



# FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF CHICAGO

## January 2018 Newsletter

First Unitarian Society of Chicago 5650 S. Woodlawn Ave., Chicago IL 60637 (773) 324-4100

### Starting in the Middle Rev. Teri Schwartz

With January, the new year is here. The month of January is associated with the Latin word for door, *ianua*, (January in Latin is *ianuarius*); January is the door to the year and new beginnings. The month is popularly associated with the Roman god, Janus, the god of beginning, gates, transitions, time, doorways, passages, and endings. The god Janus has two faces: one looking to the past and one looking to the future. At New Year's, we do the same: gazing back at where we've been, and wondering and hoping for what is yet to be.

Yet, truth be told, January 1st has never felt like a new year to me. Spring has seemed more fitting, perhaps, though its beginning is gradual. Summer is somewhat of a beginning, but I have associated it with transitions and endings: the end of the school year, graduation, or just a hiatus. Fall usually feels like the new year to me: the beginning of school and the launch of the new church year. Often in the upper Midwest, the long,



hot days of summer quickly give way to crisp, cool mornings and evenings that mark the season's change. New Year's Day has seemed to be an artificial beginning, an abstraction of a human-made calendar, which was out of sync with both nature and the rhythms of my own world.

But maybe there's wisdom in carving out a new beginning in the middle of things. After all, we're always in the middle of things. So

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often, I find myself rationalizing why I should wait to start something—or put off stopping a bad habit!—until tomorrow. Or until Monday. Wait, how about the beginning of the month? That'll be the perfect time for a fresh start. Hmm, maybe I'll wait until my birthday; a new year. Sometimes, there's no end to the rationalizations of the creative mind when it comes to the hard work of change.

The time to start—or stop—and become more fully alive, joyous, and free is *now*. The future is not guaranteed; that calm, settled, orderly moment we imagine for a turning point may never come.

May this midwinter and mid-church year time be an opportunity for the change you wish to see in your life. Church life will continue—and new beginnings will be happening at the church, too! Watch for announcements about our forthcoming capital campaign, membership coordinator hire, new facility upgrades in Pennington Center, and our annual State of the Church meeting on January 28th after the service.

Whatever this new year holds, may it bring an abundance of good things and blessings. No matter what comes to pass, it is good to be together.

May it be so,  
Rev. Teri

## Where's the Choir?

If you've attended worship for more than a few months, you will have noticed that the choir has moved around—and you may wonder what that's all about!

We are the inheritors of a beautiful, but quirky, worship space. As big as it feels, it is surprisingly narrow, and not designed for a choir! And we can't fight it, or force it to operate in a way that it can't. Instead, we're trying to figure out how to work within the constraints it provides.

We are called on to do worship (and that includes music) that respects our rich past but that is also in alignment with contemporary Unitarian Universalist worship practice. We are challenged to breathe new life into old forms and worship spaces and to shape liturgy that reflects who we are as a vibrant and diverse faith community.

In 1931, the sanctuary was built to hold an eight-person choir of all professional singers, sitting facing each other up in the chancel pews in front. While that may have been lovely, times have changed. It's been beautiful to see the choir grow in numbers

and in technical proficiency over the last few years. But with a choir that now has as many as 25 people, where do they sit?

There are a few related problems to solve for in answering that question:

1. Volume. How do we get the most sound from the choir to the congregation—especially past the halfway point where sound drastically diminishes? A key goal here is to strengthen the feeling of congregational hymn singing.
2. Room to expand as new people join. It's wonderful to have new singers, and more are coming whom we haven't met yet. How to make sure there's room to grow?
3. Minimizing transition time from seats to singing position. Last spring, when 40+ members of the Chicago Children's Choir were seated in the chancel, it took a minute or more for them to get out of their seats to sing, and more minutes to get back to their seats. That breaks the flow of the service. How do we minimize that movement time?

4. Sight lines from the piano and the organ to the choir. How do we keep the accompanist-director able to direct? (It's worth mentioning that the sanctuary wasn't originally designed to hold a piano.)
5. Not "overexposing" the choir during the service. How to give the choir some measure of privacy so they don't feel on display throughout service? (At the same time, some congregation members like to be able to see the singers sing.)
6. Experience of worship for the choir. Choir members are also worshipers—can they see what's happening in the chancel? Can they see the preacher or readers?

So we've tried a series of experiments to solve this:

- A few years ago, the choir sat at the back of the chancel. This was bad for problems 1, 2, and 3 listed above, and it sparked our continuing attempt to find a better location.
- We tried seating the choir across the front of the chancel at the top of the steps. This was a big improvement for 1, 2, and 3, but very bad for 5.
- We tried seating the choir at the front of the congregation tucked to the side

by the organ. This was fine for 1 and 3, but bad for 2—we were close to running out of space.

