



Inside this issue

Caring Contacts	1
Facing Windows - Rev. Eric	2
Splinters from the Board - Brent Nicole	3
RE-flections - Jodi McIntosh	4
Feature Article: Ajashki - Growing, Evolving, Shining	5-6
Meet a Member: Margaret Linton	7
In Memoriam	7
News from the Environmental Action Group	8-9
Thanks, Merci, Miigwetch	9
Behind the Scenes at Fall Fair	10
An Exceptional Garden Season	11
FirstU Information	12

Deadline for next Spire submissions:  
February 15, 2024



*"On a beautiful sunny day in early October, Ajashki celebrated another successful year by unveiling the spectacular murals that are one of its many achievements this year."*



**Check out this edition's feature article on pages 5-6 written by Eva Berringer**

## Caring Contacts

*"We respond to your phone calls and emails when you wish to alert us to a need or concern, or when you want to celebrate a joy"*

### The Caring Network

#### December

Paul McGinnis  
[paulmcginnis9@gmail.com](mailto:paulmcginnis9@gmail.com)  
613-829-7156

Laurie Foster-MacLeod  
[lauren.fosterm@gmail.com](mailto:lauren.fosterm@gmail.com)  
613-728-1916

#### January

Maureen Sly  
[mmsly@rogers.com](mailto:mmsly@rogers.com)  
613-728-7610

David Hudson  
[davidhudson2446@gmail.com](mailto:davidhudson2446@gmail.com)  
613-402-5744

#### February

Evelyn Algar  
[evelyn.algar@rogers.com](mailto:evelyn.algar@rogers.com)  
613-890-5761

Agnes Davis  
[davisab@rogers.com](mailto:davisab@rogers.com)  
613-986-6527

## Facing Windows

~ Rev. Eric Meter



### Creativity. Beauty. Colour.

Maybe because the autumn leaves have let go and snow has begun to replace them, I've been wanting, if not needing, more colour in my life these days. And at church.

There are a couple of avenues I'll pursue on this. They're separate but connected all the same.

I remember when I first saw a picture of the ficus trees behind the piano in worship hall. While I wish we had their green back with us, I certainly understand why they had to go because (as I've been told) they were dripping sap or the like onto the piano. That's not good.

But oh, how the space cries out for more colour!

I freely admit that I had become spoiled at a previous congregation I served by a fabulous person named Su making a point to bring flowers to church each and every Saturday afternoon. (At another church, a

coffee-addicted young man would bring a couple quarts of half and half for coffee hour when the congregation switched to 2%. There is a Grade AAA silken cloud reserved for him in heaven as his just reward.) Saturday afternoons, Su, I and others would gather to arrange the flowers. Each Sunday there was a unique arrangement.

Well, as good as that practice was, as much as I enjoyed it, over time it just became too much. At least for this slow-writing preacher. But new flowers were always there come Sunday morning. Even after several years, this is a practice I miss.

So, a request. If you have any interest in being part of a small group who take turns to bring natural colour into worship hall, please let me know.

There's another aspect of creativity I want to talk with you about in this forum.

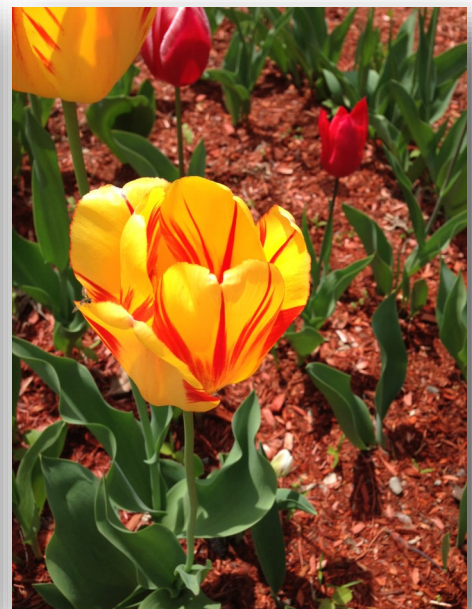
As I understand it, prior to COVID, there was an Artists Circle group that met at the church. Recently, I've been wondering if it might be time to bring that, or something like it, back. Perhaps under a new name. Creativity Circle, for example, or something better. Sketching. Watercolour. Needlework. Pastels. Why stop there? I'm sure there are questions we'd need to address (storage for example), but I've rarely experienced something that countered the old saying *Where there's a will, there's a way.*

As winter's fullness approaches, as beautiful as blue skies are over blankets of snow, why not see what beauty we can create inside? If this holds any interest to you, please let me know.

