



First Unitarian Congregation
of Ottawa



Annual Report

2007–2008



**First Unitarian Congregation
of Ottawa**

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Principles and Sources

Principles

We, the member congregations of the Canadian Unitarian Council, covenant to affirm and promote:

- the inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;
- acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- a free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Sources

The living tradition which we share draws from many sources:

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

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa

Annual Reports 2007–2008

Arts Night

Arts Night at First Unitarian, a monthly celebration of the literary, visual and musical arts, was inaugurated in April, 2003. We are pleased to have passed our five-year mark, and gratified that each year audience numbers have grown, as more people find out about our event.

Most of the artists we feature come from the greater Ottawa area. So far, we haven't had to pay a stipend to any of them; artists donate their time, allowing us to give an average of \$100 per month to the general fund of the congregation.

Members of the Arts Night Committee take turns hosting these monthly events; help is always welcome.

—*Joycelyn Loeffelholz-Rea, Arts Night Coordinator*

Board of Directors

The biggest event of our year was the Canadian Unitarian Council's Annual Conference and Meeting. Held at Algonquin College in May, it drew over 600 people from across Canada, the United States and even some European countries. Many of our members were active in setting up and running the many events, most notably the Host Committee, ably led by Elizabeth Bowen.

Changes in our staff have continued, in both the professional ministry and in the church administration. We were greatly stimulated by the presence, personality and activity of our Interim Minister, Rev. Janet Newman. Rev. Janet set us well on the way to healing after the turbulence of the previous years, through her "cottage meetings," the time line that recorded our own views of our congregation's story, her stimulating sermons, and her personal contacts.

Our year with Rev. Janet went by very quickly, and now Rev. Marcel Duhamel, our second interim minister, has taken up his ministry here. In April, a special committee was set up to begin the search for a Settled Minister, who should be ready to take over in the fall of 2009.

In addition to the change in Interim Ministers, there have been other significant changes in staff. Susan McEwen, our Director of Religious Exploration (DRE), and Caroline Elson, our Director of Youth Programming, resigned at the end of the program year, as did Jane Clarke, our Director of Support Services. Though these departures left definite gaps in the functioning of our programs, Jane Lindsay, the Chair of the Personnel Committee, with the assistance of volunteers among congregants, secured the services of Ani Arnott as our new Director of Support Services.

Working with the Religious Exploration (RE) Committee, Jane engaged Irene van de Lagemaat as DRE, and Jen Brennan as the Assistant to the DRE. Due to Irene's illness soon after taking on her position, Jen Brennan has stepped into the role of DRE on an interim basis. The RE Committee and other volunteers have stepped forward to keep RE programs running.

The move of River Parkway Preschool Centre (RPPC) last fall to new premises across the campus was a major event in the story of our building. After the RPPC's departure, we undertook a thorough renovation of the rooms they vacated to ready them for use by new renters or by children in our own RE program. Much of the renovation work on the lower level was done by our own volunteers. The entire renovation process was ably led by the Property Committee.

Our noble building reached the grand age of forty earlier this year and in April there was a special supper by way of celebration.

Those years have inevitably brought the wear and tear of climate and of many users. Many signs of age seem to have appeared within a short period: no sooner had the roof replacement been completed than we found a mould problem in some downstairs rooms. That in turn exposed a serious case of water leakage from the patio, needing expensive repairs which are still going on—and which greatly limit our ability to hold public events such as weddings.

Our Operating Budget could not have withstood these shocks alone, but a team led by John Harrison and Doug Cousins established the Building Renewal Fund. With some very effective publicity, they have collected nearly \$400,000 in special pledges, to be paid over a five-year period. Our members' generosity also extended to the stewardship campaign, which was one of the most successful in recent history. Despite these successes, the Board has continued to struggle with the congregation's finances, which again are not looking positive.

Shree Kumar Rai is still in Sanctuary within the church while volunteers and legal assistants work to persuade immigration officials and politicians of the merits of Shree's case for permanent residence in Canada. Many members take turns in the night hours as "witnesses," keeping company with Shree.

The Interim Transition Team made a number of recommendations to the Board of Directors, one being that the Board establish a congregational covenant and a dispute resolution mechanism. As a result, the Board

established a working group, including congregants who are not board members, to lead the development process. The Board has also created a Safe Church Committee, which is putting its initial emphasis on finalizing guidelines for youth and children's activities.

To maintain regular communication with all members of the congregation, the Board has continued to host regular town hall meetings. In addition, "Splinters from the Board," a quick report on each board meeting prepared by the board secretary or recording secretary, appears in *The Parkway Spire*. The full minutes of board meetings are available on the Board's bulletin board in Fellowship Hall.

The next event outside these walls will be the Eastern Regional Gathering, to be held in Kingston the weekend of November 7–9. As Kingston isn't very far away, and so many of you were able to attend the ACM in May, it would be wonderful to again see enthusiastic attendance by our congregation.

I would like to thank the dedication of the members of the Board, many of whom have taken on tasks this year that are well beyond what they were expected to do. I am also indebted to the many members of the congregation who have stepped forward to ensure that our programs and activities stay on track. Because of their efforts, we remain a vibrant and committed congregation.

—Submitted by Chuck Shields, President of the Board, with assistance from Arthur Palmer

BookShelf Committee

The objective of the Sunday morning BookShelf is to offer individuals and families a wide range of books that support Unitarian Universalist Principles and "Sources of our Faith." The activities of the committee involve selecting, ordering and selling literature considered relevant to this objective: Unitarian Universalist titles, adult fiction, non-fiction, and children's literature, as well as the works of local writers in the congregation (who are charged a small consignment fee).

Profits, which accrue because books are purchased at a discount from a local bookstore and the UUA Bookstore in Boston, allow the committee to contribute an annual donation to the congregation.

We are pleased to announce that the money borrowed from the congregation to cover the cost of the new BookShelf cabinet was fully reimbursed in May, 2008. When the cabinet was installed in February, 2007, the committee was only able to fund about half the cost; the congregation funded the other half. With that loan repaid, the committee will continue to contribute a yearly donation to the church.

During this past year, book sales were down to 250 books, compared to 300 the year before. These figures do not include sales of Christmas Multifaith Calendars, the *Humanist* magazines, and CDs by local musicians.

The BookShelf Committee is comprised of six to eight coordinators, who organize operations. It relies on a roster of over 40 volunteers, each of whom staff the BookShelf two or three times a year. Volunteering at the Bookshelf is a fun and rewarding way to serve the congregation.

Besides Sunday duties, some coordinators have additional responsibilities: Christine MacDonald, Finance Chair, manages BookShelf credits and debits, with the assistance of Susanne Ahlers and the congregation's bookkeeper, Cindy Flynn. Margaret Zielinski, a former educator of librarians, brings her extensive knowledge of children's literature to the selection of titles for that section.

This year the committee welcomed a new coordinator, John Gall.

Changing circumstances have brought other changes in personnel. Valerie Cousins resigned from our committee in June, 2007; for many years she had brought her knowledge and understanding of UU literature to the selection and ordering of BookShelf titles.

Fortunately, Carole Yeaman, a librarian with a keen interest in UU literature, has assumed Valerie's role. As Publicity Chair, Carole has initiated a regular column in *The Parkway Spire* called "Inside the BookShelf." Each month, Carole reviews a book of special interest to the congregation. In addition, Carole has ordered books requested by program organizers, including: *Saint Maybe* by Anne Tyler, for Rev. Janet's sermon on "Forgiveness"; *Building Your Own Theology* by Richard Gilbert, for a study group at the church; and *Singing the Living Tradition* and *Singing the Journey* for the Music Director.

Another personnel change came to pass when Susan Mackenzie resigned as volunteer chair to take up her duties with the Board of Directors. Cheryl Runnells, who has been a coordinator for many years, has replaced her. Barbara Brown resigned as a coordinator, but fortunately for the BookShelf, she will continue as a Sunday volunteer.

Norma Yeatman, Committee Chair, resigned in June because family health issues limit her ability to commute from Deep River to the church. She considers it vital to have the committee chair in attendance on Sundays, not only to facilitate BookShelf operations, but to interact with committee members. Norma is grateful for her association of fifteen years, initially with members of The Book Table Committee and subsequently with The BookShelf.

A new chair needs to be found for the 2008–2009 BookShelf Committee.

—Norma Yeatman, Chair

Bridge Group

The role of the congregation's Bridge Group is to strengthen informal relationships within the congregation through a shared interest in playing bridge. During 2007–08, we played once a month for a total of seven sessions this year. The average attendance was 13 players for each session. Over the year, we contributed \$425 to the congregation. Tarrel Armstrong is the contact for anyone who is interested in joining us.

—*Bob Armstrong*

Britannia Neighbourhood Group

Since we restarted our neighbourhood group, we have had two pleasant meetings for lunch, one at Susanne Ahlers and Bradley Ralph's and another at Sylvia Furman's. In July, Betty and Andy Clarke invited us to their cottage, but with some of us away and some of us not wanting to drive the long distance, there were not enough people who wanted to go and the event was cancelled. The group extends warm thanks to Susanne, Bradley, Sylvia, and the Clarks. Plans for more meetings are in the works.

—*Veronika Dent*

Caring Committee

The Caring Committee Executive nurtures the Caring Network, which comprises the Monthly Contacts and a formal roster of volunteers. Our volunteers help in various ways when one-time needs arise: occasional transportation, visits to ill or house-bound people, caring cards, telephone visits, advice on issues relating to our mandate, and casseroles for persons/families in emergency situations. The committee also organizes memorial service receptions for congregation members, and has periodically held workshops on important issues such as listening skills and planning for end-of-life decisions.

This year, the Executive of the Caring Committee has shared the duties of chairperson on a rotating basis. We have 25 volunteers on our list as monthly contacts, and approximately 60 persons listed as "willing to help" in different capacities.

There is a continuing need for new people to volunteer as monthly contacts. This is a pleasant, once-a-year job, accomplished from home. Newcomers receive guidance and assistance from executive and experienced contacts. Ria Heynen coordinates the Monthly Contacts roster.

During the past twelve months, the Monthly Contacts arranged for 50 Caring Cards, hosted receptions at four memorial services, and made or arranged for approximately 11 telephone visits, 2 home visits, and 3 drives.

The Monthly Contacts sat at the Caring Table in Worship Hall most Sundays to provide information and organize the Caring Card signings. Thank you to all who added signatures and/or thoughtful messages to the cards.

The Caring Committee is aware that individuals and other groups are reaching out to specific persons and families who are in need; the committee could not handle its duties without that other "informal" congregational network.

Lyn Gerley, as our committee representative, attended the meetings of the Spiritual Care Council throughout the year in order to allow coordination and cooperation between these two "caring" groups of volunteers.

The committee participated in the "Getting Connected" Fair, using our regular Sunday Caring Table position in Worship Hall, answering questions and taking suggestions.

