie Schwartz. Plus the AAMI Boys Choir with Dr. James Johnson, the Incidental Chamber Players, Brittany Trotter, and Brad Yoder.

I hope I haven't omitted anybody. I am very grateful for everyone's contributions and willingness to make music in these – sometimes unusual – ways.

More Videos

Kris contributed two dozen videos that included the UU Pittsburgh Community Singers, the Lemington Chorale, and the MLK Festival Singers, with soloists Deryck Tines, Michele Bankole, James Hall, and others. Some highlights: a video for Khasi Hills Sunday with Lois Hurt, who sang *Spirit of Life* in Khasi; videos with guest poet and dancer Ru Emmons, Pride Sunday 2020; a large virtual choir video of *Gentle Angry People/Singing for Our Lives* by Holly Near. The Afro-Yaqui Music Collective (video) and Miguel Sague (live) were guest musicians celebrating Indigenous people in Pittsburgh, October 2020.

In all these areas, our interim minister Connie Grant has been a supportive collaborator: organized, helpful, and generous in the freedom she has given the music staff in its planning and performance.

Behind the Scenes Production and Administration (from Ellen)

The requirements of the Director of Instrumental music have altered and increased quite a bit since the "before" time. Video production has involved writing arrangements and creating lead sheets; recording the "follow along" audio tracks; filming myself (or sometimes others) on several devices as needed, including piano, voice, banjo or harmonium; soliciting home videos from musicians and singers; organizing, editing and compiling submissions; adding lyrics for congregational hymn videos; and occasionally enhancing the video with additional media, including original photography or stock videos and photos. The process is regrettably involved and time consuming, even at this fairly simple level of production.

Early in our streaming process I thought the program staff could best assist the tech crew by providing them with a tech sheet each week. We have been using the

template created last spring, and the musician for each Sunday prepares the new technical 'road map' for the day.

Guest speakers' videos often need to be reformatted, edited or connected to adjacent videos in the service. Because we dove into this streaming world, learning as we went, I picked up these tasks, and each week I make sure all videos are ready for the tech team. On occasion this reformatting work falls to a member of the tech crew.

Instrument Maintenance (from Ellen)

The sanctuary grand piano has been maintained and tuned regularly this past year; the Undercroft, Schweitzer, and Priestly Room pianos have been tuned but only minimally. The organ has not been tuned this year. I engaged a wonderful team to tune and maintain the organ last year, but they are much more expensive than I realized, so I will need to reevaluate. It is currently in need of a tuning and maintenance appointment. The harpsichord has been in disuse, mainly because it's time consuming and expensive to keep it in good maintenance and tuned for each performance. (So, it's most of the time unplayable.)

– **Ellen Gozion**, Director of Instrumental Music

Kris Rust, Director of Vocal Music

SongSpace

SongSpace at First Unitarian is a celebration of folk, Americana, bluegrass, singer-songwriter, old-time, and world music, featuring local, regional and national artists. We are a non-profit series dedicated to establishing a welcoming and meaningful space both for making and listening to quality music. Our shows are open to the public.

Since Fall 2020 we've been live-streaming almost one show a month, featuring local artists and artists with local connections. You can see recordings of some of these streams at <https://www.uusongspace.com/weve-been-streaming/>

September 26, 2020: Brad Yoder, Morgan Erina, and Jason Rafalak

November 14, 2020: Geña y Peña and the Uptown Quartet

December 12, 2020: Buffalo Rose

January 30, 2021: Cello Fury

March 13, 2021: Joe Jencks and Zoe Mulford

April 2, 2021: Joe Crookston

Now we're getting ready for some pop-up summer shows and the fall 2021 season!

– **Brian Junker**

Art Team

Team members include: Ali Masalehdan (Chair), Linda Kaufmann, Mary Weidner, Ralph Gurley, Kirsti Adkins, Alice Lieb, Mary Schinhofen, Mary Kostalos, Charlotte Toal, Joe Jencik, Audrey Masalehdan

The Art Team has been on hiatus while the church building remains closed due to the pandemic. We look forward to again being able to bring wonderful art to the Undercroft Gallery once it's safe for the community to gather again.

– *Ali Masalehdan*

Dance Choir

The Dance Choir has been staying connected, choreographing and dancing together this church year through Zoom.

Activities:

June 2020: Summer Solstice celebration. Met over Zoom for personal check-ins and Sacred Circle Dancing together.

December 19: Some members led movement for an outdoor Solstice event with East End Song Studio.

Fall to December 21, 2020: Planned a "Live on Zoom" Winter Solstice service with Erica Shadowsong. Congregation was invited to participate live from home in some movement and in a breathing meditation. Also included an original prerecorded Dance piece, created on Zoom, that was a movement response to Erica's story.