For the beauty of the earth, of which we are all a part, may we always be grateful.

In shared faith,

~ Rev. Eric





## Splinters from the Board ~ Brent Nicolle



### Leading the way

*"A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way." - John C. Maxwell*

November was a good month to watch for migrating Canada geese. I watched geese gather in their hundreds and thousands at a nearby pond, often noisily. Sooner or later, a gaggle would gather together, honk with extra conviction, take to the air and regroup into their familiar V formation. At the front, the squadron leader would presumably chart a route that would take them southward, at a pace at which the others can keep up, stopping at safe waypoints enroute. Remarkably they accomplish this without a compass, a map, a rearview mirror or a brain larger than a walnut. Geese take turns being leaders in mid-flight, presumably without mutiny or anarchy or coercion. Or maybe that's what all the honking is about.

The FirstU Board has been thinking of leaders too. At our October meeting we decided on a board focus of establishing a **Leadership Pathway** over the congregational year. This is an acknowledgment of an increased level of turn-over and frustration for many of the lay leaders in our congregation: many are feeling ready to "pass the baton" to someone new but not seeing any obvious willing candidate nearby. The Board has some ideas, such as consolidating some of

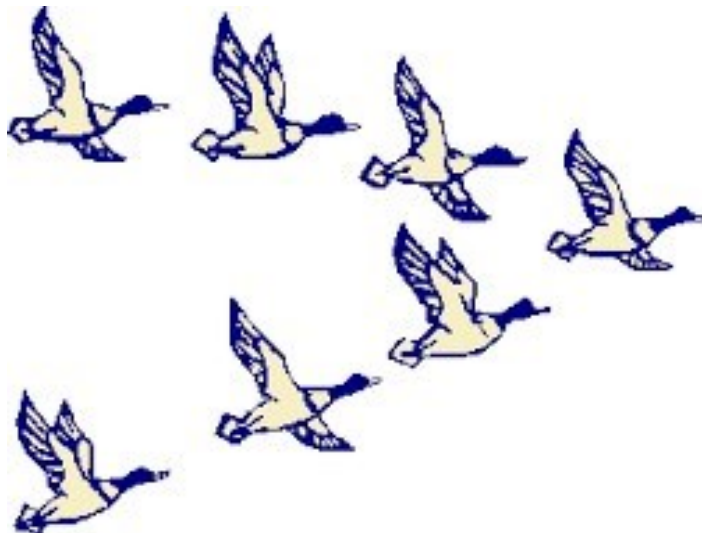
the things-to-lead, and cultivating a few younger leaders into roles that would be a good fit for them.

Others have shown it's possible; here is a case in point. This year's Fall Fair was a wonderful event, and I thank everyone for their involvement in it, large or small. Afterward, Fall Fair director Carol Card cited to me one of her earlier challenges was filling **seventeen (!)** vacancies among convenors and co-convenors. All those seventeen vacancies were filled, perhaps from people who didn't actually believe they could do the job they were asked to do. And yet, they mustered their own inner strength, and helped to make the Fall Fair what it is: a successful community-building fund-raiser. Thank you, and I hope you come back again next year.

The Board realizes that many people (like me) aren't particularly inspired to be leaders. Importantly leadership is often pretty organic. You might simply pick up an idea that you heard somewhere, and start working on it. And maybe after a while when you pause for a moment, you realize that you are surrounded and followed by a gaggle of similarly inspired people, watching you for inspiration. That's actually a pretty warm feeling.

I welcome your thoughts.

Yours in faith,  
Brent Nicolle, [president@firstunitarianottawa.ca](mailto:president@firstunitarianottawa.ca)



# Religious Exploration -RE-flections with Jodi McIntosh



## The Power of Small Acts: A Lesson from a Snowflake



A little chickadee, curious about the snowflakes falling onto a tree branch, counted each snowflake and wondered out loud “how much do snowflakes weigh?” A nearby blue jay scoffed at him and said that snowflakes weighed nothing. He thought the chickadee was wasting his time and flew away. The chickadee, however, continued to patiently count and observe the snowflakes. With the

arrival of snowflake 10,303, the branch suddenly snapped and fell to the ground.