We hosted coffee hour twice during 2007–08, including our annual February hospitality hour, with its focus on Valentine's Day and Heart Month.

The Annual Volunteer Breakfast for the Monthly Caring Contacts on Sunday, April 20, was well attended. We were able to show our appreciation for the work of the Contacts, allow time for questions and answers, and enjoy being together.

The Executive sponsored the Annual Meeting of the Funeral Society of Ottawa on Monday, June 2. The evening celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Society and featured a guest speaker on "green burials." A reception after the meeting was hosted by the committee in recognition that the Funeral Society (formerly the Ottawa Memorial Society) was in large part started by congregation members.

—*Alexandra Devine, for the Caring Committee Executive*

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee was formed in 2007 to recommend communications policies to the Board that meet the needs of the congregation. The scope of the committee extends to those communication products that are made available to the congregation at large and to members of the public, such as posters, the Web site, members' packets, public advertising, hand outs, electronic communications, and so on. To date, the committee has successfully recommended several policies to the Board of Directors, including the Bulletin Board and Poster Policy, the Order of Service Insert policy, and the Web Site Policy. The committee is currently drafting a cohesive internal communications policy that will cover all facets of congregational communication.

One major project in 2008, initiated and guided by the Communications Committee, is the new congregational

Web site. The new site provides an attractive and cohesive “face” to the public and potential members; contains useful information about congregational structure, activities, and events; and can be managed by volunteers without specialized technical skills.

In addition to policy recommendations, the Communications Committee provides guidance to all operational communications task forces, working groups, and sub-committees who are responsible for official First Unitarian communications tools. Finally, the committee provides strategic direction for the work done by the Publications Officer. In the future, the Communications Committee will take on the work of defining communications-specific guidelines for First Unitarian communications tools such as branding, editing standards, use of our logo, and so on.

—*Elizabeth Wright*

Crafty Crafters: Knitters

Over the past year—winter or summer, rain or shine—our group of about a dozen knitters has gathered in the Lounge on a Wednesday morning, as we have done for a number of years. We have learned new techniques in knitting and crocheting, experimented with the latest materials, and admired each other’s creations. We have had great discussions on a wide variety of subjects, laughed often, supported each other, and shared a pot of tea with our lunches. In addition to providing a fun and creative atmosphere for our members, we have raised close to \$4,000 for the congregation through the sale of our products over the past year. Much of this income came at the Fall Fair, when each year we convert the Lounge into a delightful boutique of functional, fashionable and fabulous items. We also sold hats, mitts and scarves for the Mitten Tree in December, and had sales at Unitarian House and the Seniors’ Lunch. Our spring clearance sale had to be postponed for a week due to a 40 cm snowfall that prevented us from getting to the church.

Donations of yarn, patterns and knitting needles are gratefully received throughout the year, and we always welcome new members who want to share their enthusiasm with a group of kindred spirits.

—*Norma Gross and Rosemary Bonyun*

CUC 2008 ACM

There was something for everyone at the Canadian Unitarian Council’s 2008 Annual Conference and Meeting “The Web of Life: In Our Hands.” Over 600 Unitarians and Universalists from across Canada and other countries gathered at Algonquin College on May 16–19, 2008 to enjoy a full and varied schedule of social events, worship, music, learning, networking, and fun.

First Unitarian was proud to host the 2008 ACM. Thanks to a core team of 15 Host Committee members and over 100 volunteers, the weekend was a great success! Special thanks are extended to the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa for their assistance with on-site registration and to the Kingston congregation for performing their play *Just Food* on Multigenerational Day.

An amazing Ingathering Celebration and Banner Parade on Friday evening set the tone for the conference. UUs of all ages enjoyed worship, song, and reflection. On Saturday, Allison and Will Brewer, both passionate fighters for social justice and members of the UU community, presented the keynote address.

The 2008 ACM featured a variety of fun-filled multigenerational events designed for children and youth. CanUdle attendance was exceptional this year, with over 100 youth registered. Though youth events were held primarily on the Cleary campus, young and old came together at Algonquin College on Multigenerational Day for food, fun, and engaging concurrent sessions—several led by CanUdle participants.

To ensure that first-timers got the most out of their ACM experience, an orientation session was offered on Friday evening; over 60 people came to learn what an ACM was all about.

The exhibit area, with over 30 exhibitors, was bustling the entire weekend! Displays proffered clothing, fashion jewellery, handicrafts from developing countries, and books and publications covering spiritual issues, the dynamics of congregational life, and broader social issues.

The 2008 ACM was a joyous occasion—thanks in large part to the music and song that filled the air! The conference theme, “Circle of Song,” composed and performed by Tony Turner, was a highlight, and has since taken on a life of its own. Other performances, given by First Unitarian’s own Blues Band, and by Jane Perry’s ACM Choir—made up of UUs from across the country—helped set the mood, inspire and entertain all present. The fun-filled social events, including a cabaret night starring a bevy of amazing UU talent, gourmet meals, and “dance till dawn” soirees will be remembered for years to come.

This year’s ACM featured over 80 concurrent sessions in English, four in French, and a variety of pre- and post-conference events. Presentations and discussions touched on music, technology, congregational leadership, small-group Ministry, Lifespan Learning, our UU faith, and international and interfaith relations. Many had a special focus on the environment, green congregations, and many other social action issues.

Rev. Janet Newman delivered the Sunday sermon, “As Canadian as Possible . . . Under the Circumstances.” Other worship opportunities included a Soulful Sundown Service

and early morning worship services lead by Rev. Fred Cappuccino, Minister Emeritus of the UU Fellowship of Ottawa and Joyce Ashworth, President, British GA of Unitarians and Free Christian Churches. But that's not all! The ACM included youth-led worship, a morning stretch and meditation practice, a labyrinth walk, and two coming of age and youth to young adult bridging ceremonies.

Proceeds from the "Empty Bowls" and Sunday service collections were donated to L'Abri en Ville/Ancoura, Child Haven, the Ottawa Food Bank and the Ottawa School Breakfast Program.

To commemorate the CUC conference, t-shirts sporting the colourful 2008 ACM logo were sold in the exhibits area. Profits from t-shirt sales will help the congregation reach its annual fundraising targets. Registration and other ACM-related fees charged to participants covered all Conference costs.

In response to feedback received from last year's conference in Vancouver, "The Meeting Place/Rendezvous 2008" was born, a place for ACM participants to leave and receive messages, check for lost items, and access conference and sight-seeing information.

In preparation for the 2008 ACM, UUs were encouraged to visit the CUC Web site, www.cuc.ca, for conference details and registration. As a result, in May the CUC Web site recorded 121,865 page views from 48,953 visitors, 11,860 of whom were unique—a record number of hits for the site.

The Closing Ceremony was the final gathering of the 2008 ACM. Besides electing the CUC's 2008–09 Board of Directors, there was more light-hearted business to accomplish. Seeds that had been donated at the Ingathering were exchanged, and Chuck Shields, President of First Unitarian, presented a container of earth samples—donated by host congregations at each ACM since 1980—to the host congregation for 2009, Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship.

As CUC Ottawa Host Committee Chair, I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to the members of the Host Committee and to all the volunteers who helped make the 2008 ACM a success:

Audrey O'Callaghan, Liaison to Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa; Carol Anne Deneka, Communications and Publicity Coordinator; Margaret Gourlay, Accessibility Coordinator and Sound Engineer; David Hudson, Banner Parade Marshal; Arthur Palmer, Exhibits Coordinator; Joan Hill and Amy McRobert, Hospitality and Social Events Coordinators; Joan Auden, Ingathering Coordinator; Susan McEwen, Lifespan Learning Coordinator; Marina Jones, Registration Coordinator; Joe Connor, Transportation Coordinator; Alex Campbell, Worship Coordinator; Jane Perry, Director of Music; Pat Hill, Treasurer; and Heidi Anderson, Secretary.

—Elizabeth Bowen, ACM 2008 Host Committee Chair

Denominational Affairs Committee

This committee's aim is to encourage participation in denominational affairs in order to establish linkages within the denomination.

In 2007–08, the congregation was represented regionally (St. John's, Newfoundland), nationally (in Ottawa), and internationally (at the International Conference of Unitarian Universalists in Germany and the UU Association of Congregations in the USA).

In addition, the committee:

- used cheque exchanges to help fund congregants attending UU conferences and events beyond Ottawa.
- sponsored the development of a new banner (now hanging in Worship Hall).
- raised \$1,220 for the Empty Bowls project of the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) to feed the hungry.
- sponsored a worship service and a "town hall" meeting with Mary Bennett, Executive Director of the CUC, who spoke on "Lighting the Chalice around the World" and the work of the ICUU.

Many groups in the congregation are establishing linkages within the UU community. The following is a sampling of these activities:

- Religious Exploration families, led by Susan McEwen, visited the Kingston congregation and the Ottawa Fellowship.
- The Youth group, led by Caroline Elson, traveled to conferences regularly, including trips to Montreal and St. John's, Newfoundland with a presentation inspired by the UU-UNO conference.
- OWL (Our Whole Lives) hosted training for facilitators both regionally and nationally; Senior High OWL welcomed participants from other congregations.
- The choir, under Jane Perry's guidance, visited congregations in Don Heights and the Ottawa Fellowship.
- Nine adults and five youth travelled to the UU-UNO seminar on Building a Culture of Peace.
- Four adults attended Canadian UU Leadership School.

The year culminated with our congregation hosting the CUC Annual Conference and Meeting, which was attended by over 650 UUs from across Canada.

Congratulations to all who attended an event at another UU congregation, went to a conference, joined one of the many CUC list groups, read the *Global Chalice* or the *Canadian Unitarian*, or reached out in some way to find out what UUs beyond Ottawa are thinking and dreaming and doing.

—Margaret Linton, Chair

Empower Dance

Empower dance is a small but vital group that meets on Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. to dance to the beat of our own drums. We bring our own music, turn down the lights and “do our own thing.” We are open to all—bring your own music, or move to the music brought by other dancers—and join us on Wednesday nights. We suggest a donation of \$3.00 each week, which goes to the congregation for the use of the wonderful space that is offered to us. For more information call Janet Clayton at 613-733-9566 or jayclayca@yahoo.ca.

—*Janet Clayton*

Fall Fair

Our annual Fall Fair, the Holly and Lace Bazaar, was once again an incredible success. With over 30 convenors and 350 volunteers, it is the largest single activity in our church year. It brings in many hundreds of visitors from the community and it makes a significant contribution to the operating fund. We’d like to thank the members of the organizing committee for their help in making this the most successful Bazaar ever. They were David Hudson, Katherine Gunn, Elizabeth Wright, Heidi Anderson and Isabel Burrows. We are especially grateful to those people who keep the Bazaar afloat by volunteering year after year.

