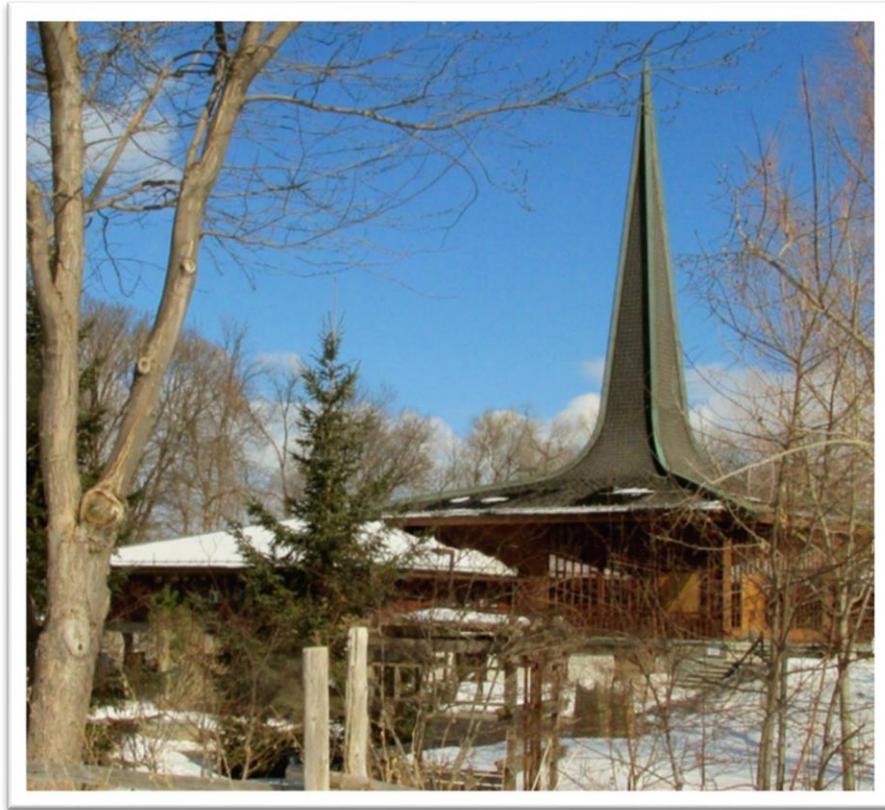


# **Annual Report 2014-2015**



**First Unitarian  
Congregation  
of Ottawa**



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This report was written by all its contributors, edited and produced by Alastaire Henderson and Jen Brennan, with proofreading assistance by Rosemary Bonyun, Carol Card and Susan Mellor.

# In Memoriam

## 2014–2015



***“May we lose no one we love  
From the shelter of our hearts.”***

*~John O'Donohue*

### **2014**

Dale Wilson, January 6  
Virginia Cameron Lang, January 24  
Arthur Forward, February 12  
Joseph Mergl, June 2  
Keith Charles Arnold, July 21  
Charles (Chuck) Rea, July 28  
Phyllis Edna Mitchell, October 8  
Gwendolyn Parsons, December 27

### **2015**

Bertram Curtis, January 2  
Edgar Jehuda Ziegler, January 20  
Ann E.R. Dunkley, March 16  
Ernest (Ernie) Criddle, March 17  
Jean Runnells, April 28  
Elise Ziegler, May 3  
John Simpson, June 18  
Leslie P. Ivan, July 2  
James Darragh, August 10

## SECTION ONE STAFF REPORTS

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### Minister's Report

#### **Worship**

Sunday morning services last year followed an animals theme. In the fall we began with animals of the water, in December we shifted to animals of the land, and in the spring, we finished with animals of the air. One of the highlights of the year was the service on Beatrix Potter, which featured prominent visuals and a dramatic reading by Michael and Maureen Cassidy.



Starting this September, Jill Whitford has volunteered to produce further visuals to help us contemplate service themes. Each month will have its own theme. There will be a packet produced for each theme, and members and friends will be invited to join discussion groups focusing on how the themes play out in our own lives.

For 2015-16, the themes will be as follows: Listening, Honesty, Stories, Aging, Love, Community, Wonder, and Play.