We shared *The Weight of a Snowflake* with the children in our Chalice room as part of our Spirit Stories program this past month. This story amazed me because it showed how something so small can have such a big impact. It made me think of the power of small acts, whether done by one person or by many. Sometimes we may feel that our actions are insignificant or unnoticed, but they can actually make a difference in the world. For instance, a small act of kindness can brighten someone’s day, a small donation can help a cause, or a small gesture can show support.



A reflection on “The Weight of a Snowflake”  
by Charlotte: Age 10

This story also made me think of our Religious Exploration (RE) program. The most common question I get asked about the RE program is “So how many kids do you have coming each week?” My reply more often than not is “Well, our program is small but mighty”. We may only have a handful of children attending on a regular basis, but we are gaining momentum and energy. We have a lot of fun and offer meaningful activities that help the children learn and grow spiritually.

The next question is usually something like “Well, how can we get more kids to come?” I used to answer this question by mentioning the ways that I, as the Director of Religious Exploration (DRE), am working on increasing our attendance. For example, the outreach I have done with the preschool on our campus through our Story Garden. I now realize that my answer is not complete. This is where *The Weight of a Snowflake* story comes into play. I am only one voice and can only do so much as the DRE, but as a congregation we are many with many voices. Most of us have children in our lives, whether they are our own grandchildren, or children or grandchildren of our friends or neighbors. There are many families that we could invite to join us at FirstU on a Sunday morning or for one of our special events. Even if the people we invite are not interested, they may know a family who is. I hope that this story inspires you to think of the power of small acts and the potential of our RE program. We all have to work together to grow our church and our RE programs. Together, we can make a positive change in our community. Now let it snow!

**Special events** coming up that would be perfect for you to invite a new family to are:

- **December 10<sup>th</sup>**: Our annual multigenerational Mitten Tree service.
- **December 15<sup>th</sup>**: Our monthly Youth Group where we will be baking cupcakes for the Ottawa Mission’s holiday dinner. 6pm at FirstU. (Youth age 11-16)
- **December 17<sup>th</sup>**: Our annual Advent Spiral labyrinth walk for children and youth during our regular Sunday service
- **December 24<sup>th</sup>**: Our family Christmas Eve Service at 5pm

### Advent Spiral

Last year the RE team was excited to present their Advent Spiral tradition with the congregation as a regular Sunday service. This year we will be giving you a new way to participate in this annual tradition. On Saturday December 16<sup>th</sup> at 7pm in the NOW room we will have a special advent spiral evening event for adults and youth. On Sunday December 17<sup>th</sup> we will have our regular Advent Spiral for children and families during the Sunday Service.

~ submitted by Jodi McIntosh  
[dre@firstunitarianottawa.ca](mailto:dre@firstunitarianottawa.ca)



# Ajashki – Growing, Evolving, Shining

On a beautiful sunny day in early October, Ajashki celebrated another successful year by unveiling the spectacular murals that are one of its many achievements this year. These Indigenous murals were designed by Stephanie Babij, a visual artist of Ojibwe and Ukrainian/mixed settler heritage and a member of Wikwemikong First Nation, with input from the Ajashki Future Food Warriors who also painted them.



Kayoki Whiteduck and Susan Tanner

The event was a huge success, with brief speeches by: Kayoki Whiteduck, Ajashki’s Food and Climate Educator who spoke to Ajashki’s successes; Susan Tanner who provided background on Ajashki; and Theresa Kavanagh, the Councillor for Bay Ward who spoke about how pleased the city was to support the mural process.