—*Joan Hill and Meg Gourlay, Co-chairs*

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee is one of the standing committees appointed by and accountable to the Board. Under our Bylaw 5 section 3.06,

“The Finance Committee in co-operation with the Treasurer, is responsible for advising the Board on financial policy and preparing and recommending to the Board annual and supplementary budgets; for reviewing periodically the adequacy of financial systems and records; for analyzing operating statements during the year and recommending action when actual developments deviate significantly from the financial plan; for reviewing periodically cost and benefit of goods and services received; for recommending investment of congregational funds, the borrowing of funds and for maintaining appropriate insurance covering congregational assets and activities.”

The committee is made up of some half-dozen individuals who meet once a month to help the Treasurer carry out the heavy responsibility of managing the congregation’s finances. The members are a mix of former Treasurers, chartered accountants and other interested individuals. In January of this year, the Board agreed to allow David Black, the very capable Chair of the committee,

to step down after almost five years, and appointed Barry Read as the new Chair. Douglas Hill served as Recording Secretary until his departure from Ottawa.

The Treasurer brings forward each year a draft Operating Budget for discussion and input from the committee, leading to the submission of the proposed final budget to the Board and its approval by the congregation. At every meeting the Treasurer tables reports on the Monthly and Year to Date revenues and expenditures of our daily operations as well as financial activities of our asset and liability accounts, all relative to the Budget. The work of the Treasurer in managing the Budget can be adversely affected by conditions outside of his control, e.g. an unexpected expenditure (such as the cost of removing last winter’s unprecedented snowfall from our grounds), or a shortfall in yearly donations by the congregation or in other sources of revenue.

The Treasurer has also presented information on behalf of the Building Renewal Campaign, whose goal is to raise \$500,000 over five years to pay for much-needed repairs to the building roof and patio decks, and renovations to the lower level. The committee also followed with great interest the success of the Annual Pledge Campaign, since the expected level of pledging is a crucial input to the Budget.

Over the past year the committee addressed a number of financial issues.

In November we met with the representative from Royal Bank Canada, which manages our investment account, to review the performance of its various funds and our ethical investing policy. (On balance, our investments have been doing well, achieving a 7.13 percent return over the 15 months ending September 30, 2007.) David Black keeps the committee regularly advised on the current status of our investment and earnings.

The committee has also discussed a number of issues brought before it: our rental policies with regard to various social responsibility groups in formation who meet at the church; the disposition of the \$150,000 transferred from River Parkway Preschool Childcare in lieu of a lease; the need for a review engagement or an audit of our financial reports by an external chartered accountant (in accordance with both our Bylaws and the Corporation Act of Ontario); cheque exchanges; the adequacy of current financial systems to handle Pre-Authorized Chequing (PAC) and pledges; our policy on liability insurance for third-party rentals; the policy on Specified Purpose Funds; and our signing policy on cheques.

Among the more pressing issues is the current state of our cash reserves to meet the demands of commitments made to building renovations that are now underway and to plans for other projects.

Meetings of the Finance Committee and its minutes are always open to anyone who is interested or concerned with our congregational finances. Interested parties are invited to contact the Chair for dates.

—*Barry Read, Chair*

Friends of the Meditation Gardens

This group was formed in early 2008 to help take care of the old and new gardens on our campus during the one-year sabbatical of Renee de Vry. Renee had previously done most of the work in the gardens, occasionally organizing work parties and other initiatives to involve others. Although on sabbatical, Renee has made herself available to provide advice and guidance to the Friends. Leadership of the group is spread out among several key volunteers.

Our award-winning gardens are one of this congregation's crowning achievements and a source of pleasure and pride to many. The Friends have so far held a "spring clean-up" weekend, with good turnout, to clear away winter debris and spruce up the gardens before out-of-town visitors arrived for the national Annual Conference and Meeting in May, 2008. Since then we have held Saturday work parties to do the necessary weeding, raking, cleaning and planting of the growing season. Angela Beale is the Volunteer Coordinator for the group, and would be happy to put you on her list of volunteers who can help out, either at a time of your choosing or at work parties.

Now that the gardens are so large, with the expansion to two main gardens, the North and South Meditation Gardens, the Friends will likely become a permanent feature of life at First Unitarian.

—*Alastair Henderson, Founder*

Lay Spiritual Care Visitor Program

During 2007–08, it was decided to rename the Lay Pastoral Care Visitor program. So, employing terminology familiar to the community—especially hospitals—we became the Lay Spiritual Care Program, leaving me with the rather unwieldy title of Lay Spiritual Care Visitor and the volunteers with the even more cumbersome moniker of Volunteer Lay Spiritual Care Visitors. The Pastoral Care Council is now the Spiritual Care Council. Besides me, whose purpose is to make sure that no one falls through the cracks, the 2007–08 council comprised Interim Minister Rev. Janet Newman, representatives of the Caring Committee, the Seniors' group, and the Membership Committee.

In this, my eighth year as Lay Visitor and Supervisor of Volunteer Lay Visitors, I have again made fewer visits than in previous years. Since May, 2005, I have been enrolled in the Master of Arts in Counselling and Spirituality program at Saint Paul University. Though being a full-time student made making pastoral visits difficult, the good news is that I have completed this part of my journey; having graduated in June, I am now able to make more visits.

The Volunteer Lay Spiritual Care Visitors continue to provide a significant number of visiting hours and are a crucial addition to the Spiritual Care Visiting of this congregation. Sadly, two of our visitors have left: Deborah Wiggins, who has become Music Director of the Halifax congregation and Mo Gabe, who felt the need to reduce her activity level. We miss both of them and wish them all the best in their new pursuits. Maureen Sly, Doris Jelly and Peter Schmolka continue to provide devoted care and hard work.

In spring, 2007 we welcomed four new Spiritual Care Visitors to the team: Jan Glyde, Katherine Gunn, Arthur Palmer and Chip Shambare.

As our schedules permitted, I and Volunteer Visitors attended several of the monthly Seniors' meetings.

We all look forward to continuing to provide spiritual care to the members of the congregation.

—*Ellen Bell*

Lifespan Learning

In January, 2007, our Board of Directors indicated strong support for our congregation's application to the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) to become an in-process Lifespan Learning community. A Lifespan Learning community is one that intentionally encourages and creates opportunities for spiritual growth and learning, for all ages of our lives, and all stages of our faith development. Our goal is to become a fully recognized Lifespan Learning Community and the recipient of a certificate from the CUC to this effect. We are likely to be the first such recipient.

The congregation's Vision statement is to promote learning for all ages as a fundamental spiritual practice in our community with intention, willingness and forethought.

The Religious Education committee takes responsibility to plan with the DRE a coherent religious exploration program for babies to 13- and 14-year-olds.

The Youth group meets regularly with youth advisors on Sunday mornings. Conferences and Senior High OWL are important opportunities for youth empowerment and learning. Senior High OWL is usually held on two weekends during the church year. Students from Montreal,

Peterborough and other UU congregations attend with their advisors, enriching the learning experience for all students.

Adult Learning is planned by a small Adult Learning Committee and coordinated by volunteer Wendy Doyle. Interim Ministers have been active members of the Adult Learning Committee. For more information about the Adult Learning program see the Lifespan Learning Guide.

Representatives of the RE Committee, the OWL Committee, Adult Learning Committee, Young Adults, Youth Group, Chalice groups, Seniors' Program and Choirs meet together on a quarterly basis as the Lifespan Learning Council. The Minister and DRE are also invited to attend. In late September, 2008 the Lifespan Learning Council had its third meeting.

—Joan Turner, Chair, Adult Learning Committee and Lifespan Learning Council

Membership Committee

Membership is one of the operational committees in the congregation. Its members are the friendly folks who greet visitors and newcomers at the Welcome Table on Sunday mornings, shepherd applicants through the process of becoming Friends or Members of the congregation, and advise the Board of Directors and staff on policy and other matters related to people's connections to the congregation.

From July, 2007 to June, 2008 we received 30 new Members and 6 Friends into the congregation. We arranged three New Member Welcome Services, with receptions for the new members and their families where they could meet the staff, the Board of Directors, the Membership Committee, and each other. We provided registrars for voting at two congregational meetings.

During the year, we prepared and distributed over 150 First Enquiry, Membership Application and Friend Registration kits.

The committee maintained its cross-membership with related groups: the Stewardship Committee and the Spiritual Care Council.

Members of the committee this year have been: Judy Donegan, Doug Emmons, Katherine Gunn, Doug Jordan, Marilyn Prevost, and Amy McRobert. We thank Prue Craib for her support as our contact to the Board of Directors.

We thank the Embroiderers—Wilma Arendsen, Phyllis Grigg, Valerie Cousins and Renee Saxon—for the beautiful name tags that many people enjoy wearing at First Unitarian!

—Katherine Gunn

Music Programme

Preamble. This church's music programme continued calmly through another year of institutional change, which included the one-year tenure of interim minister Rev. Dr. Janet Newman, the unexpected spring resignations of Susan McEwen (Director of Religious Exploration) and Jane Clark (Director of Support Services), increased construction and renovation on the physical building, and the church's "walk in the wilderness" as it sought out its identity after the retirement of its long-serving parish minister, the Rev. Brian Kopke, in June 2007. If anything, the music programme somehow thrived in 2007–08, mostly due to the influx of new members into the choral programme. Many thanks to the people who created warm community in the Chalice, Gospel, and SWAT choirs this year—what a blessing your energy has been to the whole congregation.

1. Worship Service music
2. Choirs
3. Chamber Music on Cleary Avenue concert series and other chamber-music concerts.
4. New music initiatives by lay people
5. Steinway at First fundraising wrap-up
6. Music at the Annual Conference and Meeting of the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC ACM)

1. **Worship Service music.** The usual suspects provided the bulk of live music at worship services, including the Chalice Choir (with our able pianist Elisabeth Morrison), the Gospel Choir, the SWAT Team, and Music Director Jane Perry as conductor and pianist. Services were further enriched by the blUUes band and the new bell ringers' ensemble (see #4 for full description of these two groups). We enjoyed hearing flutist Sam Clemann and pianist Elisabeth Morrison in a morning service. We had the honour of hosting Karen Donnelly (principal trumpet of the National Arts Centre Orchestra) when she played at our November Remembrance Day service.

2. **Choirs.** The choirs continue to be entry points to the church for visitors and new members. They provide focused leadership with their weekly live music at Worship Services and other church-related events, and they offer the warmth of community to new singers and long-time choristers alike at their weekly rehearsals.