This past year we discontinued our 5 p.m. Sunday services, as they were enjoyed by too few people and began a 10 a.m. service on the second Wednesday of the month at Unitarian House. These services have been popular and serve the needs of those residents of Unitarian House whose health does not always permit them to attend Sunday morning services.

#### **Ottawa's Light Rail Transit**

As most of you know, the City of Ottawa is proposing that a new Light Rail Transit (LRT) line should travel underground through a corner of our campus. The issues involved are covered elsewhere in this report.

I wish to extend my deepest thanks to Blair

Erskine, current chair of our Campus Planning Committee, and the other members –David Curry, Alex Cullen, Marlene Koehler, Charles Lanktree, Guy Belleperche, and Doug Robinson –for their patience and perseverance. This project will reshape our campus for generations to come. It has already consumed thousands of volunteer hours and will likely consume thousands more before we (excuse the pun) see light at the end of this tunnel.

While our concerns around this project are manifold, from the bees in our gardens to the traffic flow on our campus, to receiving fair compensation for any use of our property, our top priority is the health and well-being of Unitarian House residents.

#### **Staff**

When we advertised for the position of a ministerial intern last fall, I said whoever came here would find a dream program staff from which to learn. I still believe that this is true, although the staff will be different. This year we were required to say a bittersweet farewell to our Music Director, Jacob Caines, and our Director of Lifespan Learning, Susan McEwen. Their gifts to us have been many, and they will be long remembered here. Mary Du, our bookkeeper, had to resign her position due to health concerns. We wish her a recovery to full health. Special appreciation goes to Carolyn Turner, who took on added responsibilities so that Mary could continue to work here as long as possible and then helped to smooth the transition to our new bookkeeper, Michelle Jackson.

This fall we have the pleasure of welcoming Deidre Kellerman as our incoming Director of Music, Liz Roper as our incoming Director of Lifespan Learning, and AJ Galazen as our new Ministerial Intern. It promises to be an exciting year.

Thanks and praise for the staff who are making this transition! To Carolyn Turner and Jen Brennan who keep our office humming; to Gareth Auden-Hole who manages our sound system, sound system volunteers, and makes our services and other events

available as podcasts on iTunes; to Lori Clarke, our facilities manager and to our custodians: Kevin Quinn, Andrew Nowak, Charles Pereira and, our newest member of the team, Tom White. We also bid a fond farewell to Andrew, who worked here for four years while a student, and is now moving on to other things.

Thanks also to Ellen Bell, who coordinates our Pastoral Care volunteers; and to Marie Gabe, our longstanding Lifespan Education Assistant, who will be helping with the transition between directors.

### ***Sabbatical Plans***

This fall, I am entering my seventh year as your lead minister. Sabbaticals are in part to give ministers an opportunity to take a break from congregations and to give congregations a break from their ministers. Sometimes ministers take as much as six months for a special project, but often sabbaticals are shorter. I'm planning to take six weeks (end of February to the beginning of April) to volunteer with Child Haven in India and also to make a trip to Nepal.

### ***A Community of Memory and Hope***

It has been five years since Eric Haythorne and Elinor Mueller arranged for a special gift to our congregation to honour the memory of their parents, George and Ruth Haythorne – a Book of Gratitude in which to inscribe the names of persons who have given extraordinary gifts to our congregation.

The project has taken a number of twists and turns in which Elinor, Mark and I have learned a lot about book-binding, fine calligraphic papers and the state of the art of calligraphy in our city. The project is not yet complete. However, the work in progress is now on display in our sanctuary. In a sense, as long as our church is alive, it will never be complete, as new names are added every year.

### ***Golden Anniversary Approaching***

The fifty-year “golden anniversary” of our sanctuary is coming in 2017. One of the things I hope we will be able to add to the Book of Gratitude is a list of the names of

those who contributed to building our sanctuary at its present location. If anyone knows where to find such a list, please let me know. In the meantime, I will continue to make periodic forays into our archives. Fifty years in one place is a call for celebration. It is also an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to our principles, including reducing our carbon footprint here on our campus. Perhaps our theme for that year might be: “Gold for Green” as in committing some of our gold in order to make our campus greener.