- This fall, we've experimented with seating the choir in the rear of the church. This is dramatically better for 1, 2, 3, and fine for 4, but it's a lot worse for 6, since the choir is in the back. It's especially an issue for a service like the Christmas pageant, where you want to see what's going on.

People have shared different reactions to the different configurations, and we'd love to keep hearing from you. While some choir members have shared that they like being in the back, others find it harder to see. While some people in attendance like the improved sound quality of the choir in the back, others have shared they would like to be able to see the people singing.

We haven't figured out the perfect solution yet, and the reality is that there won't be a perfect solution; all of them involve tradeoffs. We're approaching the whole endeavor in a spirit of exploration and an attitude of experimentation. Please keep letting us know your thoughts on this!

Thanks,  
Rev. David, Rev. Teri, and Jeff.

### From Your Intern Thom Thomas

I have just been working on my sermon for January 7, after spending some time working on the Soul Matters packet for the Soul Matters Discussion group that just started. I notice that the theme for December is Hope and for January it is Intention. I realize that intersection is a pretty good description of where I live: right on the knife edge between hope and intention.

If you asked me why I chose to enter ministry at this time in my life, I would tell you that I entered ministry because the world is a mess, but I have hope. As David told us this month, hope and optimism are not the same thing. I am not optimistic that the world will somehow be saved, but I have hope that, if enough people get together and work on solving the problems of the world rather than on creating more of them, it is

possible that the world can be saved. All it takes is enough of the right kind of people working together in love. Entering the ministry is my way of setting the intention to be one of the right kind of people.

How about you? What kind of person do you want to become in the next year?

## Greetings from the Director of Religious Education (RE) Beth Moss

This month's theme is intention. Intention is more than goal setting; it's moving towards a purpose. A few years ago, I set that darn New Year's resolution everyone sets: to work out more and be healthier. Among other things, I had decided I hated hearing myself say, "I am trying to be healthier." So, I decided to just do it. And then? I did.

In five years I have never gone more than 7 days without exercise because *seven days without exercise makes one weak* (cue disgruntled laugh). But seriously, I am proud of that, and surprisingly, it took imperfection to get there. While sometimes going to the gym was easy, other days I would get there and just barely slog through ten minutes on a few random machines lackadaisically. Even though I felt like I was getting little out of it those times, I was getting something: I was growing a habit. I was living with intention and moving towards my goal of being healthier, even if slowly. What I found was overall so long you are moving, you are always faster than your couch.

How can that be applied to kids? Well, if you have the right teacher, they will tell you all mistakes are fine if you learn from them, but this can be hard to remember in a school where grades are on the line. Sometimes, there and in other spaces, your kid's best maybe won't quite make it. Of course, you WANT your kids to do well, but make your home a safe space to mess up and talk about those imperfections. Your kids know they are loved, but sometimes it helps to remind them this is true no matter what. When I

would fail at something when I was young, my dad would ask me, "Did you try your best?" When I said yes, he would tell me, "That is all anyone could ever ask."

Besides showing your unconditional love, teach your kids to forgive themselves. This can be hard! When your child has the best intentions and to spite their efforts they don't get the desired outcome, that can be very frustrating to them. They don't have the benefit of time and perspective like an adult does. For a child, their world is right NOW. Help them to see the bigger picture, and help them to remember that even if they didn't meet their goals this time, there is always tomorrow. Just keep moving towards your goals with intent, and you and your family will always get to them sooner than your couch.

### **In RE this Month**

**January 7:** Join classes as we return from winter break. This month, the youngest class will finish *Creating Home* and start *Wonderful Welcome*, a curriculum designed to make them feel like part of the church community. The Upper Elementary kids will be starting the hunger horcrux which will lead to a service project in February. Middle school will shift to focus on hunger as well, and on the upcoming service project in February. If you LOVE really making a real impact with your time at church, this is for you.

**January 14:** Regular RE continues. OWL will be held from 12-3 in the youth school room.

**January 15:** MLK Day events. A partner church has invited youth from First U to have lunch and go to the DuSable museum on MLK day. More details to come—watch your e-mail.

**January 21:** Regular RE continues. Chalice Lighter Training from 11:45–12:45.

Chalice Lighters serve as a key member of the Sunday worship team. They are responsible for lighting our chalice, which is the central symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith. The Chalice Lighter program is an opportunity for youth to practice worship etiquette, poise, and leadership—skills that will serve them throughout their lives. Our Chalice Lighter program reflects the church's investment in our children and shares our children's leadership with our community.