- (a) The Chalice Choir grew to a record 52 singers this season, perhaps because of interest in the choir's project to learn Schubert's *Mass in G*, the largest choral work that the Chalice Choir has ever

undertaken, for the December 2007 church-choir concert. The performance included soloists Shannon Cole, Gavan Quinn, and Richard Hrystak (all students from the University of Ottawa) and our own Elisabeth Morrison at the piano. The Chalice Choir presented its second-annual Midwinter Evensong in February 2008; this is perhaps the Chalice Choir's favourite event of its singing year, and audience numbers grew this year. The Chalice Choir finished its performance season with the April, 2008 choir concert called *Home Sweet Home*, at which it sang a variety of music that reflected aspects of our church community. It has been the choir's pleasure to have Rev. Janet as a member of the Chalice Choir this season; we will miss her in the soprano section. The Chalice Choir developed its organizational infrastructure this year, with the addition of four choral-music volunteer librarians, a coffee-break captain, a concert-week volunteer team, and a SWAT Team (Song Will Always Triumph) community liaison captain to the existing volunteer squad of social convenor and choir treasurer. This blossoming volunteer base will support the organizational health and growth of the Chalice Choir for years to come.

- (b) The Gospel Choir has evolved happily into a truly multi-generational singing ensemble, with three sets of siblings and some of their parents now in our midst. Some of the choir's elders have taken on surrogate-grandparent roles to the younger singers, and there is a lovely sense of musical family each Sunday morning at rehearsal. The Gospel Choir participated in both the December and April choir concerts. A performance highlight for the group this season was their rendition of *Big Momma Makes the World* (based on the book by Phyllis Root, music by Jane Perry) accompanied by the church's new blUUes band. Thanks to pianist Marg Stubington for accompanying the choir at the April concert.
- (c) The SWAT Team, whose singers come as needed from the Chalice Choir, continued its proud mobile-choir tradition this season, representing the First Unitarian Congregation at a variety of church and non-church events. These included: a World AIDS Day event; the fundraising evening of the Jamaica-Ottawa Community Association; a trip to the Don Heights Unitarian Congregation (Rev. Debra Faulk) in Toronto; active participation in the Ingathering ceremony of the Annual Conference and Meeting of the Canadian Unitarian Council; the farewell event for Rev. Janet; worship-service

music for the visiting Rev. Debra Faulk; entertainment for a meeting of the GoGo for Grannies group of the Stephen Lewis Foundation; and a rally for sanctuary in support of Shree Kumar Rai.

- 3. **Chamber Music on Cleary Avenue** and other chamber music concerts. The eighth instalment of our church-based chamber music drew wide praise and ever-larger audiences this past season. The presence of the church's new Steinway piano (which arrived in April, 2007) increased interest in the series from performers and concert-goers alike. The artistic level of the series continues to be high. As a statement of support for the musicians, this year the series increased its per-musician honorarium from \$200 to \$250. This amount will remain constant for the 2008–09 season. Thanks to Joan Hill for her help with brochure design/distribution and ticket production. Thanks as well to Jeff Merriam at Merriam Print in Sandy Hill, for his fine poster designs this season. The concerts were cheerfully supported by volunteers from Friends of the Music Programme (FMP), and I thank them all for their time and energy. On a sad note, we mark the passing of FMP Volunteer Coordinator Mary Trotman this year; she will be dearly missed.

The church was the beneficiary of two fundraising chamber-music concerts this season. The first was the annual *Elisabeth and Friends* concert, organized by host and pianist Elisabeth Morrison and featuring some of her musical colleagues. The second was *Conversations for Trumpet and Tuba*, with National Arts Centre musicians Karen Donnelly (trumpet) and Nicholas Atkinson (tuba), along with pianist Jane Perry. The latter concert raised money specifically for the Building Renewal Fund.

- 4. **New music initiatives by lay people.**
 - (a) After some years of discussion, the planets were finally in alignment for the birth of the blUUes band. Capably captained by Graeme Jones (piano) and Doug Robinson (electric bass), the group includes Marc-André Manseau (drums), Alan Ng (rhythm guitar), and Andrew Gibbs (alto saxophone and guitar), with occasional guest vocalist Sheilagh McEwen. The blUUes band made its debut at the choirs' December, 2007 concert, backed up the Gospel Choir at the choirs' April concert, and played at a few worship services in the late spring, to the delight of all who rocked out to their music. The blUUes band also made a substantial musical contribution to worship services at the CUC ACM in Ottawa. Thanks to all of these fine fellows for a fantastic new addition to church life.

(b) Chalice Choir singer Sam Wilmott started the Bell Ringers group this season. Its members are also Chalice Choir choristers. Sam brought his considerable expertise and contagious enthusiasm as a bell ringer to the project, as well as his personal set of hand bells. The Bell Ringers participated in the Midwinter Evensong, the April choir concert, and a worship service in April. Thanks to Sam and the Bell Ringers for their dedication to bringing a new musical art to this congregation.

5. **Steinway at First fundraising wrap-up.** The church's new Steinway piano arrived in April, 2007, and we celebrated this wonderful instrument with two gala concerts in October. The gala events were organized by the Steinway at First fundraising committee, captained by Havi Echenberg and including David Gero, Susan Mackenzie, Susan Tanner, Michael and Maureen Cassidy, and Music Director Jane Perry. On October 19, there was a private concert for donors to the Steinway at First fund; performers included the three pianists who went to the New York City Steinway Factory to select the piano (Dina Namer, Sandra Webster, and Jane Perry), flutist Tina Fedeski, and Ottawa jazz legend Brian Browne. On October 21, the public was invited to attend a ticketed gala concert featuring Ottawa concert pianist Andrew Tunis and his colleagues from the University of Ottawa, flutist Robert Cram and cellist Paul Marleyn. Receptions for both events included champagne and cake, and a good time was had by all. Thanks to the whole Steinway at First fundraising team; to our piano technician David Anderson; to the performers; and to everyone who contributed in ways large and small to the purchase of this magnificent instrument.

The presence of the Steinway in our church has raised considerable interest from local media, music groups, and individual performers. First Unitarian has increased its reputation in Ottawa as a place where good music happens. Concert rentals rose markedly in the 2007–08 season, and this trend is continuing in the form of advance bookings for 2008–09.

6. **Music at the CUC ACM.** As soon as the church's official music year wrapped up in mid-May, it was time to ramp up musical activity for the CUC ACM. Music involvement included: a first-ever pre-conference professional day, organized by Music Director Jane Perry, for Canadian UU congregational musicians; the Ingathering service featuring music from the SWAT Team, the blUUES band, the RE Family Singers (led by DRE Susan McEwen), and singer-songwriter Tony Turner; the 80-voice ACM Choir,

conducted by Jane Perry with Michael Cloud at the piano; the Sunday-morning worship service featuring the blUUES band, the ACM choir and Tony Turner; early-morning worship services with live music from pianist Jane Perry; more music-themed workshops than ever; an Open Mic night hosted by Tony Turner with bassist Anne Downey and pianist Jane Perry; a performance from Ottawa Folk Festival producer Chris White and friends; and music from the Tony Turner Band and an Ottawa Ceilidh band to round out the weekend. Special thanks to Tony Turner, for allowing the conference to use his *Circle of Song* as the 2008 ACM theme song. There was more music than the CUC ACM has ever seen before! We set a standard for others to aspire to—congratulations to all of the singers, instrumentalists, volunteers, and organizers who contributed to this phenomenal success.

—Jane Perry, Music Director

Newsletter (*The Parkway Spire*)

In November 2007, *Parkway Spire* Editor-in-Chief Joan Hill moved laterally to take the role of Production Designer. The duties of Editor then fell to the newly hired Publications Officer, Annie MacTavish.

Over the summer, when Joan left the congregation to go to Toronto, the *Spire* took a palpable hit, losing not only a designer, but a repository of knowledge of the congregation's structure, history and culture.

Fortunately, Joan left behind a crack production team of knowledgeable and assiduous copy editors, production designers and proofreaders. We are indebted to Editorial Assistant Donna Watershaw, Copy Editors Alastaire Henderson, Judith Moser (who is also *ex-officio* newsletter photographer), and Claire Harrison. Eagle-eyed Proofreaders Arthur Palmer, Warren Scott, and Rebecca Hogue kept us from coming to grief many times.

In the background, the Communications Committee worked to develop sound editorial policies that will keep newsletter content digestible and production costs low.

Of all the people who worked on 2007–08 *Spire*, the most valued of all were the faithful contributors, who, month after month, sent us the columns, articles, and photographs which reflected our life as a congregation.

So, with new production designers Alastaire Henderson, Patti Moran, and Colleen Glass and new copy editors Mark Johnson, Sarah Nugent, and Jan Andrews, the *Spire* team looks forward to providing an accurate, relevant and appealing publication that will continue to promote the congregation's groups, events, and programs in 2008–09.

—Annie MacTavish, Editor-in-Chief

The Noble Birds

The Young Adults group (dubbed The Noble Birds, in honour of the namesake sculpture in the Meditation Garden), is composed of people in their twenties and thirties who wish to share as a community in activities of mutual interest. Due to our age range, we are a very diverse group, including students, young professionals, young couples, and parents.

As a group, the Noble Birds have events monthly, often a potluck or a social event. We organize one or two worship services a year and assist at other groups' events and services. We are also very involved individually, as we each take part in several groups, including the Communications Committee, the Board, RE, OWL, the UU Writers' Group, lay chaplaincy, and the Search Committee for a Settled Minister, among others.

This year, highlights included our assistance at the OWL and Easter services, a wonderful Sunday morning worship service, and hosting young people from across Canada at this year's CUC ACM, where we also participated in the Soulful Sundown service with other Young Adults.

Our group is dynamic and growing: in a recent welcoming ceremony for new members of First Unitarian, about half of the new members were Young Adults. We invite young people over 18 to join us in any of our activities!

—*Rodrigo Emilio Solano-Quesnel*

Nominating Committee

This year's Nominating Committee comprised returning members Elizabeth Bowen, Gwen Harman, Susan Mackenzie and Maury Prevost as well as new members Joan Auden and Scott Drennan. We had our work cut out for us this year as we had to find not only five new Board members but also the Search Committee for our new Settled Minister.

This year, for the first time, we asked the congregation's help in identifying potential candidates for the vacant Board and Search Committee positions. We were pleased with the response and grateful for the congregation's assistance. Several positions were filled by people who either expressed their interest directly to us or were suggested by others.

In the fall George Samuel stepped down from the Board for health reasons and at our committee's suggestion the Board appointed Tom Williams to complete the remainder of George's term, with the understanding that Tom would stand for election as Treasurer in the spring.

At the Annual General Meeting in March we were able to nominate a strong slate of candidates and the congregation elected the following people to the Board for 2008–09.

Returning members are Chuck Shields (President), Kathy Yach (Vice President), and Members at Large Bob Armstrong and Rod Solano-Quesnel. New members are Doug Cousins (Secretary), Tom Williams (Treasurer), Susan Mackenzie and Paul Ward (Members at Large). Eric Hill-Keast (Youth Representative) served for a time before stepping down.