March 2021: Met for Sacred Circle dancing over Zoom.

Spring to June 20, 2021: Collaborating with Erica Shadowsong on our first-ever Sunday Summer Solstice service. Will include original recorded choreography.

We are looking forward to being able to dance in person again and to continued creative collaborations in the new church year.

Current members: Tory Butterworth, Alice Carnes, Linda Fleming, Jennifer Halperin, Karen Litzinger, Mary Pat Mengato, Cathy Rohrer, Sarah Sheard, Elaine Stolick

– *Mary Pat Mengato*

Serve

Serve Council

Humanitarian Service Ministry

Alternative Gift Market Team

Just like the rest of the world, the Alternative Gift Market (AGM) had to change with the times this year. Usually there are several “shopping days” after Sunday services with displays and descriptions of the causes. To address the challenges of the pandemic, the AGM committee decided to limit AGM donations to the First Unitarian Church Khasi Hills cause. This cause is familiar to most members and simplified the advertising, shopping, donations, and accounting. Members were extremely generous with the total AGM amount reaching \$2313.26!

– Karen Burns Rutigliano,
Nancy Latimer (co-chairs)

East End Cooperative Ministry Homeless Shelter Meal Preparation Coordinating Team

<https://www.first-unitarian-pgh.org/east-end-cooperative-ministry.html>

Members: Mary Denison (group leader). Participants vary each month. Regular head chefs include David Hereth, Jim Reitz, Pat Schuetz, Jim Cunningham, Sam and Kathryn Hens-Greco, Tony Rutigliano and Karen Burns, Becky Studer, and Trevet and Sarah Hooper. The group includes 41 individuals who have been participants at one time or another, including a handful of friends who like to participate but are not members of the church.

The East End Cooperative Ministry is dedicated to helping vulnerable adults and at-risk children and youth throughout Pittsburgh. As an interfaith ministry, EECM seeks to make a difference in the lives of the individuals and families it serves by tending to their needs for today as well as their hopes for tomorrow.

Major programs/activities/projects: The group served a meal for 52 residents of the EECM Homeless Shelter once a month, including menu planning, shopping, cooking, and serving the meal. We usually try to join the residents for dinner as well, although during the past year we were not able to enter the EECM building, so serving and visiting with residents were not possible.

All through the COVID-19 pandemic, we continued to provide a monthly meal for EECM. This was completed in a variety of ways :

- Supporting local restaurants, we ordered the meals for the shelter from a local restaurant and the committee paid the restaurant.
OR
- The team leader for that month would assign portions of the meal to the team members. Each team member delivered their contribution to the shelter separately.

This is a wonderful service we provide to the community. Personally, I would like to expand our church's relationship with the shelter. To volunteer your group (4–6 people) or yourself to prepare and serve a meal, please contact eecm@first-unitarian-pgh.org.

– *Mary Denison*

Habitat for Humanity Team

The First Unitarian Church has had a Habitat Team since 2014, serving residents both in the eastern suburbs of Pittsburgh and in adjoining communities to our church. We have had wide participation, with 51 people volunteering 727 hours to help at least 25 people have a safe and efficient home.

2020 was a sad year as our activities were curtailed due to the pandemic. We did hold one work party on February 15, 2020, which included painting all the walls in a house twice to be in "move in" condition and laying ceramic tile in the kitchen and hallways. The temperature was 10°F when we arrived at the worksite, but 1st UU "Habitaters" prevailed.

We are elated that we will have work parties in June, July, and August 2021, with groups of 6 who will practice safe standards such as wearing a mask, social distancing, and washing hands frequently.

– *Marty Lieb*

Khasi Hills Partnership Team

Members: Karen Litzinger (chairperson), Lois Hurt, Mary Pat Mengato, Christine Milcarek (finishing service), Maureen Porter, Shelley Ross, Anne Van Cott, Carol Washburn

Highlights:

Funding New Teachers: For the new Higher Secondary school we have funded since 2015–2016, we raised \$9,510 of the \$9,600 goal of funding two teachers which we had done for the last three years. We were pleased and surprised to maintain our full sponsorship due to the pandemic upheaval. The uncertainty was eased with some carryover in funds from our May/June 2020 fundraising.

Alternative Gift Market: Our annual participation was enhanced with church leadership support to earmark Khasi Hills as the sole recipient this year based on the pandemic having limited team fundraising and the limited logistics of the AGM team to host many recipients. \$2,313 in donations were received.

Share the Plate and Historical Video: The other major fundraiser was in March, the annual Share the Plate collection on which the project depends on. The collection was enhanced this year by a PowerPoint video highlighting the history of our church's involvement since 2003, raising \$2,905 through the month.