When Ajashki was first conceived over four years ago, no one would have envisioned the successful program it has become. The congregation had just made climate change the focus for its social justice program and the decision was made to pursue accreditation under the Unitarian Universalist Association’s Green Sanctuary program. Green Sanctuary encourages congregations to address climate change by focusing on three areas:



Kayoki with Councillor Theresa Kavanagh.

mitigation, adaptation/resilience and climate justice, which requires congregations to work in partnership with a marginalized group who is disproportionately impacted by climate change. Given the congregation’s commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, it made sense to explore working with local Indigenous communities. Susan Tanner contacted Elder Verna MacGregor who suggested holding a ‘sharing circle on the land’. In opening the circle, which was attended by members of FirstU’s social action groups as well as two other representatives of the Indigenous community, Elder Verna spoke compellingly about stewardship of our beautiful site. As different participants in the circle contributed, the idea formed that we should work towards building an Indigenous learning centre focused on caring for the land. Contact was made with Kayoki Whiteduck, a young Algonquin Anishinabeg farmer and horticulturalist who helped give life to the vision of an Indigenous learning centre.

With Kayoki as the Food and Climate Educator, and Sharen Bowen as the lead from FirstU, the project quickly began to take

shape. The focus would be on training Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth to be Future Food Warriors (FFWs), to help them learn not only about gardening, but about climate change and food security. At the same time, the FFWs, who are paid an Ottawa living wage, would learn basic skills for employment.

That first year there were two dedicated Future Food Warriors. Not only has the program expanded in numbers – there were 11 FFWs this past summer – but also in scope as it responds to the interests and needs of the Future Food Warriors. A breakfast and lunch program provides not only needed nutrition, but also helps FFWs learn about food preparation, including how to use all those wonderful vegetables from the garden. The education component has expanded to include teachings on mental health and well-being, helping the participants build stability and resilience. And this year, thanks to funding from Crime Prevention Ottawa, the FFWs have also been able to explore and grow their artistic abilities – the beautiful murals are a testament to their growing talents.



Over the past couple of years, Ajashki has developed a close working relationship with local Inuit organizations. Through the Inuuqatigiit Centre’s YESS (Youth Employment and Skills Strategy) and high school programs, Ajashki has been linked with Inuit youth, with 7 Inuit participating as FFWs in 2023. Ajashki and



# Ajashki – Growing, Evolving, Shining cont...

Tungasuvvingat Inuit's (TI) Food Security Program, which provides food including traditional country food to 600 Inuit every two weeks, have developed a reciprocal food sharing program which helps ensure no food goes to waste. In addition, TI has also started renting Fellowship Hall for some of their programming, including their monthly Inuit Elders Tea and Country Food lunch and a weekly Inuit Sewing Program.

Ajashki is proud of the recognition it has received, including being named The David Suzuki Foundation Future Ground Prize Finalist (2021), receiving the CUC Shining Lights award (2022) as well as an award from SOUL (Society for Organic Urban Landcare) Greener Greenspaces (2023). Most recently, Ajashki received a Climate Champion award from Ecology Ottawa. During his speech at Ecology

Ottawa's Awards Gala, Kayoki Grass Dancer was to help prepare the ground for those who came later. What a fitting analogy for Ajashki and how it prepares youth to become environmental activists, able to pass their learnings about the land, the climate and food security on to others.

Ajashki is also very thankful for the support it has received, including funding this year from Crime Prevention Ottawa and the Ottawa Community Foundation, as well as from private donors and FirstU's Social Justice Action Network. And of course, FirstU continues to provide significant in-kind support. But the program is really made possible by the presence of volunteers – Sharen Bowen, Lynn Kofmel-Preston, Patti Wunsch, Meghan Dunn, Jan Andrews and others – who show

up each Ajashki day to support FFWs as they work and build the garden, explore new recipes in the kitchen, develop artistic expression and build their understanding of mental wellness. As Ajashki's Circle of Support, they find ways to ensure the program's success.

You too can be part of that success—stable funding continues to be a challenge and donations are always welcome. You can find more information on the Ajashki webpage: [Help Us Grow](#).

The next time you're at the church, do check out the murals. Be awed with their beauty and may they encourage you to learn more about Ajashki and about all it is teaching us and the Future Food Warriors. Learn more about mural designer Stephanie Babij by visiting her website at <https://www.stephbabij-art.com/abouttheartist>

~ submitted by Eva Berringer



## Meet a Member: Margaret Linton



Margaret grew up on a dairy farm in Waterloo County, where she enjoyed an idyllic, lovely childhood - a great life with very few rules and the freedom to roam the countryside. But it was also a hard life with lots of hard work. You ate what you grew and canned or froze the rest for winter. Margaret loved school and played on every team.