We were also pleased to nominate, and see elected, a group of strong candidates to serve on the Search Committee. They are Donna Bowen-Willer, Margot Clarke, Blair Erskine, Gwen Harman, Alastaire Henderson, Charles Lanktree, Kent Swinburne, and Sue Williams.

This year the Nominating Committee considered over 120 members of the congregation as potential candidates for the Board and/or the Search Committee. We are grateful to all who responded to our inquiries whether they were, or were not, interested in serving the congregation in this way.

Finally, I am grateful to my fellow members of the Nominating Committee. It was a pleasure to serve with them in accomplishing all that we had to do.

—*Susan Mackenzie, Chair*

Ottawa South/Glebe/Centretown Neighbourhood Groups:

The Ottawa South neighbourhood group has been functioning continuously since the mid-sixties. The original members are Dorothy and Whitman Wright, Dorothy Hanna, and I. From September to June, we meet in each other's homes on one Sunday a month (except for December). At the start and end of each year we have a potluck supper; other months it is coffee and dessert, but always there is a program.

You may imagine what areas we covered over forty some years—church, religion, the community, health, science, books, art, each other's travels. We've had speakers from the congregation, the Universities, the political or literary scene, the city and everywhere in between, often members of our group. Recently, we've heard David Chernushenko, Richard Patten, Renee De Vry, Ann Denis, and Elizabeth Bowen, to name a few, talk about their special interests and activities.

I remember, from way back, Gwen and Fred Finlay (he was president of the church at the time), and later Kay and Brody Shearer, who kept us abreast of the arts. And Jody Gifford. And so many others. I remember Whitman Wright and John Hanna and my husband Max, who would involve us in serious discussions, even arguments, about science or technical progress.

The old group changed bit by bit and as it got smaller we merged with other groups in the area and welcomed

new members, such as Rosemarie and Ernie Criddle and Maureen and Michael Cassidy, who so often offered their homes for our meetings. We have been the Ottawa South/Glebe/Centretown Neighbourhood Group for a few years now.

The president of this amalgamated neighbourhood group is now John Stevenson, who took over from Helen McCuaig, who held the position so effectively for almost 10 years. Before that, however, for several decades, we elected no president and no chairperson. But we had Dorothy Wright, unsung and untitled, who did whatever was necessary to make us function: coordinate, suggest, initiate, review, decide, phone. It was she who held this group together for so long and so well.

I hope the group will have another forty some years!!
—*Trudy Kassner*

Ottawa West Community Support

This has been another busy year for OWCS as it has continued to be the lead agency for the government-sponsored and expanded “Aging in Place” program. Early evaluations indicate that the program is meeting some of its goals with regard to reducing the number of ER hospital visits through the provision of timely and enhanced support services in a number of the Ottawa Housing Corporation’s seniors’ apartment buildings. Meeting this challenge has required some staff increases and the agency continues to rely heavily on the support of its volunteers to run its regular services. Volunteers provide drives to medical appointments, assist with day programs and special trips, help on the shopping bus and staff the reception desk, etc.

If you have an interest in being a volunteer with OWCS, please contact Lee McCarthy at 613-728-6016 or Margot Clarke at 613-820-6596 for more information.

—*Margot Clarke, representing the congregation on the OWCS Board of Directors*

OWL Sexuality Education for all ages

Our Whole Lives (OWL) is a comprehensive lifespan sexuality education series grounded in the understanding that sexuality is an essential part of every person. It affects our identity, relationships and decisions throughout our lives. At First Unitarian, the OWL Facilitation Committee is responsible for planning and overseeing all Our Whole Lives programs and the training of OWL Facilitators.

The OWL program was developed in the US by the Unitarian Universalist Association and the United Church of Christ. It includes a wide range of age-appropriate topics at six levels; at First Unitarian we offer five of the six.

Each level of Our Whole Lives offers:

- up-to-date information and honest, age-appropriate answers to all participants’ questions
- activities to help participants clarify values and improve decision-making skills
- effective group-building to create a safe and supportive peer group
- education about sexual abuse, exploitation, and harassment
- opportunities to critique media messages about gender and sexuality
- acceptance of diversity
- encouragement to act for justice
- a well designed, user-friendly leaders’ guide
- parent orientation programs that affirm parents as the primary sexuality educators of their children

OWL Programs are offered at First Unitarian for five specific age groups:

- Grade 1 OWL (for children in Grades 1 and 2)
- Grade 5 OWL (for children in Grades 5 and 6)
- Junior High OWL (for Grades 8 and 9),
- Senior High OWL (for Grades 10 to 12)
- Adult OWL

In the future, possibly by 2009–10, we hope to add OWL for Young Adults, based on the new curriculum now available from the Unitarian Universalist Association. Texts for the Young Adult program have been ordered, and facilitators will need to be trained.

For more information about the content of OWL programs, go to the OWL Web site at the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Grade 1 OWL

In January, 2008, Grade 1 OWL for 6-year-olds (and for 7-year-olds who had not yet taken OWL) was offered for the third time at First Unitarian. There were eight children in this year’s Grade 1 OWL: one boy and seven girls. Parents were invited attend an orientation, the first class and a finishing “celebration.” OWL trained teachers Coral Sato Andrew Gibbs led the program, assisted by regular Grade 1 RE teachers and back-up OWL teacher Margaret Linton.

The content of this series includes *Our Wonderful Bodies*, *Healthy Bodies/Safe Bodies*, *Families, Families and Feelings*, *Babies and Families*, *Birth of a Baby* and *Family Celebrations*. “Homelinks” for parents are a starting point for discussions between parent and child about topics covered in class. The book *It’s So Amazing* is recommended as supplementary reading.

Grade 5 OWL

Offered each winter, Grade 5 OWL is a nine-week series that supports the three R's of childhood sexuality education: Respect, Relationships and Responsibility. Sessions include Values and Sexuality, Family Relationships, Puberty: Physical and Emotional Changes, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation, Lovemaking and Reproduction, Health and Safety, Communication and Decision Making. The book *It's Perfectly Normal* is used throughout the course as a resource book for the students. *The Parent's Guide* is recommended reading for parents.

In 2007–08, 16 students were enrolled in our Grade 5 OWL classes. Parents were invited to attend an orientation. Teachers were lead facilitator Roz Mathews, John Turnbull, Lena Talback, and Jill Burns, all trained OWL facilitators.

Junior High OWL

Junior High OWL helps young people develop communication and decision-making skills, gain knowledge about their changing bodies and develop self-confidence and clarity about their values. OWL is taught in a Unitarian Universalist faith-based context that affirms the worth and dignity of every person. Registration for this group requires a commitment to regularly attend 30 weeks of OWL.

This was the sixth year that Our Whole Lives has been offered to 13- and 14-year-olds in Grades 8 and 9, following many years of providing "About Your Sexuality" to teens.

This year's Jr. High OWL was facilitated by five adults, who rotated responsibility for the sessions: OWL-trained facilitators Joe Connor (lead), Guy Belleperche, Joanna Simpson, Lisa Sharp, and Joel Guenette, who brought his knowledge, ability, energy and experience to the program.

Senior High OWL

The OWL sexuality education program for high school students age 15 and older in Grades 10 to 12 was offered for the fourth year in 2007–2008. Our Senior High OWL committee began by consulting the congregation's youth group, who urged the committee to offer the OWL curriculum on weekends. In February, 2008, a Sr. High OWL weekend was held at First Unitarian, attended by youth from Peterborough, Montreal, and the Ottawa area from Friday evening until Sunday morning. Over 30 adult volunteers, including trained OWL facilitator/teachers, were present: teaching, supervising, providing meals and support during the weekend. All meals, snacks and supplies were provided, thanks to many volunteers. For more information, including biographies of the facilitator/teachers, go to www.owlinottawa.blogspot.com

Another Sr. High OWL weekend will take place at First Unitarian the weekend of November 21–23.

Adult Our Whole Lives

This year the congregation presented the OWL curriculum for Adults in partnership with the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) at the Quaker Meeting House in the Glebe. Four facilitators, who had been trained in the Adult OWL Training session held at First Unitarian in the fall of 2006, led 12 participants through the Adult OWL curriculum using learning activities, current information, and discussions about human sexuality.

In spring, 2008, a series of Adult OWL sexuality education classes, co-sponsored by First Unitarian and the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) were held in the Quaker Meeting House.

The revenue from registration fees (after expenses) was shared equally by the two sponsoring congregations. Plans are afoot to hold Adult OWL in alternate years and, if possible, to offer mini- Adult OWL sessions in between.

Conclusion

Our Whole Lives sexuality education classes are ongoing programs of the church, delivered through the OWL Facilitation Committee, which is responsible to the Board. The OWL Program has its own budget for purchasing books and supplies, training facilitators, etc. Training for OWL Facilitators is offered each fall. In 2007, Elementary (K–1 and Grade 4–6) OWL teacher training was held. Four new facilitators were trained, who subsequently began teaching OWL classes in January, 2008.

Members and friends of the congregation who are interested in taking OWL training should submit a short biography and two references to the chair of the OWL Committee. Training for Jr. and Sr. High OWL Facilitators was held at the church the weekend of Friday October 17.

—*Joan Turner, Chair*

Property Committee

Property Committee Members

Max Bacon, Renée de Vry, Ted Elliott, Meg Gourlay (Chair), Phil Gross, John Harrison, Terry Kimmel, Bob Stevenson, Bill Van Iterson, Lionel Wagner

Single project working group member(s)

Jose Gonzalez, Sylvia Furman

Ex Officio (staff)

Bruce Cameron, Head Custodian

Report

The year 2007–08 was truly a year of renewal at First Unitarian, and the Property Committee was busily and actively involved in this process in very tangible ways. At the same time, the committee had to contend with the

temporary loss of three of our stalwart committee members—Ted Elliott, Renée de Vry and Lionel Wagner—who took sabbaticals this past year. Their input, participation and advice were sorely missed. Happily, we were joined by a new member, Terry Kimmel, as well as Project Members, Sylvia Furman and José Gonzalez.

The work of the committee this past year included major renovation and renewal projects, the most ambitious of which was the replacement of cedar shingles across the majority of the upper roof with Enviroshakes and installation of proper ice guards, (Total cost: \$231,972.60). Made of a mixture of post industrial and recycled materials, Enviroshakes are hardier than cedar and help us meet with our mandate to leave a smaller footprint on the earth. As well, in preparation for major renovation work in summer 2008, engineering and design work was done on the north and south decks.

With the relocation of the River Parkway Preschool Centre to its new building on campus, the entire lower level of the church building became available for use. The Property committee took advantage of their departure to undertake remediation and renovation work: floor tiles were removed and replaced, ceilings came down and all walls and doors were given a fresh coat of paint. We were pleased to find the space to include an accessible washroom as well; something that has been sorely lacking on the lower level. (Total cost: \$110,000).