Children in the program will be taught the history and significance of the flaming

chalice. They will also make their own chalice, as well as practice their role in worship and fire safety. The Chalice Lighter program is open to youth from Kindergarten to 4th grade. Might your child be interested? If so, e-mail the DRE to sign them up so we know you are coming!

**January 28:** Regular RE continues.

### Early Warning:

#### February 15th OXFAM Banquet 58PM

Put the OXFAM hunger banquet on your calendar now—you will won't want to miss this whole-church event. This event is intended to raise awareness and funds in response to the devastating food crisis that is affecting some 30 million women, children, and men globally. If you are interested in helping to plan for this event, please e-mail the DRE.

## January Worship Services

January 7<sup>th</sup>, 10 AM  
*Living On Purpose*  
Thom Thomas

Self-improvement, or at least the desire for it, is a shared American hobby. It's why so many of us—some estimates say more than 40% of Americans—make New Year's resolutions. Only 8 percent of people keep their New Year's resolutions, according to a commonly cited statistic. Maybe part of the reason for this disconnect is that many of us confuse setting goals with setting intentions. This sermon will examine that difference and explore ways to find your purpose and use that knowledge, not only for self-improvement, but for world-improvement.

January 14<sup>th</sup>, 10 AM  
*MLK Sunday: The Dream is Ours to Do*  
Revs. David and Teri Schwartz

We live in a time in which outright hatred is part of our public discourse and the murder of black men, women, and children is ever-present in our newsfeeds. Through Dr. King's writings and special music, we'll explore how Dr. King's legacy might speak to our work for justice today, 89 years after his birth. First U is honored to welcome special guest musician, Kopano.

January 21<sup>st</sup>, 10 AM  
*Faith of the Free*  
Rev. Teri Schwartz

January 13, 2018, marks the 450th anniversary of one of the world's first statements of religious tolerance. In 1568, in the city of Torda, in what is now Romania, Unitarian King John Sigismund proclaimed

religious freedom. Centuries of Unitarian faith proclaim there are many ways to be faithful—and free. As UUs, our religious heritage provides not only a foundation, but a catalyst for a contemporary faith of the free, which is vital in our post-modern, theologically plural world.

January 28<sup>th</sup>, 10 AM  
*The Ones Who Walk Away*  
Rev. David Schwartz

We benefit, directly and personally, from all kinds of systemic injustices which harm others around the world. How will we do the moral calculus of our own complicity?

## Rising Up in Song

Jeffrey Hamrick, Music Director

On the afternoon of **Sunday, January 14, 2018**, you are invited to join me and other singers from First Unitarian in a protest singing workshop at Unity Temple Unitarian Universalist in Oak Park. This event, sponsored by Unity Temple and Second Unitarian Church of Chicago, is the first of two upcoming events that invite us to raise our voices in song and to become part of the community of singer-protesters coalescing around the nation.

The January 14 event, *Full Body Forward*, presented by Melanie Demore, is a two-hour workshop designed for those who have longed to raise their voices in protest with power, determination, and energy. Ms. DeMore will teach songs from various vocal and communal traditions. By the end of the workshop, you will sing in community with your whole self.

There is a suggested donation of \$20 (\$10 for students). Those planning to attend from First Unitarian are encouraged to contact Jeff Hamrick so that ride sharing from Hyde Park may be arranged.

For more information on Melanie Demore, please visit her website at [www.melaniedemore.com](http://www.melaniedemore.com).

On **Saturday, March 31** (time TBD), we are delighted to welcome Windborne, a dynamic quartet from New England that achieved great recognition following the release of their widely shared video featuring them singing in protest outside Trump Tower in New York following the inauguration of Donald Trump.

Over the past decade, Windborne has sought to study a variety of vocal music from masters of traditional singing styles in the US and around the world. Through these collaborations, they have developed the vocal agility and authentic sound for which they are known. Their dynamic concert programs include songs from Corsica, the Republic of Georgia, Bulgaria, Quebec, and Basque country, as well as traditional and original American folk music. They believe deeply in the power of music to change hearts.

We'll be sharing more information regarding Windborne's visit to First Unitarian as plans are finalized. Provided that there is sufficient interest from our congregation, we hope to schedule a late afternoon singing workshop akin to the January event offered at Unity Temple, followed by a performance by the quartet. For more on Windborne, please visit [www.windbornesingers.com](http://www.windbornesingers.com).

Come raise your voices in protest!