Her parents highly valued education: all four of their children went to university, with Margaret attending Queen's University, and graduating with a degree in math and biology. This set her up for a career in computers where there is a technical side but also one managing people.

It was here Margaret excelled. She worked in government IT as a project manager, and by the end of her career was involved in disaster recovery simulation: Exercises pretending a disaster had happened, e.g. an asteroid had hit a data center and all critical processes, including sending out cheques, were to be up and running again within 24 hours. Over the next years she worked and travelled; her last big trip was to Nepal.

After moving to Ottawa, Margaret met David during a white-water canoeing trip. A year later they met again while cross-country skiing. It was love at second sight and they were married 6 months later. Margaret was 32. In just four short years they were the proud parents of 4 children...2 of them twins! Those children are now 40, 38 and 36.

After many years as a stay-at-home mother, Margaret decided, at age 50, that she was ready to go back to work full-time, and thoroughly enjoyed her new government position. Nevertheless, when the

time was right, she was ready to retire.

Retirement has been busy with travel, church life and volunteering. Her church work has included filling in as Director of Education when Liz Benjamin took a 6-month sabbatical leave, teaching in the church school for several years, and actively participating in the Fall Fair, taking on roles as Director and Convenor of the Silent Auction. She has also served on the Board of Directors as Treasurer for a 3-year term, is currently a member of the Finance Committee and is a team leader for the Meditation Gardens. For years, Margaret has also been singing in FirstU's *Three Rivers Choir* and the *Fusion Choir*.

Last year, daughter Kate moved back to Ottawa from the West Coast to become an ER doctor at the Queensway Carleton Hospital, bringing her partner, Amil and their two children, Elinor and Kalin with her. To their great delight, Margaret and David are now experiencing the joy of being hands-on grandparents!



## In Memoriam

**Sarah (Adams) Craig** ~ died 6 November 2023, in Kingston hospital

**Barbara Lee (Darragh)** ~ died 22 November 2023; wife of the late James Darragh (d. 2015), mother of Jacques Lee

**Mary Duncan** ~ died 22 November 2023, mother of Ian Duncan





# Environmental Action Group (EAG)

## October Enviro-Action Questionnaire Answers

### *Most important things learned about climate change:*

#### 1. Emissions

- Canada is the only G-7 country to have increased emissions in the last decade
- each 2700 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> kills one person
- almost every activity has a climate cost
- the extent of greenwashing
- our government is not as environmentally conscious as I thought

#### 2. Energy

- heat pumps can now deal with very cold weather
- you can financially support renewable energy: Bullfrog energy and OREC
- heat pumps and solar energy
- big oil's underhanded behaviour

#### 3. Household Items

- laundry strips are better than plastic bottles
- bought tofu and learned how to cook Textured Vegetable Protein (TVP)

### *Climate actions taken:*

#### 1. Advocacy

- went to protests; wrote letters; signed petitions (x3)
- supported climate action groups with money, petitions, letters (x3)
- supported journals like *Narwhal*, *Energy Mix*, *National Observer*, *Below 2°C*

#### 2. Climate Awareness

- included the climate factor in plans for activities, actions, purchases, travels
- focused on how to decrease footprint; encouraged others to do same
- read a lot, listened to podcasts and attended webinars; learned to listen for accuracy; to recognize greenwashing

#### 3. Investments

- spoke to several financial advisors about sustainable investing
- changed from one of Canada's big banks because they fund fossil fuels

#### 4. Housing

- purchased heat pump (x4)
- purchased solar panels
- switched from gas stove to induction or electric (x2)
- switched from gas water heater to electric (x2)

#### 5. Food

- became vegetarian
- stopped eating red meat, cut back on animal protein
- bought a share in a Community Supported Agriculture share; tried to shop local

#### 6. Waste

- researched & organized the coffee bag recycling program
- purchased *TerraCycle* kitchen & bathroom boxes for recycling the un-recyclables
- decreased garbage waste to almost nothing
- shared newspaper

#### 7. Plastics

- cut back on plastic use (x3)
- avoided buying clothing made with fossil fuels (x2)

#### 8. Nature

- helping in restoration of Hampton Park Forest
- designed a native pollinator garden (x2)

#### 9. Transport

- bought an EV (x2)
- rode bike, walked when possible (x3)
- fossil free commute to work
- fly less