Related to the work of the committee is the 40th Anniversary Renewal Campaign. Headed by John Harrison and Doug Cousins, the Renewal team managed to obtain commitments for \$345,000 of its \$500,000 five-year goal. The campaign continues into fall, 2008.

Smaller projects abounded as well, each helpful in making life just a little bit better for those who move about the church. Security measures were reviewed and upgraded; the west lobby was painted by Sylvia Furman and Meg Gourlay; a hydrometer/thermometer was installed for the Steinway piano; the apartment was painted by youth members and youth advisors; elevator operations were converted and a motion detector was installed on the light; the fire alarm system was assessed; the sound system review was undertaken; and A-frame signs were purchased for use around the building.

—*Meg Gourlay*

Religious Education

Statistics

- 103 registered children from 58 families
- 25 registered youth

Committee Update

The Religious Exploration Committee started the 2007–08 year with five committee members, of which one retired during the year. Although we remained short of members, the committee had a productive year, focusing our attention on supporting special events, an RE safety policy and handbook, and assisting Susan with the physical changes to our space downstairs.

In the spring, committee members attended the Renaissance module, which focused on the role of the RE committee. Though we all felt very inspired to move forward in a different capacity, we were at the same time discouraged by the events within our congregation that resulted in Susan's resignation. We are still hoping to expand the role of the committee in the coming year and plan to recruit two to three more committee members.

Breakdown of Religious Exploration Classes by Age

- First Steps—toddlers to 2-year-olds
- Celebrating Me and My World—3- to 4-year-olds
- Spirit Stories with the Rainbow Family—5- to 9-year-olds
- Holidays and Holy Days—10-year-olds (included the Grade 5 OWL program)
- Neighbouring Faiths—11-year-olds
- Junior High OWL—13- to 14-year olds
- Young Religious UUs—High School youth (youth group)

Each group of children was supported by a team of four teachers.

Program Highlights

We continued with a Rainbow Family custom that was initiated as a way to instill a larger sense of community into the time the children spent at church. Each Sunday morning, children leaving Worship Hall regrouped in the Now Room for a shared time of welcome and stories. After shared time, the children would break into their smaller groups for discussion and related activities.

In February we celebrated Black history Month with Special guest Chipó Shambare, who led the Rainbow Family children in music and dance.

Special Events

The fall started with a Halloween celebration in the NOW Room, featuring a potluck lunch, stories, and crafts.

The annual Mitten Tree Service and Christmas Eve Pageant were well-attended and appreciated by all. We attempted to keep our other activities to a minimum at this busy time of year and scheduled an event in January instead. This is when the Karaoke party took place. We intended it to be a congregation wide fundraiser, and although it was really enjoyed by those who came, it was not a well-attended event, perhaps because it was interpreted as being only for RE families.

The second Teachers' Retreat, usually held in January, was replaced by a feedback session in March. A special team was formed to re-evaluate the Spirit Stories format and develop new ideas for next year. Other adjustments were suggested to the scheduling of the music intervals, and structure for the outdoor group.

The popular Mystery Pal program was run this year by Jen Brennan. It is an important event in the church, bringing together the young and old on a very personal level. We had 60 plus participants in the event and they celebrated their final meeting with a lunch served in Fellowship hall.

The year was wrapped up with a delicious Teachers Appreciation breakfast in May attended by more than 40 people.

RE Summer Program

With the staffing transition in RE we decided to reduce the summer program in July and August, and offer toys, books, and colouring supplies for parents and young children in the Lounge. No formal program was offered.

—*Linda Brown, RE chair*

Riverside Park Neighbourhood Group

This group tries to hold monthly meetings from September to May or June, except for December. This past year meetings were held on the following topics:

- **September 2007:** Reports by group members on highlights of our summer's activities.
- **November 2007:** Speaker David Chernushenko, former deputy leader of the Green Party (and a member of this congregation), on the goals of the Green Party under the title "Living Lightly."
- **November 2007:** Speaker Bob Stevenson of this congregation, and President of "Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice" (CUSJ), spoke on the work of that organization.
- **January, 2008:** Speaker Marj Mosienko on the background to the Robert Latimer case
- **February, 2007:** Speaker Rev. Janet Newman, our 2007–08 Interim Minister, on certain aspects of our religion and on her personal journey in this religion.
- **March, 2007:** Meeting postponed due to condition

of snow clogged streets, i.e. no room to park!!

- **April, 2007:** Speaker Stuart Trew of the Council of Canadians, on threats posed by certain international agreements that are being negotiated behind our backs, i.e. without any involvement of Parliament.
- **May, 2007:** Speakers Peter Patton and Bob Staveley, on the recent CUC Annual Conference and Meeting here in Ottawa.

Attendance at these meetings ranged from a high of 14 to a low of 8 persons. All meetings ended with coffee, tea and desserts. Question and answer sessions following the speakers' presentations became quite extended on occasion.

—*Bob Staveley, Group Coordinator*

Search Committee for a Settled Minister

With the resignation of Rev. Lee Devoe in 2006, and Rev. Brian Kopke's retirement in 2007, First Unitarian began a two-year period of transition leading to the calling of a new settled minister for the congregation. In the first year of the transition, the Board instructed the nominating committee to recruit a Search Committee for a Settled Minister. Eight members of the congregation were presented by the Nominating Committee to the Annual General Meeting of First Unitarian on March 30, 2008. These eight congregants were elected by the congregation on that day: Donna Bowen-Willer, Margot Clarke, Blair Erskine, Gwen Harman, Alastaire Henderson, Charles Lanktree, Kent Swinburne, and Susan Williams.

To affirm the trust given to the Search Committee by the congregation, and the seriousness with which the Search Committee members received the trust, the congregation and the Search Committee together entered into a covenant.

The Search Committee pledged to be faithful to the duties entrusted to it, and to be committed to the spirit and practice of Unitarian Universalism. The congregation in turn committed to support the Search Committee in its work and the congregation as a whole as it engaged in the search for a new settled minister.

Through April and May the Search Committee received a comprehensive orientation from the UUA/CUC Ministerial Settlement Representative, spent half a weekend together in "retreat" guided by a CUC facilitator, and convened the Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop conducted by two UUA facilitators.

June through August, the Search Committee conducted a process of "self-study" on behalf of the congregation. The committee met with the Board and other key committees, and spoke with individual members of the congregation. This process culminated in the Congregational Survey, small-group conversations, and the convening of a Town Hall meeting.

The views of all congregants expressed through these means provide shape to a profile of the congregation that is described in a document called the Congregational Record. Released electronically through the Transitions Office of the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Congregational Record is a candid disclosure of the church's strengths, challenges, and continuing issues. Equally important, it is the means by which the congregation expresses what attributes it expects in the ideal minister.

This document is produced and made available to all Unitarian ministers who intend to compete for ministerial positions in 2009. It is one of the ways that First Unitarian will announce that it is looking for a settled minister.

As this Annual Report nears publication, the Search Committee is nearing the date when the Congregational Record will be released. Our next annual report should contain the good news that we expect will unfold over the next several months—that an experienced, highly qualified, wonderful settled minister was recruited and called unanimously by the congregants of First Unitarian in the spring of 2009!

—*Kent Swinburne, Chair*

Social Responsibility Council

In 2007–2008, the former Social Responsibility Committee (SRC), now Council, underwent some big changes. After several months of work, new terms of reference for the SRC were approved by the Board in May, 2008. In an attempt to involve more Members and Friends in our work, the Council now has a Steering Committee that identifies an annual central theme for social responsibility and encourages Working Groups to include the theme in at least some of their work.

The SRC currently comprises eleven Working Groups. We are responsible for spending an annual allocation of 4 percent of pledges received. In 2007 (twelve months), we spent or set aside \$4,000 for local housing and anti-poverty work, \$4,000 for refugee support, \$2,000 for peace and global justice work, \$1,100 for youth involved in UU-UNO activities, and \$300 for environmental work. In the first half of 2008 (six months), we have spent or set aside \$1,000 for justice and human rights work, \$1,000 for Child Haven, \$3,500 for local housing and anti-poverty work, \$4,000 for refugee support, and \$700 for UU-UNO work. We also donated \$1,500 from the Andrew Wynn Fund to the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada.

The above figures refer only to our 4 percent of pledges. The congregation also donates additional funds for social responsibility through special events and collections. Also, several of our Working Groups are entirely self-sufficient, and do not avail themselves of the pledge money. Reports of individual working groups follow.

—*Phil Nagy, Chair*

Canada-Nepal Solidarity for Peace

CNSP was formed in response to the grave situation in Nepal, to be a source of information and a financial support to the people of Nepal and The Women's Foundation of Nepal, of which Tara Upreti was a founding member nearly 20 years ago. The CNSP working group has met sporadically over these past two years, mainly to organize large public information and fundraising events. It was decided that, like the Child Haven working group, we would not meet on a regular basis, so there are no regular meetings on which to report.

This year, since Tara is studying full-time, working part-time and getting to know her four children again after a seven-year separation, her life has been extremely busy and complicated. It was necessary for her to put CNSP on a quieter basis. However, Tara and the CNSP committee did organize and carry out a most successful fundraising evening. Held in February, the Nepali Festival dinner was a great evening of food and entertainment, and brought in good funds for CNSP.

—*Tara Upreti and Judy Dunlop, Co-Chairs*

CUSJ ACM

The Annual Conference and Meeting of the Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice took place at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, Quebec on May 16, 2008. Although the CUSJ is a separate organization from the Canadian Unitarian Council, it does have Associate Status. As part of the organizing committee, I am happy to give a brief synopsis.

This year it was decided to hold our ACM away from the college campus where the CUC was meeting. We wanted to see how the Museum presented this country's story of social justice in Canada Hall. After our visit to the Hall, there was a question and answer session with the Curator, Dr. Rhonda Hinthner. She was very enthusiastic about our visit and encouraged us to write about our concerns to the President of the Museum and send a copy to her.

This discussion was followed by our business meeting, which included the passing of a motion on the withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan. Incidentally, the Ministers' Group also passed a motion about Canada's involvement in Afghanistan. Unfortunately our CUC did not deal with this issue in the Social Responsibility session.

Our meeting finished at 1:00 p.m., allowing time for visits to other museum exhibits, including the Face to Face display, which profiled 25 outstanding Canadians. Three were Unitarians: Arthur Lismer, Lotta Hitschmanova, and Vilhjalmur Stefansson.

It was wonderful to renew friendship with so many Unitarians and I look forward to Thunder Bay in 2009.

—*Bob Stevenson*

Child Haven Working Group

Members of this committee participated in several activities to raise money for Child Haven International (CHI) and its many projects.

For the November, 2007 major fundraiser for Child Haven, we sold tickets at First Unitarian, and helped at sales tables and in the silent auction. In April, we helped Ottawa Friends of Tibet, a sister organization, hold a benefit concert to fund construction of a seniors' home for Tibetan refugees living in India. In June, we sold tickets and helped at sales tables and the silent auction for Child Haven's annual dinner and silent auction. Our members attended each of these events, and brought guests.