### ***Thanks and more Thanks***

To all of you: those who have served on Search Teams in the last year, and those who have put up and taken down chairs and tables; those who have edited newsletters and reports and those who have moved soil in the gardens; those who have sung, washed dishes, walked for the Multifaith Housing Initiative, read books to our children, planned worship, contributed money to our annual budget, sat with each other in silent meditation; those who have given someone a ride to a Worship Service, visited someone who is sick, attended a lecture on justice for Palestinians; those who have served on our Board of Directors, and whoever made that tasty casserole involving noodles and green onions at the potluck last November. You are the news. You are what is happening. You embody our gifts to each other and our mission in the world. It is a privilege to serve among you.

### ***Keeping the Dream Alive***

Let me conclude this report with the benediction I wrote for my installation here six years ago:

“Since brute force is still confused with legitimate power and the greed of the wealthy is catered to while the needs of the poor are ignored;  
Since we all have our own demons with whom we wrestle as well as discoveries yet to make-- each on our own spiritual path...  
Let us resolve to live by our mutual covenant, and when we falter, as we surely will, let us acknowledge our errors—forgive each other and begin again in love;

Let us gather what resources we have—our powers of communication and persuasion, our skills with poetry, music, healing, commerce and technology—the power of our concern for each other and the power of our devotion to the interconnected web of all existence... So that together we may create a community of memory and hope, so that our faith might be made known and extended throughout all neighbourhoods and our small victories result in ever greater triumphs, and a world of which we dream, be a world attained.”

~ Rev. John Marsh



## President of the Board

This report, written in late June, is largely based on my remarks at the Annual General Meeting of April 26, 2015.

But first, a few highlights from the months of May and June:

- The congregation’s selection of the Aboriginal Issues initiative as our Social Responsibility focus for the next two years.
- Successfully hosting the Canadian Unitarian Council Annual Conference and Meeting (CUC ACM) at Algonquin College May 15-17, and the corresponding youth conference (CanUUdle) in our own building. Many people worked hard to accomplish this.
- Considerable further work, led by the Campus Planning Committee, on communicating our LRT concerns to the City of Ottawa and others. A key event is a June 29 meeting of the City’s Finance and Economic Development Committee.
- Two more regular Board meetings, an overnight retreat in early June, and two more one-on-one meetings with John Marsh. We are close to finalizing a new list of key priorities for 2015-2016.
- Selecting a new Music Director and new Director of Lifespan Learning. This was the good work of the respective search committees, led by John Marsh.
- Saying farewell and thank you to Jacob Caines and Susan McEwen as they end their service to us.

### **And now for my (edited) April 26 AGM remarks**

This meeting marks the midpoint of my two years as your President.

Here are some numbers to give you an idea of what the first year has entailed:

- About 2,500 email messages or 7 a day on average, and the recent trend is up significantly;
- 13 regular Board meetings, 1 overnight retreat, 2 congregational meetings, and 2 Town Halls organized by the Board last fall, one on the Strategic Plan and one on the Western LRT extension plans as they impact our property;
- 9 one-on-one meetings with John Marsh;
- 7 “President’s Corner” articles for the Parkway Spire.
- The Spire articles reflect several of our activities, challenges, and opportunities:
- May/June 2014: “Transitions”
- July/August 2014: “From Montreal to Arnprior” about last year’s CUC ACM and our Board retreat in June
- September/October 2014: “The Balanced Budget Challenge”
- November/December 2014: “Volunteers: Giving Time and Talent”
- January/February 2015: “Update on Town Hall Meetings”

- March/April 2015: “The Legacy of those who came before us”, which concluded with the question: ‘What will our legacies be to this congregation, so that it will evolve and thrive into the 22nd century and beyond?’
- May/June 2015: “The Ripple Effect, Transforming Lives”, about the transformative power that volunteers can have.

### **Committees of the Board**

1. One priority for the Board and me has been to fully establish the Committees of the Board. There are five in our current structure and here is their current status:
2. Campus Planning Committee (CPC): Restarted in November/December 2014, with an initial focus on representing our congregation and campus interests in response to the Western light rail transit (LRT) plans. This has also involved strengthening our relationships with our lessees and campus partners, especially Unitarian House and the River Parkway Children’s Centre, represented by David Curry and Alex Cullen respectively on the committee. Blair Erskine chairs the CPC and has been designated by the Board as our official spokesperson on the LRT. I'd like to recognize Blair and the other members of the committee who are present at the meeting. They have a big task preparing our input for the City's Transportation Committee hearings on the Western LRT extension that start around mid-June.
3. Audit Committee: This committee, which has a broader mandate than just finances, has recently started its work by reviewing the audited financial statements for 2014. Gordon King is the Chair, and the other members are Rob Cummings for the Board, Tania Mushka, and Phil Nagy. I'd like to recognize any members of the Audit Committee who are present.
4. Governance Committee: Maggie Sharp,

Guy Belleperche, and I have recently resumed working on the next iteration of our Policy Manual, at least a six-month project.