### *Climate actions planned in the near future:*

#### 1. Advocacy

- remember personal carbon footprint
- continue to read, listen and learn;
- continue to protest, write letters sign petitions
- support environmental groups

#### 2. Investments

- move money; choose financial companies and/or financial advisors who offer sustainable options

#### 3. Housing

- keep improving house
- move into a smaller place to decrease emissions
- look at increasing insulation and installing heat pump

#### 4. Food

- save more food seeds
- grow more own food

#### 5. Cleaning and Laundry

- use laundry sheets instead of liquid
- use more vinegar and baking soda as cleaners
- use less water for dishes
- continue using environmentally friendly drier sheets

#### 6. Waste

- resume composting (x2)
- reduce food waste

#### 7. Plastics

- further reduce single use plastics
- be rigorous about recycling
- recycle medical bottles

#### 8. Nature

- nature Journaling...doing it and showing others how; way of documenting local nature stewardship/building relationships with nature

#### 9. Transport

- ride bike, don't drive

#### 10. Burials

- investigate a Tree Urn, a planting system for growing a memory tree or plant with cremains
- investigate green burial

~ submitted by Donna Bowen-Willer



### An Afternoon to Remember

On the afternoon of Sunday, Nov 5, the Environmental Action Group, with the help of Aella, one of Ottawa's finest upper voice ensembles, marked the culmination of FirstU's four-year congregational focus on Climate Action with a unique environmental experience.

Aella, directed by our own Director of Music, Jenn Berntson, offered us *The Earth Is Tired*, a remarkable choral presentation interspersed with spoken word. The first part of the afternoon poignantly spoke to the collective feelings of climate anxiety and grief that have become overwhelming and increasingly intense in our lives, blending together rousing anthems and powerful music about climate-driven disasters. The second half fed us with songs of deep emotion and beauty leaving us feeling empowered, aware, and hopeful. The sizeable audience was emotionally moved and deeply appreciative of this exceptional performance.

Mike Fletcher, chair of the EAG spoke briefly to the challenges faced by, and the accomplishments of, the EAG over the past four years.

Before and after the concert, there was much interest in the six invited environmental groups who shared their passions with the attendees. And all this was crowned with generous offerings of food along with abundant conversation at the reception following in Fellowship Hall.

Climate action as a congregational focus is winding down . . . but for the Environmental Action Group it will remain a central concern, and we plan to maintain a strong congregational presence. The Climate Action Page will continue to be updated. Please follow us.

Thank you to all in the congregation who have encouraged and supported us over these past four years; we welcome your further participation.

~ submitted by Donna Bowen-Willer

### Reusing Pill Bottles: Another Environmental Action Group Opportunity

Our **Ethical Bean Coffee Free Recycling Project** has been a great success. Carmen has already sent our first full box of flexible coffee bags to *TerraCycle* for recycling.

And now, Susan has volunteered to help us keep our pill bottles out of the landfill. Starting in December, we will set up a box in the office hallway, close to the one for flexible coffee bags, where we will accept capped plastic medicine bottles which will be sent to *Earthub, Ottawa* for forwarding to *Matthew 25: Ministries*<sup>1</sup>, where they will be reused as medical supplies. Acceptable are both large and small prescription and over-the-counter pill bottles.

The bottles should be label-free, (Susan suggests the use of a hair dryer for labels that don't peel off easily), washed in soap and hot water, dried and recapped. There is a cost to mail the pill bottles to where they are needed. Please put 10 cents (or more) in each bottle.

<sup>1</sup> *Matthew 25: Ministries* is an international humanitarian aid and disaster relief organization, which, by rescuing and reusing products from major corporations and manufacturers, helps the poorest of the poor and disaster victims locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. <https://m25m.org/about-us/>

~ submitted by Susan Barker and Donna Bowen-Willer

Thankyou  
Dedicated  
Supportive  
Hardworking  
Unitarian Universalists  
Volunteers  
Connections  
Grateful  
Amazing  
Community  
Relationships  
Resourceful  
FUN

### Thanks, Merci, Miigwetch

Kudos to the entire Fall Fair organizational team, and all of the volunteers who worked tirelessly before, during the week leading up to, and on the day of the Fall Fair.

You have all played a big role in ensuring this year's event was a tremendous success!