In October, February, and May, groups of volunteers went to the CHI office in Maxville to help stuff envelopes for the newsletter mailing.

—*Leslie Baird, Coordinator*

Environmental Working Group

During 2007–08, the Environmental Working Group conducted many events and programs.

We organized an environmental summer church service (in August), a forum with the Polaris Institute about the impact of using bottled water (in September), a workshop at the CUC ACM on "Greening Sacred Spaces" (in May, 2007), and a "Simplicity Circle" education program.

Every week, we promoted simple ways that congregants could reduce individual energy use and material consumption. The EWG also promoted environmental action by publicizing Buy Nothing Day, Earth Day, Earth Hour, Clean Air Day, Waste Reduction Week, World Wildlife Week, and World Oceans Day.

Once a month, the EWG held sales of organic coffee, sugar, chocolate and olive oil after Sunday services, to raise funds and awareness of environmental and social justice concerns.

We assisted other First Unitarian groups: Friends of the Meditation Garden, Holly and Lace bazaar, CUC ACM planning committee, and Adopt-a-Riverbank. The EWG financially supported Canadian Youth for Climate Change, the "Stop Uranium Mining in Ontario" campaign and the "Ottawa Anti-Pesticide" campaign.

In the fall of 2007, the Environmental Working Group was awarded the Faith and the Common Good "Green Sacred Spaces" award.

—*Pauline Heinonen, Chair*

Global Justice Working Group

The Global Justice Working Group invited two guest speakers for two Sunday services in June, 2007: John Foster on the "Security and Prosperity Partnership," and Pat Mooney on "Science, Community and the Public Interest." Both talks elicited many worthwhile questions. In December, Bob Stevenson presented a brief to the City Council during the budget deliberations.

We continue to financially assist groups who are involved in social justice work. This year they included Homes Not Bombs, who organized the Caravan About Torture, the Justice for Harkat Committee, and the Uranium Mining Moratorium Fund.

Many of us who are also involved with Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice worked on their activities, in particular the ACM held at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. After nine years as a director I have retired as president of CUSJ. During that time I learned that there is much need and much opportunity for our committee and congregation in the cause for social justice.

—*Bob Stevenson, Chair*

Peace Watch Working Group

Abolition of nuclear weapons remains a congregational issue, to which end we have endorsed an Abolition Statement "Restoring Canada's Nuclear Disarmament Leadership," sponsored by Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (and others), and have signed up as a supporter of the "International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons" (iCAN), to achieve a world Nuclear Weapons Convention. We keep in touch with the Conference on Disarmament, New Agenda Coalition, and Middle Powers Initiative, etc. Our Web site is: www.uuottawa.com/sr_peace_watch.html

We co-sponsored with the UU-UNO group a Holtom Lecture on Afghanistan by John Watson in December, and also a "Guns or Butter" session for youth at the CUC ACM in May. We endorsed an "Educating for Peace" initiative to promote teaching peace in schools, and signed a Cluster Bomb petition for Mines Action Canada.

Our Summer Service on the Israel/Palestine situation, "Peace in the Middle East" featured speakers from Potlucks for Peace. We continue to involve the congregation by means of monthly meetings, items in *The Parkway Spire* and weekly *Communiqué*, signing letters, petitions, and hosting after-service coffee hours.

—*Dan Morrison, Chair*

Poverty Awareness Working Group

The group met on many occasions during the year, with Ria Heynen as chair. We have attended meetings on poverty and housing and continue to contribute financially to organisations that we have supported in the past, namely the Multifaith Housing Initiative (MHI), Pinecrest-Queensway Health and Community Services and Salus. Members of the working group also met with the Housing Department of the City of Ottawa on issues of affordable housing. Via our e-mail list we sent out information and sometimes asked for letters to be written.

Work was done on the possibility of forming a charitable development trust to respond to the request for proposals to provide affordable housing under the Action Ottawa programme. Unfortunately the owner of the building in which we were interested declined to sell it, so this initiative came to naught.

The working group on indigenous issues has joined with us; hence we shall in future provide support to the Oshki Kisis (new beginnings in Cree) Interval House, which is operated by Minwaashin Aboriginal Women's Support Centre.

—*Mike Wheeler, Co-chair*

Refugee Committee

Last year in September we completed our one year sponsorship of Zemene Abounie. Before this year was over, we applied to sponsor two young Ethiopian men who are presently in a refugee camp in Uganda. Unfortunately the waiting time for processing a refugee is now 42 months.

Our committee appreciates the help of the SRC in funding the resettlement of refugees. Since 1999 the committee has assisted six families and individuals from Kosovo, Iran, Ethiopia, the Sudan and the Congo.

—*Bob Stevenson, Chair*

Sanctuary Committee

Some 140 volunteers from our congregation are involved in supporting Shree's stay in sanctuary. Some come in as visitors and some as witnesses to protect Shree from any removal efforts, although we have the promise of the RCMP that Sanctuary will be honoured. Shree continues to receive help to improve his English. His biggest accomplishment is his painting, and he has sold several of his works. Painting helps him to relax and keeps from too much worrying about his future.

The main focus for the Sanctuary Committee is to work on obtaining a permit for Shree to remain legally in Canada. A small group within the Committee has worked steadily on documents to obtain his release based on Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds, or through a possible Skilled Workers permit. People in the congregation and beyond have responded generously to our request for letters of support.

The Sanctuary Fund raises enough money to cover Shree's expenses, including lawyer's fees and support for his wife and son in Nepal. Shree himself helps to support the fund through the sales of his paintings and of his sushi.

—*Ria Heynen, co-chair*

Unitarian GoGos

The Unitarian GoGos is an active group of about 30 women, one of about 200 such groups who form the Stephen Lewis Foundation's Grandmothers to Grandmothers campaign. About half of our members are Unitarians and the rest are interested community members, mostly from the west end of the city. We usually meet on the third Thursday of each month at 4:00 p.m. at the church.

We seek to raise awareness and mobilize support in Canada for African grandmothers who are raising their Aids-orphaned grandchildren, very often in extreme poverty. Since January, 2007 when our group was founded, we have sent more than \$16,000 to the Stephen Lewis Foundation. Some examples of our fundraising activities are:

- the familiar monthly Granny Squares sales, which garner a steady \$200 or more each month;
- a very successful Kazuri jewellery sale, which netted about \$3,500;
- an "oatmeal cookie with a glass of cool water" sale during the Great Glebe Garage Sale, which brought in more than \$900; and
- a "Just Home from Africa" evening with Joan Turner and Sue Cousineau (Ottawa area grannies who travelled to SLF funded sites in Africa in March), which brought in \$2500 in donations.

As part of the Canadian Grandmothers for Africa: A National Advocacy Network, we are gathering signatures on a nation-wide petition to the House of Commons urging government action on a number of fronts, including legislative changes to permit the immediate flow of generic medicines to developing countries (e.g. anti-retrovirals).

We participated in a rally on Parliament Hill last September on International Grandparents Day, marching in solidarity with many others to support AIDS sufferers in Africa.

In May, we hosted two grandmothers from Africa, who were visiting Canadian Grandmother's groups to tell their stories. We sponsored several educational lectures: one by Dr. Claire Touchie: "What is HIV/AIDS Today?" and one by Nick Barber about his work with youth in Lesotho for the Canadian International Development Agency.

—*Wendy Doyle, Chair*

UU-UNO Working Group

The UU-UNO Working Group cooperates with the World Federalists of Canada and the United Nations Association of Canada.

In November, 2007, The group proudly helped three members of the youth group attend the Eastern Regional Gathering in St. John's, Nfld., where they presented their workshop on human trafficking, "Modern Slavery?" The youth also presented the workshop at the CUC ACM in May. An Ottawa delegation of record size (14 people) attended the Seminar.

In December, 2007, we co-hosted the Holtom Lecture with the Peace Watch Working Group. Dr. John Watson, past CEO and President of CARE Canada, presented "A New Leviathan? Afghanistan in Historical Context." Despite a snow storm, over 100 people attended, including members of the Holtom family.

At the 2008 CUC ACM, we presented the global simulation game "Guns or Butter." Twenty-five youth and five adults participated. The session was moderated by David Hall from Y FOCUS of Ottawa and three very able young people. For his efforts, UU-UNO made a contribution to Y FOCUS' initiative to send sports equipment to war torn regions.

Dan Morrison, with the help of Rosalie Reynolds, developed a pamphlet for the group. We sold UNICEF Christmas cards again this year, although sales were down to just under \$200.

Thanks to our committee members and volunteers who gave assistance and much time to make 2007–08 a successful and productive year.

—*Katrin Nagelschmitz, Chair*

Sound Booth Operators

The composition of the team of sound booth operators has changed, with new operators coming on board while others have reduced their time or stepped down. We encourage anyone who might have an interest to speak to one of the operators on a Sunday. There is presently a need for someone who could be available during the day to do sound for memorial services and/or weddings.

Technical problems during the past year were a challenge, but the system operates now pretty much the way it did when installed—though it still falls short of what is possible with technology today. A committee has been formed to evaluate what we have, find out what we would like, and make recommendations to the Board.

—*Art Read*

Stewardship Committee

Key results of the 2007–08 Annual Pledge Campaign:

- 335 pledges (up by 10 pledges) generated \$386,000 in pledges (up by 14 percent).
- The average pledge was \$1,153 (up from \$1,037).

These results are gratifying, especially considering that so many had donated and pledged so much to the Building Renewal Campaign just two months earlier.

During the campaign, we built on the good work and ideas of earlier committees. A few innovations this year were:

- explaining clearly that it takes an average pledge of about \$1,000 simply to meet basic expenses.
- showing the distribution of giving in previous years.
- recognizing the major financial supporters of the congregation with a wine and cheese gathering.
- using coloured envelopes for the completed pledges.
- using the large replica chalice and the plexiglass box at the front of Worship Hall to receive pledges.
- giving coloured pins to those who pledged.
- asking the committee members to commit to three years to provide continuity.

The committee members were: Prue Craib, Bob Armstrong, David Hudson, Jan Glyde, Becky Hogue, and John Harrison

—*Bob Armstrong*

Time and Talent Auction

Official bidding in this year's Time and Talent Auction started mid-May and ended at the start of June.

Unofficially, bidding on items that did not "sell out" was extended for another two Sundays. Joan Auden and Judy Donegan, who worked on this fundraiser, felt that it was a great success, as it raised \$6,624 and allowed people in the church to get together on a social basis.