5. Finance Committee: Our Treasurer, Chuck Triemstra, is reactivating this committee with Diana Romero and Gordon King. I'd like to recognize any members present.
6. Personnel Committee: We have three volunteers for this committee, but are still looking for a Chair.

### **Strategic Plan**

The Strategic Plan for 2014-2017 that you approved at the Fall Congregational Meeting last October continues to be a priority for the Board, in particular the 8 short-term priorities identified. In preparation for this year’s Fall Congregational Meeting, the Board has started working on how we measure and report on these priorities. Let me paraphrase what the priorities are, with a few comments:

- The introduction of Theme-based Ministry this fall;
- Maintaining a strong choir presence ... for me, the recent Jazz Choir performance of a challenging Bobby McFerrin song was a good example of what we want to maintain;
- Nurturing and integrating newcomers;
- Developing a communications strategy ... Terry Kimmel has started looking at our external marketing;
- Expanding connections with the broader community;
- and creating an increased profile and participation in Social Responsibility activities;
- Matching goals and financial resources;
- As funds become available, establishing a Communications Officer position. (We aren’t there yet.)

We clearly have our challenges, including the LRT, supporting the new Music Director and the new Director of Lifespan Learning, and increasing revenue for our Operating Fund. The LRT has been taking a lot of our time and attention in recent months, but it's important that we not allow it and other challenges to distract us from our mission "to increase love and justice in the world". In this context, the most important decision we will make today is our choice of the Congregation's social responsibility focus for the next two years.

I will close my remarks with thank-yous:

- Our office staff, custodian, sound operator, and scrutineers for helping to prepare for, set up, and conduct this meeting;
- Our continuing Directors and Officers;
- Our Directors who are completing their service, Alastair Henderson (5 years, 3 as Secretary), Kim Elmer (4 years, 2 as President), and Rob Cummings (3 years);
- All of you for being here.

~ Maury Prevost



## Director of Lifespan Learning

With gratitude for our time together, I bid you farewell as I leave the role of Director of Lifespan Learning. With appreciation for the many precious moments we have shared, creating connections, building relationships, and making discoveries, I wish you a blessed road ahead as your journeys in transformative learning unfold.

This past year saw us continue to evolve in all aspects of our lifespan religious exploration ministry.

We deepened our learning in

Compassionate Communication with children, youth, and adults and will carry our practice forward next fall with Heart Talk for Kids, a UU non-violent communication curriculum for 4-to-12-year olds.

We created meaning together with ritual in the chalice lightings, songs, and sharing of our Sunday morning gatherings, with family chapels, our Advent Spiral, a child dedication, and a Youth Bridging Ceremony. We reached out to our neighbours at Unitarian House in December with our annual carolling visit, and welcomed friends from the Multifaith Housing Initiative as we learned more about the work of this organization with whom the congregation has partnered for the last two years.

We hosted many youth in our building with a Senior High OWL (Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education) weekend in the fall and CanUdle (the Canadian Unitarian Council's annual youth conference) in the spring. We offered the newly revised and updated Junior High OWL curriculum for a group of twelve 12- to 14-year olds over the course of the year. We fundraised with an all-ages Games Café for the training of new OWL educators.

We continued to strengthen our volunteer base in Religious Exploration with children and youth, beginning with our annual fall retreat at Baxter Conservation Area which saw almost 100 percent participation from our volunteers and their families. This year we combined our RE day retreat with an overnight youth retreat. Plans to follow this

format again next fall speak to the success of this endeavour.

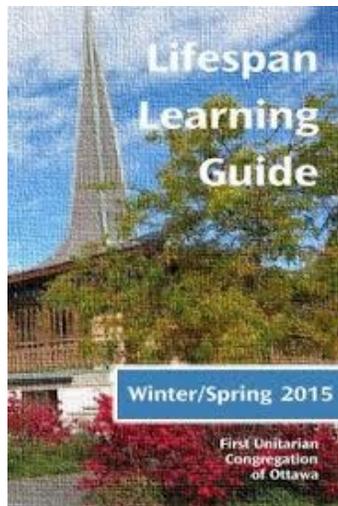
We contributed as a community to the Canadian Unitarian Council's Annual Conference and Meeting. Our congregation shared tremendous volunteer resources and much good will in the process of helping to host this special event.