October Founders Day Church Service: Somewhat replacing the annual Holi and Diwali social hour festivities, we hosted the October 4 service. Founders Day is our Khasi Hills partners' most significant holiday, celebrating the founding of Unitarianism in the Khasi Hills through a month-long range of activities. This was the highlight activity of our year. The remote church service featured video greetings and prayers from our Khasi Hills partners; a traditional tribal dance of the region by a Pittsburgh Indian Dance company, Nandanik; *Spirit of Life* sung in Khasi; combined video of our congregation and Khasi students singing *We Shall Overcome*; and a homily and slide show by pilgrim Maureen Porter.

Religious Education Collaboration: We were pleased to have Erica Shadowsong's participation in the Founder's Day Church Service with a Khasi Hills folk tale. The other collaboration will be a Children's Chapel about Khasi Hills on May 23.

May 23 Live Congregation Zoom Visit with our Khasi Hills India Friends: This was the first congregation-wide opportunity to interact directly with our India Partners, with special invitations going to donors. This program is a positive outcome of our becoming more comfortable with Zoom and of the positive response from the congregation after hearing from our partners during the October church service.

Team Zoom Meetings: Zoom planning meetings have worked well and twice we were able to include our India partners. Members of our team also participated in the quarterly Zoom calls of the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council.

Consulting: We have provided consultation to two other UU congregations about our partnership as a result of our long history and participation.

Next year: We expect to continue to fund two Higher Secondary School teachers until government funding kicks in, which has been delayed by changing government regulations and the pandemic. We want to continue and expand the Khasi Hills annual Founders Day activities, including an annual church service like other congregations. We look forward to a growing partnership with Religious Education. We are also contemplating collaboration with other congregations involved in India partnerships, including joint pilgrimage trips to the Khasi Hills. Long term, we hope to collaborate with other UU congregations in the Pittsburgh area.

Social Justice Ministry

Green Sanctuary Team

Current members: Robert Baron, Mary Alice Drusbasky, Linda Fleming, Margaret Fuhrman, Eileen Kraus-Dobratz, Barbara Litt (co-chair), Chris Milcarek, Bob Mitchell, Monica Nogueira, Peg Schmidt (co-chair), Becky Studer.

The goal of the Green Sanctuary Team is to integrate the Seventh Principle into our daily congregational life – specifically celebration, education, sustainability, and environmental justice.

Meetings: Our monthly meetings last an hour, though discussion sometimes continues.

- Current projects in progress are usually presented by the project lead.
- Sustainable living issues we notice during congregational activities and in our community are noted, such as recycling, commercial composting, the continued use of single-use plastics, and trash.
- Current issues are discussed briefly.

Activities During the Church Year 2020–2021

- **PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) public comment:** In June 2020, Barbara Litt and Becky Studer gave testimony during the virtual public hearing on DEP's proposed regulations to control emissions of volatile organic compounds and methane from existing oil and natural gas sources. There were 14 co-signers to Barbara's testimony that urged DEP to close oil and gas industry loopholes and adopt a strong final methane rule to tackle the climate crisis.
- **Zoom meetings during COVID-19:** After a few months on hiatus, we started Check-in & Chat meetings in late 2020 to stay connected. Regular meetings since then have focused on our activities.
- **Harvest the Power conference panel:** In November 2020, Peg Schmidt participated in the UU Ministry for Earth (UUMFE) panel Congregational Teach-in: Addressing

400 Years of White Supremacist Colonialism on the subject of supporting incarcerated No Dakota Access Pipeline Water Protectors.

- ***SB 790:*** In November 2020, several of our members reached out to their PA state senators and the governor urging them to reject this legislation because it relaxed restrictions on the oil and gas industry. It passed in both the Senate and the House, but was vetoed by our Democratic governor.
- ***Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative testimony:*** In December 2020, Eileen Kraus-Dobratz gave oral testimony during the virtual public hearing on PA joining the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). Barbara Litt submitted written comments. The PA DEP is currently drafting the regulatory language and gathering feedback. It is expected that the final regulation will be presented to the Environmental Quality Board in summer 2021.
- ***Winter Solstice Service, December 2020 :***"Descent of Persephone" was coordinated by Lifespan Religious Education Director (LRED) Erica Shadowsong with the Dance Choir. Linda Fleming participated with the Dance Choir in this earth-centered lay-led annual service.
- ***Solar United Neighbors Co-ops:*** Project lead Monica Nogueira kept up with the Allegheny Interfaith Solar Co-op, led by Kate Begg at East Suburban Unitarian Universalist Church. It later merged into the Millvale Solar Co-op.
- ***Bob Mitchell's presentations:*** Bob gave a recorded homily for the March 28, 2021, Sunday service entitled "Climate Action is not a Spectator Sport" at the UU Church of the North Hills. He continues to offer classes on climate change through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Pittsburgh.
- ***Survey on the Climate Crisis and Hope:*** Barbara Litt and Monica Nogueira led this effort to survey interested congregants. Partial results were delivered by Barbara during the Earth Sunday service, with a more detailed report to be posted on the church website.
- ***Earth Sunday Service, April 18, 2021:*** This year's service, on the theme "Enacting Hope for a Livable Planet," was coordinated by Rev. Connie and Ellen Gozion, Director of Instrumental Music. Chris Milcarek led our team's contributions, recorded reflections by Chris, Bob Mitchell, and Barbara Litt, and a recorded reading by Peg Schmidt. The service was dedicated to the late Ray Schinhofen, who founded the Green Sanctuary effort with his wife Mary.
- ***UUJusticePA Environmental Justice:*** Barbara Litt, Bob Mitchell, and Becky Studer continue their participation with this team. (UUJusticePA was known previously as UUPLAN). The April 2021 annual meeting was attended by Bob Mitchell, Peg Schmidt, Becky Studer, and several congregants.
- ***Light It Forward:*** Bob Mitchell coordinates this effort that we hope to have approved and enacted through the Building & Grounds Committee. When conditions permit safe work at church, we can obtain final bids for consideration by