And a very special shout-out to **Carol Card** for fulfilling her role as Director of the Fall Fair, always with a warm greeting and a welcoming smile. You have done a wonderful job and your efforts are much appreciated!

# Behind the Scenes at Fall Fair

November isn't most people's favourite month, but First Unitarian's Fall Fair is certainly one of the favourite events of our congregation and the wider community. This year's bazaar, held on Saturday, November 18, was again a great success. Not only did we raise funds for our congregational activities, but we distributed our unsold goods to a long list of local charities, and our over 200 volunteers carried all this off with much good cheer.

We all know that Fall Fair involves lots of big jobs like setting up tables, bringing in donations and deciding on prices. But have you ever thought about some of the smaller but vital tasks that go on as well? Here's a sneak peek at some of the activities your Fall Fair director has noticed in walking around the building before and during our amazing sale.

Those wrinkle-free linens laid out beautifully in Worship Hall? Volunteers are at the back all during prep week ironing them carefully before they are displayed in the pews. Then there are the signs to direct shoppers to the sale and the various booths. Where do they come from and return to? Well, there's an attic, commonly called Purgatory, above our Fellowship Hall that holds not only signs but all sorts of supplies for Fall Fair. Down it all comes the weekend before Fall Fair, and back up it goes afterward till next year. Safety precautions must also be attended to: just before the sale started this year, yellow tape went down on the steps around the platform in Worship Hall to help keep Silent Auction patrons and volunteers safe.

Did you know that various types and colours of aprons are needed by

volunteers in different areas? Those are all sorted, repaired, washed and distributed in advance by a dedicated team. Ever wonder who decides whether a given set of glasses gets sold in Bargain Haven, Gifts or the Silent Auction? Yes, there's a team of volunteers for that too, making sure that shoppers can find the kinds of goods they expect in each of those areas.

I could give lots more examples of the many details that come together to make our annual bazaar run smoothly (or at least with fewer bumps), but you get the idea. Whether you can help out, donate items, spread the word or just cheer us on, we look forward to your participation next year. Our 2024 date will be Saturday, November 16. See you then!

*~ submitted by Carol Card, Fall Fair Director*



2023 Fall Fair Lineup – photo by Paula Theetge



Published quarterly, **The Parkway Spire** welcomes unformatted articles (**maximum 450 words please**) along with photos (high resolution jpg format is preferred) of interest to the congregation. We also welcome one feature article for each issue of the Spire, **maximum 900 words**. Articles may be edited if necessary. Submissions should be sent to [spire@firstunitarianottawa.ca](mailto:spire@firstunitarianottawa.ca) no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to publication. Next submission deadline: **Feb 15, 2024**.



# An Exceptional Garden Season

Happily, our group of volunteer gardeners experienced very few unbearably hot days and there was sufficient rain to sustain the gardens without us needing to use our supplementary water system more than a few times over the six gardening months. Even when a severe hailstorm in late July destroyed many of the neighbourhood trees, our Meditation Gardens escaped serious damage.

The Friends of the Meditation Gardens team was occupied with the normal garden duties of weeding, pruning, fertilizing, plant propagation, new planting and controlling fungal and insect pests as well as deterring feathered and furry nuisances. And we continued our efforts to manage or eliminate invasive plant species. In addition to these and numerous other garden maintenance activities we undertook several other major projects.



We requested and received assistance in restoring the decayed wood seating in the Brian's Reste arbour (a structure built to honour Rev. Brian Kopke upon his retirement).

The team organized another Red Dress Day in May to remember missing and murdered Indigenous

women and girls. Congregation members were encouraged to donate dresses which the Friends hung in the gardens.



We organized for and constructed a pollinator garden on the lawn area facing the church and planted the seedlings that had been grown over the previous winter from seeds obtained through the Ottawa Wildflower Seed Library. As we were digging the garden a monarch visited a nearby ironweed as if to acknowledge our work.

This year, the display cases at the garden entrance were cleaned and refurbished with new cork board so that we could again greet visitors with information about the gardens and showcase some of our plants from a catalogue of photos taken over the years by Elizabeth Campbell.

Also this summer, as a first, we purchased a few flats of shade loving annual flowers to provide some colour in our cool south garden woodland. We are now able to plant up some impatiens and begonias because two of our Friends team live on campus at

Unitarian House and can be consistent with a watering schedule.