Just a sampling of the wonderful times and talents auctioned off: sharing a lunch or dinner with a group, going to a cottage, attending dance classes, having tea and cake in the garden, receiving a postcard from our travellers, playing bridge, participating in a walking tour of Almonte, hiking in the Gatineau, receiving a massage, or going on a birdwatching expedition. A number of people offered items that they had made, such as a ceramic vase, a dakka scarf, hand-crafted greeting cards, a stained glass panel, etc. These are just a few examples of the many items that were offered and shared. There are many talented and generous people in this congregation who were willing to share with others. Thank you. the 2008–09 auction will be bigger and better than ever.

—*Judy Donegan*

Unitarian Seniors' Service, Lunch And Program

Once again, a very positive report for the Unitarian Seniors! Averaging about 60 to 70 participants at each of our monthly meetings, we have wonderful social times and stimulating programs. Everyone is welcome to attend, and add his or her name to our monthly telephone link. Alternating between Thursdays, Wednesdays, and Tuesdays at the end of the month, we gather at 11:00 a.m., have a service at 11:30 a.m., lunch at noon, and a program at 1:00 p.m.

During the 2007–08 year, we have appreciated worship services led by Jack Wright, Liz Benjamin, Don Fraser, Reverend Janet Newman, Ellen Bell and Barry Read amongst others.

Art Read provided sound assistance; Liz Benjamin recruited service leaders and Renee Saxon or Elizabeth Morrison played the Piano.

The September to December Programs have included, "Introducing Reverend Janet Newman," a men's barbershop quartet, and our Carol Sing featuring Jane Perry and the Chalice Choir.

From January to June the programs were diverse. In January, Phil Jenkins came to speak to us about his travels and play on his guitar. Other programs included Joan Turner on her trip to Africa with the Stephen Lewis Foundation, Clive Doucet on his vision for urban development, and the World Voices Choir from Brookfield High School, led by Jeannie Hunter, which regaled us with music from around the world, especially from Africa. We again ended the season with our annual Barb-B-Q, where we were entertained by Jane Perry and soprano Shannon Cole.

Entirely volunteer driven, we are grateful to our lunch convenors: Isabel Burrows, Ann Soar, Christine MacDonald, Alexandra Devine, Judy Dunlop, Pat Hill and Prue Craib, Kathy Yach and Marilyn Prevost. Also, many thanks to Brian Cowan and Bradley Ralph our stalwart dishwashers, and the many other lunch-time helpers.

This report would not be complete without reference to our treasurer, Elspeth Read; our transportation coordinator, Arthur Palmer; our caring coordinator, Bette Stern; Maureen Sly, who coordinates the phoning and keeps records of the phoning tree; and Meg Gourlay who has this year submitted all our announcements for us.

The steering committee members are Kathie Elliott (Chair and lunch co-coordinator); Ellen Bell (Caring Committee Liaison); Lillian Laakso, Joan Kabayama, Lurline Wright, Anne and John Soar (dates and booking coordinators); Arthur Palmer (recording secretary); Elspeth Read (treasurer); Bette Stern, Isabel Burrows, Pat Hill, Renee Saxon, Meg Gourlay, and Susan Van Iterson.

—*Kathie Elliott, Chair and Coordinator (Retired)*

Unitarian Women's Group

The Unitarian Women's Group (UWG) meets every second Thursday. We invite speakers who can enlighten our group about a wide variety of topics. To this end we have enjoyed and been stimulated by many interesting presentations by authors, speakers from health organizations, and our own members. Occasionally, we go off-site to visit libraries or museums. We enjoy three potluck lunches during the year, in September, Christmas and June. The group collects a small donation each meeting and, if possible, some of these proceeds are donated to a charity of our choosing.

—*Marian Rickey*

Volunteer Resource Council

Some new initiatives and highlights of the past year were:

- Publishing the first edition of the "Volunteer Operations Handbook" in February. This modular-based handbook provides information on our congregation's operational activities, answering many questions posed by new and old volunteers alike.
- Starting a monthly appreciation column, "Thank You! Merci! Gracias!" in *The Parkway Spire*.
- Conducting, for the first time, exit interviews with Board members ending their term in March. This was a joint activity with the Nominating Committee.

Other new initiatives were:

- A Gifts and Interests survey that had a relatively poor response and did not provide the information and follow-up that we had hoped for.
- A program of subsidies for ACM volunteers, to encourage volunteers from our congregation who wished to attend the Annual Conference and meeting, but might have been deterred by the registration fee. In the end, only one couple needed a subsidy, but it made a real difference for them.

Activities with proven value that continued from prior years were:

- The "Getting Connected" brochure, a master list of contact and other information about groups and activities in the congregation.
- The third annual "Getting Connected Fair" that took place on October 28, 2007. Once again the purpose was to help people see the broad range of volunteer opportunities in the congregation and to connect to the ones of most interest to them.
- Celebrating 2008 National Volunteer Week at the May 4 service, including a flower communion, RE volunteer recognition, and a sermon in three parts about volunteering.

- Identifying and financially supporting five people from our congregation to participate in the 2008 Canadian Unitarian Universalist Leadership (“CU*UL”) School at McMaster University in July. In the last three years a total of 18 congregants have taken CU*UL training, a significant leadership development activity.

One of our activities, the “Appreciation Wall” in the west lobby, was discontinued, as we were not using it on a regular basis.

The members of the 2007–08 Volunteer Resource Council were Maury Prevost, Prue Craib, Bob Armstrong, Scott Drennan, and Jan Andrews. We would like to thank Rev. Janet Newman for her active participation and strong support during her term as Interim Minister.

We greatly appreciate our affiliation with the Social Responsibility Committee. We feel that our purpose and mandate fit in well with the committee and the congregation’s purposes and interests.

—*Maury Prevost, Chair*

Volunteer Support Office Personnel

Thanks go to all of our special volunteers on the 2007–08 roster: Susanne Ahlers, Angela Beale, Joan Campbell, Margot Clarke, Brian Cowan, Veronika Dent, Wendy Doyle, Lyn Gerley, Marilyn Prevost, Art Read, Karen Swinburne, Joan Tutton, Sue Wheeler, Sam Wilmott, Cynthia Wilson, and Marianne Wood. Mary Duncan and Katherine Gunn have also assisted from time to time.

Thanks are extended to Jocelyn Loeffelholz-Rea for her loyal service over the past number of years as she takes a break from being a VSOP.

It was another year of changes in the office as we welcomed several new staff members and became accustomed to different routines and areas of responsibility. This dedicated group continued to fill morning and afternoon shifts from Monday to Friday, and on Sunday mornings before and after services. Most VSOPs come on a weekly or bi-weekly basis and some less frequently. The tasks are many and varied as we provide support services to the staff and congregation, but could include: responding to multiple questions by phone and in person, sorting mail, photocopying, collating, tidying the pews and bulletin boards, making tapes, maintaining records of various sorts, selling tickets, and providing telephone reminders. Much of this is routine, but from time to time there are new challenges and duties. If you enjoy this type of work and would like to learn more about how First Unitarian functions, new volunteers are very welcome. The office is a friendly place and training is provided. Call 613-725-1066 to volunteer.

—*Margot Clarke, Coordinator (Retired)*

Women’s Personal Growth Group

Exploring and also taking care of the inner self is what the Women’s Personal Growth Group is all about.

Our group meets once a month, on the first Monday of each month. (Tuesday if Monday is a holiday). Meetings start at 7:30 p.m., usually in the lounge, where we sit in a circle, drink tea and share food as we discuss topics of interest. This year we initiated the “Question Game (getting to know you).” There are over a hundred questions on topics such as success, sex, creativity, freedom, your potential, relationships, health, spiritual trust, balanced lives, and joy.

In our discussions, we explore resources related to these topics, share our own experiences and learn from one another. But the wonderful thing about this group is that we’re informal and never stay strictly on-topic. No matter what the subject, we’re able to connect with it on some personal level. This is how we go about achieving our goal, which is to nurture the emotional and spiritual growth of our members. We are very supportive of each other. Several of the women in our group have been members for years. During that time, we have developed a deep trust with one another, knowing that we can share anything and it will stay within our group.

If you are searching for this kind of sharing in your own life, we would love to have you. There are no membership requirements. All you need to bring is yourself.

—*Evelyn Algar, with the assistance of Sue Deschene*

Worship Associates

The Worship Associates Group has been getting established over the past two years, with the goal of sharing a meaningful worship experience with the congregation. This has been carried out in a collaborative manner with the active ministers. 2008 has been a particularly defining year in the group’s formation, in which the group’s role in relationship to the congregation has become increasingly clearer.

During 2008, the group identified the additional goal of improving upon our popular summer program and expanding on the worship experience during the summer services, by upholding a consistent standard of quality similar to that of year-programming, and by ensuring the inclusion of important service elements. We consider this initiative highly successful, based on the positive feedback we have received, as well as on steady growth in summer attendance.

Some of the administrative aspects of the group have also been established. Early in 2008, it was decided that a convener would facilitate group discussion, maintain

group documents, and carry some duties on behalf of the group, among other administrative duties. The current convener is Rodrigo Emilio Solano-Quesnel. All members of the group are ambassadors for the Worship Associates, and may be contacted for matters regarding Worship Services.

Over the last year the Worship Associates have developed some important guiding documents, including the roster of service participants; a Policy Reference with goals, duties, and group makeup; an Announcement Best Practices guide; and a Testimonial Essentials guide.

The Worship Associates have also defined requirements for future members of the group, including the expectation that new Associates should be active members of the congregation, familiar with its norms and fellow congregants, comfortable speaking in public, and have an active interest in exploring their spirituality beyond their comfort level. New members should also be prepared to offer a commitment to be involved for two to three years, particularly in the summer months. A mentoring process is intended to foster an effective familiarity with the rhythms and components of a worship service.

With a membership of nine, in addition to the minister, the group has been of a comfortable size to proceed during the year, but felt shorthanded during the summer. After many valued contributions, and with a welcome vote of confidence, Valerie Cousins has retired from participation in the group. This has brought the

number of Worship Associates down to eight and the minister. The group will therefore be looking to bring in one to two new members over the next year, based on the newly-established guidelines.

In August, 2008, the Board formally incorporated the group as an established element of the congregation. This codified the practice that had been in place under Rev. Brian Kopke's initiative since 2006, and further under the guidance of Rev. Janet Newman. With the arrival of interim minister Rev. Marcel Duhamel, the group has been continuing to work with ordained ministry to explore ways to facilitate shared ministry with the congregation.

The typical duties for a Worship Associate have been identified to include, among other things: selecting and delivering opening and parting words, as well as meditations; welcoming congregants and guests during services; coordinating with other groups and volunteers relating to worship services; assisting guest speakers; and occasionally delivering a sermon. These are in addition to working with the minister to identify ways to improve on the worship experience and handle other administrative tasks related to worship programming.

Over the coming year, the group looks to use its increasingly clear understanding of its role within the congregation to continue to deliver on its mandate of sharing meaningful worship with congregants.

—*Rodrigo Emilio Solano-Quesnel, Convener*

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