the Board. Originally introduced at the 2018 Summer Institute, this program combines updating lighting fixtures at church to reduce electricity use and using rebates we receive to seed the same program at another non-profit. Reducing our electric use/bills may enable a future switch to clean power sources.

- **Urban EcoStewards:** At our April 2021 meeting, project lead Becky Studer proposed that we continue maintenance of one plot in Frick Park as long as we can enlist young, able-bodied volunteers. LRED Erica Shadowsong has suggested that the RE high school students might be interested in working on this project. The group communicates by email and gathers 3–4 times a year during the growth season to remove invasive species, plant native species, and clean the stream bank adjacent to our area.
- **Certification as a Green Sanctuary Congregation:** The report for accreditation is in progress.
- **Conference attendance:** Barbara Litt, Bob Mitchell, Peg Schmidt, Becky Studer, and several other congregants attended the UUMFE Harvest the Power conference in November 2020. Barbara Litt, Margaret Fuhrman, Peg Schmidt, and Becky Studer, and other Racial Justice Task Force members and friends attended the Racial Justice Summit on January 23, 2021. Peg Schmidt, Becky Studer, and Racial Justice Task Force members and friends attended the UU New Day Rising workshop on February 27, 2021.
- **Environmental Justice Exchange:** Barbara Litt and Peg Schmidt submitted their final reflections to New Voices Pittsburgh, thereby concluding the project. We look forward to applying what we learned in our ongoing environmental justice work.
- **Citizen's Climate Lobby:** Several Green Sanctuary members and congregants continue to work with this organization, which specifically advocates carbon pricing, which is widely recognized by scientists and economists as essential to meeting the goal of net zero greenhouse emissions by midcentury.

– Peg Schmidt

Pennsylvania Interfaith Impact Network (PIIN) Team

PIIN is a faith-based organization focused on equity and social justice in the Pittsburgh region. It is a coalition of many local faith communities. Working with other organizations, PIIN can add a moral foundation and voice to support justice issues.

During COVID, the First Church PIIN Core Team has merged with a newly created First Church Racial Justice Task Force. The PIIN Board meets monthly, on the 2nd Thursday, 7:00–8:30 pm. The Racial Justice TF meets monthly, on the 3rd Sunday, 3:00–5:00 p.m. (During COVID both meetings are on Zoom.)

Currently PIIN is focused on criminal justice reform, including working with the Alliance for Police Accountability to pass two Primary ballot initiatives and develop a program to assist “returning citizens.”

For information about PIIN, contact Karen Burns Rutigliano or Sandy Woolley or go to <https://piinpa.org/>.

– *Sandy Woolley*

Racial Justice Task Force

The newly formed Racial Justice Task Force was created due to a high level of interest from the First Unitarian community to organize and be more active around racial justice issues. Our current goal is to encourage and organize the development of resilience, courage, activism and leadership for stronger and more cohesive racial justice identity, values, and action at First Unitarian Church.

Although a new group, we already have many exciting things in the works and look forward to doing more. Watch for more information about an upcoming book group, movie discussions, speaker series, resource lists, discussion and action around the UU 8th Principle, strengthening and creating supportive relationships with other racial justice organizations, and promoting activism within our own beloved community.

The Racial Justice Task Force currently meets the third Sunday of every month from 3 p.m. to 5 pm ET via Zoom. For more information please contact Sonia Wellington at sonia.wellington@gmail.com.