## Capital Campaign Update

Joan Pederson, President, First Unitarian Church

Last spring we conducted a Capital Campaign Feasibility & Planning Study to gauge our congregation's potential to raise capital to fund structural repairs, renovation, and refurbishing of the church and its facilities. It's been roughly six months since we shared the report from that study with the congregation back on June 11, and we wanted to provide you with an update on recent developments and activities which have occurred.

We received valuable input from members and friends of First Unitarian, church leadership, and the Board of Trustees through the Feasibility Study showing strong support for prioritizing capital improvements and for making the financial contributions beyond annual giving needed to fund these efforts. In light of these great indicators of support, we are pleased to announce that First Unitarian is moving forward with plans to conduct a Capital Campaign in 2018 in tandem with our 2018 Annual Canvass in an effort to streamline and best utilize our volunteer resources through a combined fundraising effort.

The goals for the joint campaign are to raise \$1-\$1.25 million for capital improvements discussed and ranked by members during the Feasibility Study, and to increase the 2018-2019 annual budget by 3 percent in order to meet new and ongoing programmatic needs of the church. (Capital gifts will be pledged during 2018 but fulfilled over a 2-3 year period.)

Pre-campaign activities are underway. We're excited to continue to work with Pratapas Associates fundraising consulting firm as we move into our capital campaign

planning and execution efforts. Our consultant, Steve Pratapas, has been meeting and working with church leadership over the past few months on a number of pre-campaign planning activities, including developing a detailed campaign action plan and providing recommendations on the structure of the campaign leadership team.

We are thrilled to announce that congregants Jim Proctor and Lisa Christensen Gee have agreed to lead the campaign as Co-Chairs (see their bios on the next page). Jim and Lisa are already busy at work meeting with several members of the congregation, seeking their input and feedback on the campaign plans and recruiting additional members of the Campaign Leadership Team.

The public launch of the campaign with events and congregation-wide solicitations is a few months out (February/March), but we wanted to let you know there are good things brewing in the wings. We are planning to host a congregation meeting in January to engage members in a visioning exercise and discussion on the future of our church as it relates to the planned campaign. In the meantime, Jim, Lisa and the campaign leadership team will keep you informed of developments as they happen, and you can always reach out to Teri, David, Lisa or Jim if you have any questions or need more information.

We are very grateful for all the work you do to build and sustain our beloved community and look forward to undertaking this significant work together!

**Lisa Christensen Gee, Campaign Co-Chair**

Lisa Christensen Gee has been coming to First Unitarian since 2012 and joined in 2015. She loves singing with the choir, working with the Worship Arts Committee, participating in adult education courses, and coordinating dance pieces for church pageants and events. She has served on the Nomination Committee for two years. Lisa and her husband Matt live in Hyde Park where she works from home as an advocate for fair tax policies and Matt runs his business doing data analysis for social good. She is very excited about First Unitarian's future, humbled to be asked to help lead the Capital Campaign efforts, and stoked to be co-chairing the work with Jim.

**Jim Proctor, Campaign Co-Chair**

Jim Proctor has been a member of First Church for 15 years. He likes to engage in healthy conversations, especially with our newer members. He is always willing to help where needed; he gets involved and holds true to his commitments. One of his passions is singing in the Choir. He is a member of the Men's Group, the Global Studies Group, the Leadership Development team, the Worship Associate team, and the Board of Trustees (for the second time). He is currently serving as Vice President of the congregation. In the past he has also served on the Strategic Planning Committee and the Ministerial Search Committee that recommended that the congregation call Revs. David and Teri Schwartz. He has been a mentor twice in our Coming of Age program and continues as a facilitator in the Our Whole Lives program.

He is married to his lovely wife Aneesah Ali. They have 5 children, one of whom was raised at First Church, Zarinah Ali. Jim retired from the Graphic Arts community after 39 years of service. He is currently working at Meadville Lombard Theological School as the Officer of Recruitment.

He is extremely honored and excited to be working with Lisa Christensen Gee as co-chair of the Capital Campaign.

## January Meetings and Events

**Criminal Justice Task Force**

1/4/2018 Thursday 6:45 PM

Chris Moore Parlor

Our guest will be Ben Ruddell, director of the Criminal Justice Reform Project Illinois ACLU. The ACLU has developed an extensive agenda for criminal justice reform. Mr. Ruddell will update us on the Illinois ACLU's advocacy. All are welcome.

Please contact Evan Freund, [evan17@evanfreund.com](mailto:evan17@evanfreund.com), for more information.)

**First U Christian Group**

1/9/2018 Tuesday 7:00 PM–9:00 PM

Chris Moore Parlor

Open to all church members and friends of any religious beliefs with an interest in learning more about the Christian faith.