And finally, to conclude our very productive gardening year we combined our end of season social with an award ceremony for Elizabeth (Betty) Campbell. Betty, who celebrated her 98<sup>th</sup> birthday this September, was one of a small group of FirstU congregants who designed and created the Meditation Gardens in the mid 1990s. At the ceremony Rev. Eric Meter presented Betty with a bronze plaque and our first order of business in the spring of 2024 will be to assemble the new garden seat we have purchased and affix the plaque to Betty's Bench.



Photos credits for this article: Marilen Gerber and Kathryn Taylor

~ submitted by Susan Mellor, Friends of the Meditation Gardens





# First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa

30 Cleary Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K2A 4A1

**Phone:** 613-725-1066, **Fax:** 613-725-3259

**Email:** [uuoffice@firstunitarianottawa.ca](mailto:uuoffice@firstunitarianottawa.ca)

**Website:** [www.firstunitarianottawa.ca](http://www.firstunitarianottawa.ca)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/First-Unitarian-Congregation-of-Ottawa](https://www.facebook.com/First-Unitarian-Congregation-of-Ottawa)

**Office Hours:** Monday to Friday, 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**2023–2024 Board of Directors** [bod@firstunitarianottawa.ca](mailto:bod@firstunitarianottawa.ca)

Brent Nicolle: President [president@firstunitarianottawa.ca](mailto:president@firstunitarianottawa.ca)

Mary Ella Keblusek: Vice President

Phil Nagy: Treasurer

Carl Sonnen: Secretary

Amy Bérubé, Carmen Contreras, Guy Belleperche : Members at Large

Lisa Sharp: Past President

## Program Staff

Rev. Eric Meter, Minister [minister@firstunitarianottawa.ca](mailto:minister@firstunitarianottawa.ca) 613-725-1066 ext 225

Jodi McIntosh, Director of Religious Exploration [dre@firstunitarianottawa.ca](mailto:dre@firstunitarianottawa.ca) 613-725-1066 ext 234

Jenn Berntson, Music Director [music@firstunitarianottawa.ca](mailto:music@firstunitarianottawa.ca) 613-725-1066 ext 230

## Lay Chaplains

Guy Belleperche, Lisa Boulay

## Worship Associates

Lisa Boulay, Kris Cormier, Mary Jackson, Kate Kirkwood, Susan Mackenzie

## Administrative Staff

Jen Brennan, Operations Manager [omr@firstunitarianottawa.ca](mailto:omr@firstunitarianottawa.ca) 613-725-1066 ext 221

Michelle Jackson, Finance Manager [fm@firstunitarianottawa.ca](mailto:fm@firstunitarianottawa.ca), 613-725-1066 ext 222

Allison Armstrong, Communications Coordinator (e-UU and Communiqué) [publications@firstunitarianottawa.ca](mailto:publications@firstunitarianottawa.ca)

## Building Staff

Julia Defalco, Audiovisual Coordinator [av@firstunitarianottawa.ca](mailto:av@firstunitarianottawa.ca) x223

Dee Mollena, Lead Custodian [leadcustodian@firstunitarianottawa.ca](mailto:leadcustodian@firstunitarianottawa.ca) 613-725-1066 ext 224

Custodian cellphone, 613-890-1067

## Spire Contributors

Susan Barker, Eva Berringer, Donna Bowen-Willer, Carol Card, Alexandra Devine, Marilen Gerber (photos), Margaret Linton (photo), Jodi McIntosh, Susan Mellor, Rev. Eric Meter, Brent Nicolle, Maryan O'Hagan, Kathryn Taylor (photos), Margaret Zelinski

**Next deadline for submissions: Feb. 15, 2024 - please send submissions to [spire@firstunitarianottawa.ca](mailto:spire@firstunitarianottawa.ca)**

## Subscriptions

Electronic subscriptions are free, contact: [publications@firstunitarianottawa.ca](mailto:publications@firstunitarianottawa.ca)

For information on receiving the Spire via postal mail (cost \$12 per year), contact the office.

## Spire Editorial Team:

Editor: Marg Lee    Layout: Jan Andrews

Proofreading: Jen Brennan, Andrew Drake, Marg Lee, Susan Mellor