– *Sonia Wellington*

Share the Plate

On the third Sunday of each month, our offering is shared with a community/service organization. The following have been Share the Plate recipients over the past year:

Month	Recipient	Amount
May	Khasi Hills School, India	\$1,692.04
June	Reading Ready Pittsburgh	\$529.42
July	PIIN	\$1,095.69
August	1Hood Media	\$874.62
Sept	UUA Disaster Relief Fund	\$289.85
Oct	Habitat for Humanity	\$431.36
Nov-Dec	Mathilda Theiss Toy Drive	\$1,820.25
Jan	Afro-American Music Institute	\$766.19
Feb	Book 'Em	\$468.07
Mar	Khasi Hills Secondary School	\$2,884.04
Apr	412 Food Rescue	\$627.10

If you would like to nominate an organization to be the recipient of a future third-Sunday Share the Plate offering, please submit your nomination using the form at <https://www.first-unitarian-pgh.org/serve/share-the-plate/>. The following information is needed:

- Name of organization
- Website address or other sources of information
- Is this a 501 (c) (3) organization (required)?
- What is your involvement with this organization?
- Why do you consider this an appropriate recipient for our Share the Plate offering?
- Preferred month (if any)

– **Rev. Connie Grant**

UUs for Justice in the Middle East (UUJME) Team

<https://www.first-unitarian-pgh.org/justice-in-the-middle-east.html>

<https://uujme.org/>

UUJME is dedicated to a peaceful and just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The team has been on hiatus during the closure of the church building during the pandemic, but looks forward to resuming its regular activities – including sales of olive oil in the Undercroft Gallery and handing out leaflets about the Palestinian situation – once it's safe for us to gather again.

– **Ali Masalehdan**

UUJusticePA (formerly UUPLAN)

The last year has been one of both challenges and accomplishments for UUPLAN. Of course, we have been prevented from having in-person contact among members and with our elected leaders in Harrisburg. However, under Reverend Joan Sabatino's leadership the group has agreed to change its name to UUJusticePA, which more directly speaks to our vision and mission. (You can learn more about the group and its name change at www.uujusticepa.org).

The vision of UUJusticePA is "Pennsylvania UUs are aware of justice issues and are called to speak and take action that leads to a better Commonwealth." Its mission is "Pursue justice by voting, advocating and making just public policies." To realize these ambitions, UUJusticePA has six active Justice Teams: Criminal Justice Reform; Economic Justice; Environmental Justice; Good Government; Gun Violence Prevention; and Reproductive Justice. All of these teams partner with other organizations aligned with UU principles as we seek to influence and improve our state governance.

Much of the last year was spent working with UU the VOTE. UUJusticePA collaborated with other organizations across the state to register and mobilize voters through phone, text, and, in the case of First Unitarian, distribution of door hangers with important information about mail-in ballots and critical registration and voting deadlines.

UUJusticePA represents approximately 6,000 UUs across the Commonwealth. The group's goal is to "Bring UU Voices to the Public Square in Pennsylvania." However, the group has only 250 dues-paying members. We need more to increase our influence. The UUJusticePA Board has set a goal of having 10% of UUs in Pennsylvania supporting this important work and having individuals from each congregation active with Justice Teams. To that end, First Unitarian's co-liaisons Tony Rutigliano and Becky Studer will reach out to our congregation. We need at least 17 more UUJustice PA members from our church to do our part in reaching the organization's goal.

The liaisons will do their best to keep the congregation informed about legislative initiatives via the weekly email newsletter. However, the best way to stay informed is to check the uujusticepa.org website regularly. You can watch videos highlighting some of the issues we're working on and sign up for Zoom presentations by the teams that will educate and inspire to action related to important legislation. Despite pandemic restrictions, the group's annual meeting in April 2020 and the Advocacy Day in November were well attended.

Check the website, become a member, find your passion among the Justice teams, and work to have our UU values lived out through our state governance!

- Tony Rutigliano, Becky Studer (co-chairs)

Learn

Learn Council

Lifespan Religious Education

Children & Youth Religious Education

Overview

This year, Sunday morning religious education has consisted of one class, led by the LRED, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., after the live-streamed service. We have been exploring the Six Sources in depth with lots of stories, multimedia, and activities. The class has seen regular attendance from a mostly school-aged group of kids from 1st to 5th grades. It is a lively group, and they seem to enjoy this time.

Coming of Age was offered for 8th and 9th graders. High school youth was not very active, however, and has been a challenge. I am hopeful that this can be addressed in the summer to some degree, when the stresses of school have dissipated, and more youth are likely to be vaccinated.

Young adults continue to be a strong but steady group. Adult faith development has been very successful over the year, and it is my observation that the virtual offerings have actually boosted participation. Both the minister and I have noted that some people are participating who previously were not regularly attending church in person, and some of them have expressed that for various reasons, the virtual offerings have allowed them to feel more connected than previously.