We nurtured our connections with one another in small and large groups as we undertook projects, worked as teams, played and created, brainstormed and planned, and simply sat quietly together. We acknowledged and celebrated daily experiences and life transitions. We shared our joys and sorrows, laughter and tears, our wonderings and our struggles.

It has been a privilege to walk along with you these past four years. I'm grateful for my own learning in this time. It has been vast and deep and I am sure that its fullness will continue to reveal itself long after our paths diverge. My next adventure includes some time for rest and refreshment, further Yoga studies, and settling into a new home with my partner.

May your welcome to a new religious educator be warm and gracious.

*~Susan McEwen*



## Lay Spiritual Care Visitor Program

This is my 15th year as the Spiritual Care Visitor and Supervisor of Volunteer Lay Spiritual Care Visitors. Approximately 30 visits were made during this time. In addition, I held frequent meetings with the Volunteer Lay Spiritual Care Visitors and the Spiritual Care Council.

I also am part of the Seniors' Planning Council which meets several times a year. In addition, some of the Lay Spiritual Care volunteers and I attended educational sessions presented by the Ottawa Pastoral Services group in the fall and in the spring. This is my second year as the UU representative on the Interfaith Council for Seniors. The Council is a small group composed primarily of Christians from different denominations, one Muslim and me. We are actively looking for representatives from different faiths. We discuss and attempt to liaise with other groups working for seniors' well-being, especially with various departments from the City of Ottawa.

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. Arthur Palmer and Katherine Gunn continue to provide devoted care and hard work.

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

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

*~Ellen Bell*



## SECTION TWO

### KEY COMMITTEES & EVENTS

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#### Adult Learning Team

The Adult Learning Program continues to be rich and varied, offering a range of ongoing and special programs. One of the special events held by Adult Learning this past year was “Unpacking our Voting System”, moderated by Frances Deverell and featuring Elizabeth May, MP, which had 200 enthusiastic attendees. “Buddha’s Noble Eight Fold Path” (9 sessions) was so popular we had a long waiting list. The workshop on “The Meaning and Importance of Dreams: the Path of Individuation and the Analytical Psychology of Carl Jung” by Andrew Sherwood was well attended. Other events were “World Federalism: Why it Matters for International, Peace, Equity and Justice”, with Fergus Watt, and “Conscious Aging” (4 sessions) by Laura Golden.

Within our ongoing programs, “The Way of Mindfulness” is extremely well attended each week. Other programs include “Compassionate Communication Learning Circles”, two weekly sessions of “Gentle Yoga, an Embodied Spiritual Practice”, “Arts Night”, three “Reading For Growth” groups, “Painters’ Circle”, “Empower Dance”, “Spirituality and Philosophy Discussion Group”, “UU Writers Group”, “Women’s Personal Growth Group” and “Crafty Crafters-Knitters”.

Twice a year, in September and January, the Adult Learning Team, with the layout help of Jen Brennan, puts out the Lifespan Learning Guide. This guide lists upcoming events, courses and ongoing groups.

I thank our Adult Learning Team members, Colleen Glass and Rozanne Lepine, as well as our new members, Peter Schmolka and Jill Whitford, for their enthusiasm and dedication to Adult Learning, and Susan McEwen, Director of Lifespan Learning, for all her help and guidance over the past four years.

~Wendy Doyle

#### Denominational Affairs Team

This has been a dynamic year for First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa in Denominational Affairs. Our team supports the interaction of the congregation with the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) and its member congregations, the Unitarian Universalist Association and affiliated organizations—such as the UU United Nations Office—the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists, and the Canadian UU Women’s Association (CUUWA). This year, our major effort was to host the CUC Annual Conference and Meeting (ACM) (see full report of the CUC ACM 2015 Host Committee in Section Three/below)

#### ***Eastern Region, Canadian Unitarian Council Fall Gathering***

We were pleased that a strong delegation from the congregation was able to attend the meeting in Halifax, including Rev. John Marsh, our president Maury Prevost, Vice-president Maggie Sharp, Margaret Linton, David Hudson and John Twemlow. They participated in testing the CUC visioning process and took training in theme-based ministry, as well as getting to know leaders in eastern congregations.