For the remainder of 2017–2018, the group will continue its study of world Christianity. First we will view the opening lectures of a Teaching Company course, *The History of Christianity in the Reformation Era*, taught by

Professor Brad S. Gregory, Assistant Professor of History at Stanford University. We will also begin a Bible study, focusing on the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke. For more information, please contact Phiefer Brown at [PhieferBrowne@comcast.net](mailto:PhieferBrowne@comcast.net) or Finley Campbell at [FinleyCampbell5222@comcast.net](mailto:FinleyCampbell5222@comcast.net).

### **Emancipation Proclamation Pageant** 1/13/2018 Saturday 6:30 PM

If you are interested in participating in this performance, drop by the Social Justice/Program Council table to sign up. We need narrators, dancers, etc. This is readers' theater, so no experience is needed. Join us!

### **Activism: Singing With Melanie DeMore**

1/14/2018 Sunday 2:00 PM–4:00 PM

Unity Temple in Oak Park

A two-hour workshop for those who have longed to raise their voices in protest. See the Rising Up in Song article in this newsletter for more information.

### **Martin Luther King Faith In Action Assembly**

1/15/2018 Monday 8:30 AM–11:30 AM

Old St. Patrick's Church, 700 West Adams

Celebrate the Community Renewal Society's accomplishments in improving our city along with 80 other member congregations. At this, their annual assembly, local politicians will pledge support for CRS's *2018 Platform for Renewal*, and all almost all gubernatorial candidates will make presentations. All members of the congregation are welcome.

Get details and register online at [www.communityrenewalsociety.org/calendar/martin-luther-king-faith-action-assembly-0](http://www.communityrenewalsociety.org/calendar/martin-luther-king-faith-action-assembly-0).

### **MLK Tribute Concert and Pre-Concert Outing**

1/15/2018 Monday 6:00 PM

Symphony Center, 220 S. Michigan Ave.

The First U Men's Group cordially invites you to join them for their annual Pre-King Day

concert. This is always a great event and a special time to break bread, enjoy each other, and have a truly great concert experience. This year's 30th anniversary tribute concert is entitled *Ask Your Mama*; the words penned in 1960 by Langston Hughes still resonate. The concert features conductor Mei-Ann Chen and guest artists Janai Brugger, soprano, and Nnenna Freelon, jazz vocalist. Gather with us before the concert at 6:00 pm at the Exchequer Restaurant & Pub, 226 South Wabash Ave.

To RSVP or for more details, please contact Joseph Harrington at 773-768-8983 or Finley Campbell at 773-752-4019.

### **First U Book Club**

1/16/2018 Tuesday 7:30 PM

Home of Joanne Michalski—please email for directions

The purpose of this group is to share thoughts about the book read, to get to know each other, and to have fun. Members come when they are able. We read non-UU books, both fiction and non-fiction. Books are selected by club members. Our January book is *No is Not Enough* by Naomi Klein.

For more information, please contact Joanne Michalski at [jomichal@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jomichal@sbcglobal.net).

### **Soup Lunch**

1/21/2018 Sunday 11:15 AM

Hull Chapel

Soup Lunch happens every third Sunday of the month. Everyone is invited! This is a wonderful time for all members and friends to gather and learn more about each other. Please bring a pot of your favorite soup. You can bring it at room temperature and we can reheat it in crockpots in Hull Chapel.

Not bringing soup? Please consider contributing bread, salad, bread, drinks, or sweets, if convenient, or offer to help with the coordination. For more information, please contact Lisa Martin-Eatinger, [lisaeatinger228@gmail.com](mailto:lisaeatinger228@gmail.com).

**SJC First Forum:****Movement for Black Lives**

1/21/2018 Sunday 11:45 AM –1:00 PM

Chris Moore Parlor

These forums sponsored by the Social Justice Committee are held after the service on the third Sunday of most months.

This month's forum is a workshop of the Movement for Black Lives, sponsored by the BLM Task Force.

**History of the Rise and Triumph of Neo-Racism in U.S. Culture**

1/21/2018 Sunday 1:00 PM—2:00 PM

The Nature of Racism is an annual course with a different focus or theme each year. This year's course is a personal/historical analysis of the impact of neo-racism within the UUA, with some impacts that reach further.

Sponsored by the Racial Justice Task Force. For more information, please contact Finley Campbell at [finleycampbell5222@comcast.net](mailto:finleycampbell5222@comcast.net).

**Church Office Hours**

Monday – Friday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Saturday 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

**Co-Ministers' Office Hours**

Rev. David Schwartz, by appointment on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Sunday

Rev. Teri Schwartz, by appointment on Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday

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