As the summer approaches, two programs are in the works. For the Sunday RE class, I am working with the Khasi Hills Partnership Team to explore folktales from that region throughout the summer. The plan is to have this summer exploration culminate in some art that may be shared with our partners overseas. More importantly, we are hoping to make a connection between the American folk art of crankies and the Khasi Hills/Indian folk art of storytelling scrolls! While in some ways we are building on our past relationship with the Khasi Hills school, we are also intentionally thinking about reinvigorating a stronger, more regular relationship with the church through our respective RE programs.

The second program is a virtual tabletop roleplaying game called Testament, geared towards 4th to 7th graders. This game involves playing a character set in the Biblical era through an adventure facilitated by the LRED. I have learned that pop culture fandom, including gaming of various kinds, has been very popular at youth con events, and so I am going to try to offer my own gaming enthusiasm and experience to see if this experimental program might see some similar success. This also may help support

the need for more peer-to-peer bonding that is less curriculum based, less top-down instruction than programs such as Coming of Age. While it's primary goal is fun, I consider it a possible plus that we will get to explore Biblical peoples, cultures, mythologies and religions in a narrative, immersive game-based setting!

Looking Ahead

Like perhaps many of my colleagues, I began thinking about the coming year of RE with the past in mind, thinking about themes and curriculum, and our usual volunteer/classroom model. While relationships and community building are always the highest priority of religious education in our congregation – this is what keeps us together and truly fulfills the children and youth, as well as adults – I felt it important to have a detailed plan for the year ahead, as if we would be returning to some level of “normal,” and perhaps going back into some kind of thematic three-year rotation.

After attending the presentation on Multi-Platform Ministry, I have taken to heart that much of what was said focused on the idea of A) going slowly and B) returning in “phases.” UU leaders wanted us to understand that it is more likely that we will have a gradual “return” to in-person congregational participation, rather than returning all at once in the fall. In that spirit, they pointed out that a priority in coming back might be a greater need than ever for a focus on community building and connection.

They asked us to consider that we may not wish to return to the Sunday school model that we are used to, and that it may take some time to remember how to be together. Therefore, they emphasized flexibility and resisting the urge to try to predict ahead of time what would be needed.

This coincided with a conversation I held with some prospective RE leaders, and with our unique situation of just coming out of an interim period into a new settled ministry. I am now thinking more intentionally about being flexible, gauging the need based on the current situation, and being open to something that may look very different from what we are used to, even while I am not able to say what that might be yet.

One thing I am confident in, however, is that the RE program, whatever evolution occurs, will be well supported and have strong participation from people of all ages. Families and volunteers still maintain contact, express an interest in opportunities, and attend to their ability current programs. On my Sundays off, I have been able to have volunteer coverage for the Sunday RE virtual program.

Thus, I am confident that we have an excellent opportunity to build a really intentional, exciting religious education program that will unfold organically, dynamically, and solidly, with continuous conversation and engagement from stakeholders to dream big. When we do finally return to meeting in person, I hope to have a program that more strongly connects families, children and youth to the wider congregation and to worship; engages multiple ages and people of different backgrounds; trains confident

and enthusiastic volunteers; and grows powerful UU leadership in the generations to come.

Number Registered

Nursery	4
PreK–K	17
1st–3rd Grade	17
4th–6th Grade	15
7th–8th Grade	6
Our Whole Lives (7th–9th Grade)	10 fall, 9 spring
Youth Group (9th–12th Grade)	9
Total	78
RE volunteers currently active	6

Attendance

Average children’s attendance	
Summer	8
September to May	8
Multigenerational events	
Meet & Greet with Ministerial Candidate	12
Christmas Pageant	10
Flower Communion	8–10
Regular Sunday service	5–8
Regular participants in the Family Choir	Currently inactive
Average attendance at the Family Social Hour	Currently inactive

Coming of Age

We had 4 participants and mentors in our first all-virtual Coming of Age program, although more were eligible. The move to a virtual program had both advantages and disadvantages; the time commitment may have been easier on the families and youth, but the lack of peer-to-peer in-person interaction made bonding a much slower and more difficult process for this group. It has also been observed, however, that the participants in this year’s program are naturally on the quiet side! We held our virtual graduation on Saturday, May, and the Coming of Age service took place on May 16th.

In conversation with the parents of this cohort, we agreed to explore the opportunity to have an additional social and service-related event, which we could not really do during the school year in virtual form. We believe that, with such a small group and the likelihood that they will either be eligible for vaccination or able to be entrusted to observe safe distancing procedures, we will be able to hold this event in person in late summer or early fall.

Middle School Youth

Middle school youth have been fortunate to have several regional virtual conferences offered this year, which were very successful and have resulted in members of this age group remaining in contact with one another. I am interested in getting more involved in these regional endeavors, as the middle school youth from our congregation who have attended have had a very positive experience.

High School Youth

High school youth met a few times at the beginning of the year, but virtual attendance fell off rapidly. Across UU congregations, it has frequently been observed that this age group is at particular risk of severe psychological suffering as a result of isolation from their peers, and different congregations have had mixed results with meeting outdoors on occasion, meeting virtually, focusing on games and socializing, or focusing on personal check-ins and group discussions, depending on the closeness of the cohort before the pandemic.

In our case, our youth group was brand new, having just graduated from Coming of Age, so they had not really had a chance to form a youth group culture. Additionally, there is a need for strong adult leadership in addition to the LRED. To that end, I am exploring youth-ministry best practices and learnings as much as possible with regional staff and colleagues, and looking toward the summer and early fall to prioritize youth events that will most likely need to be in person.

I am also taking a training in pastoral care that I am planning to use to help train new adult mentors and volunteers to work with youth. Finally, I have had some conversation with the interim minister about the possibility of forming a part-time youth coordinator position, although I have not yet acted on this with a proposal. I will most likely revisit this in August with the new settled minister. In the meantime, the young adults have shown an interest in helping to arrange one or two safe outings/events with the youth, which would also be attended by the LRED.

Young Adults & Campus Ministry

Three young adults continue to meet regularly on Wednesday evenings on Zoom, with the LRED present most of the time.

The young adults have a strong interest in social and racial justice work, and have expressed increasing interest in finding ways to be supported in this work through the church. In the winter, they organized a warm-blanket drive for families in need. They also made donations of baby formula to a local non-profit organization.

Campus ministry is not currently active. With the interim period and the vacancy of the young adult coordinator position, the interim minister and I agreed this was not an RE priority at this time as to be done well it requires a lot more presence on campus. I expect to revisit this when the settled minister has arrived.

Adult Faith Development

Adult faith development has enjoyed robust and continuous attendance through the pandemic, via offerings on Zoom.

We began by reading *Braiding Sweetgrass* over the summer, which was one of the 2020 UUA Common Reads. We had 8 participants, facilitated by the LRED.

After completing this book, the participants continued as a self-led book group that has regularly seen 10 to 12 participants throughout the course of the year. Books they have read have included *A Tale of Two Planets* and *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair*. This book discussion group continues to meet on Thursday nights.

Other adult faith offerings included the following:

- *The Artist's Way for Parents* book group, facilitated by the LRED, with 4 participants.
- *Yes to Life, In Spite of Everything*, a UUA Common Read facilitated by Rev. Connie with 11 initial participants, 5 who completed the course.
- *Building Your Own Theology*, beginning in May and facilitated by the LRED, with 12 signups.
- *Spirit in Practice*, to be offered in August or September, facilitated by the LRED and with 8 participants initially interested in affinity groups.

Additionally, several events facilitated by congregants occurred, including offerings by the newly formed Humanist group, which has continued to engage participants through the pandemic with book discussions and guest lectures.

Worship & Congregational Life

There have been few multigenerational services since our move to virtual Sunday services, but the most long-established and well-attended did occur, including the Christmas Pageant and the Flower Communion.

Professional Development

I have continued, during this pandemic period, to focus on self-guided professional development, exploring and reading a variety of books on topics related to history, culture, science, and religion, mostly through an Audible subscription. At times, I have written about what I'm reading in my monthly column in the church newsletter. On a note of personal interest, I've also been honing my skills in mathematics, a lifelong personal goal.

Additionally, I attended the virtual Finding Our Way Home conference for UU professionals of color in March. I also attend regional gatherings and trainings that I think would be beneficial. These have included Multi-Platform Worship and Pastoral Care with Youth for Religious Educators. I am also participating in regional ongoing

conversations on youth ministry in the time of the pandemic, and continue to meet with my bi-weekly spiritual direction group of UU professionals of color, facilitated by Jessica York.

Bookstore and Adult Library Team

Mary Schinhofen stepped down this year from leadership of both these ministries, and in discussion with the Learn Council, the interim minister and I have decided to work together on re-envisioning the bookstore and the library, with input and aid from a couple of Learn Council volunteers.

Leadership: Rev. Connie Grant and Erica Shadowsong

Children's Library Team

Leadership: Mary Denison

Religious Education for Children & Youth Ministry Team

Currently on pause during the pandemic period. As agreed with the leadership at the time, leadership for religious education has primarily been provided by the LRED. This is, however, understood to be a temporary situation and is about to change, as a recent interest meeting for future RE leadership was held. Three parents attended, two new and one an experienced volunteer. I will be continuing these conversations and expecting this number to grow as I invite more RE stakeholders to help co-create an intentional vision for religious education and family congregational life as we enter a new period of ministry under a settled minister.

– **Erica Shadowsong**, Lifespan Religious Education Director

Sunday Morning FORUM

FORUM is a Sunday morning lecture series featuring presentations on topical issues by distinguished individuals from our congregation as well as from local universities, organizations, businesses, and government.

FORUM convened on four Sundays (see below) in 2020 before the COVID lockdown. I would like to continue FORUM once the church reopens for in-person services, but in partnership with other church groups. The new iteration of FORUM would meet monthly (date and time TBD), with more advance notice and outreach than in the past. I would also like to broadcast each FORUM via Zoom to increase participation.

January 12, 2020	Scott Morgenstern, PhD	<i>Cuba, Venezuela, and Democracy in Latin America</i>
February 9, 2020	Aradhna Dhanda	<i>CEO of Leadership Pittsburgh</i>
February 23, 2020	Erica Shadowsong	<i>UUA Common Read: An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States</i>

March 5, 2020	Cody McDevitt	<i>Banished from Johnstown: Racist Backlash in Pennsylvania</i>
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– **Kim Francis**

Board Committees

Vision, Identity, and Mission (VIM) Committee

Members: Ebe Emmons, Joan Harvey, Bob Mitchell, Lynne Porterfield, Cathy Rohrer, Michael Safran, Jean Schmidt

The Vision, Identity and Mission (VIM) Committee is a standing committee of the Board of Trustees, which supports the Board's important roles of discernment and strategic planning. It helped Rev. Grant and the Transition Team in planning and executing the Heart of the Matter event on March 1, 2020. It also assisted the Ministerial Search Committee by facilitating the cottage meetings that helped clarify congregants' vision for the church's future and the characteristics of a settled minister who could lead us into that future. The VIM Committee plans to resume conducting regular cottage meetings in partnership with Rev. Kate Walker.

Endowment Committees

Social Justice

Committee members in 2020: Maria Lauro (chair), Margaret Stevens, Irma Tani

Mission: The Social Justice Endowment Committee considers requests for grants that will enable an individual or group to pursue a project that serves a social justice purpose of broad effect. Grants from this fund are not given to pay for a one-time benefit, but rather to fund an effort that will have a longer-term benefit with broadly felt implications.

Method: The committee members carefully considered the suitability of each application to the guidelines of the Endowment. We weighed the purposes as described in each application, the intent of each applicant, and the expected outcomes of the effort proposed.

Social Justice Endowment awards in 2020:

- **8/18/20:** \$248.08 to Madeline Darnell to cover the cost of door knockers to provide information about voting procedures. The door knockers were distributed in various communities in Pittsburgh as part of *UU the Vote*.
- **12/6/2020:** \$1,000.00 to Kris Rust to help defray the cost of producing and performing the 2021 *Let Freedom Sing* concert, which has the mission to bring together diverse groups of people from various choirs in the city and convey Dr. King's message of love in song and spirit to audiences across the lines of race, religion, class and culture. (Note: funds were reimbursed in 2021.)

- 12/18/2020: \$250.03 to Maria Lauro to supplement funds raised by the congregation for gifts to the Mathilda Theiss nursery and preschool.
- 12/31/2020: \$300 to Erica Shadowsong for a Blanket Drive organized by congregation's young adults in coordination with other. The young adults are doing this as part of an effort to develop a long-term relationship with Circles of Greater Pittsburgh. (Note: funds were reimbursed in 2021.)

Summary of funds awarded in 2020:

- The Annual Draw available to this committee for 2020 was \$7,880.41.
- The total funds awarded in 2020 came to \$1,798.11.

The remaining balance in the fund for 2020 was \$6,062.30 (will return to the fund).

– **Margaret Stevens**

Music

The Music Endowment provides support for our church's music ministry program.

<https://www.first-unitarian-pgh.org/music-endowment-committee.html>

2020 Committee Chair: Michael Shanley

Awards in 2020

10/18/2020: \$450 to Dr. James Johnson for an online performance for the congregation's 200th anniversary

11/6/2020: \$800 to Ellen Gozion to hire chamber musicians to perform at the Christmas Eve services.

Ministry with Children and Youth

The Endowment for Ministry with Children and Youth provides financial support for our church's religious education program (infancy through the end of high school).

<https://www.first-unitarian-pgh.org/endowment-for-ministry-with-children-and-youth.html>

Campus Ministry

The Campus Ministry Endowment extends the ministry of the First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh to local universities and colleges.

<https://www.first-unitarian-pgh.org/campus-ministry-endowment-committee.html>

2020 Committee Chair: Nick Izzo

No grant funds were disbursed in 2020.