#### ***February – CUC month***

We conducted a “Sharing Our Faith” Sunday, with the collection taken for the CUC Sharing Our Faith growth fund. After the service we gathered feedback from the congregation on the new CUC vision statement and our feelings about what is important for Canadian Unitarianism today. How should we be presenting ourselves to the world? We also reviewed the four social justice resolutions—an updated resolution on abortion rights, a resolution supporting an on-going process for Unitarians to reconcile with First Nations, a resolution to promote the human right to clean air, soil and water, and a resolution to encourage divestment from fossil fuels by individuals, congregations, and the CUC. We joined others from across the country in providing feedback.

### **March – UU-UNO Spring Seminar on Criminal Justice**

We were happy to have a solid delegation of youth and youth leaders and members of the congregation attend the UU-United Nations Office (UNO) Spring Seminar to learn about the challenges of building effective and just criminal justice systems around the world. Our own Dr. Irvin Waller was a key presenter in the area of crime prevention and victims' rights. For details, see the UU-UNO annual report.

### **May – CUC ACM**

Our host committee, led by Kathy Yach and Marg Lee and supported by a huge contingent of volunteers from both First Unitarian and the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa, did a fantastic job of hosting the ACM at Algonquin College. They worked as a team to overcome difficulties presented by the venue and ensure that all had a great conference. First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa was eligible for eight delegates and was ably represented by Rev. John Marsh, Maury Prevost, Maggie Sharp, Jaimie Dunton, Eva Berringer, Alastaire Henderson, Rev. Linda Goonewardene, and Barry Coburn. The meeting was not controversial, and all resolutions passed.



First Unitarian also provided leadership in the ACM programming. The theme of the conference was "Seeking Justice in a Changing Land". Sharon Reeves and Rev. Frances Deverell co-facilitated the Democracy Stream with Real Lavergne from Fair Vote Canada. Susan McEwen organized the Children's Program, and Jacob Caines

organized the music for the event and directed the choir. Margaret Linton was a key organizer for the CUUWA annual meeting, with Claudette Commanda speaking on the situation of First Nations women in Canada. Tony Turner was a key organizer and MC for the musical entertainment.

Our challenge now is to spread the word from what we have learned in these dynamic denominational events, and integrate best practices to make our congregation as welcoming and as good a community as we can be—and thus to bring more love and justice into the world.

~Rev. Frances Deverell, with assistance

### **CUC ACM 2015 Host Committee**

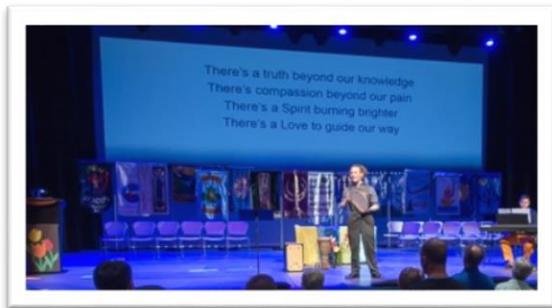
In 2015 our congregation hosted the Canadian Unitarian Council Annual Conference & Meeting from May 15 to 17 at Algonquin College. The theme was "Seeking Justice in a Changing Land".

A year prior to the event, a Host Committee of 19 people (1 from the UU Fellowship of Ottawa, the rest from First Unitarian) began planning in earnest for the event. The UU Fellowship took on the role of registration. The Host Committee was responsible for the Friday Ingathering Service and Banner Parade, evening social events, a welcome centre, information and transportation aids (including shuttle service) for those with special needs, Ottawa tourist information, signage, music, the Sunday service, volunteer recruitment, safety & security, children's programming and child care, food for the youth & young adult conference, a list of frequently asked questions, promotion, record keeping and financial accounting. We also had a liaison to the program committee to assist the CUC with program development. Our treasurer, Brian Cowan, created electronic and paper files documenting all aspects of our work on this committee, including minutes of each meeting. These will be kept in storage at the Church office for future reference.

A total of 106 volunteer shifts required filling. Many volunteers worked multiple shifts, and a total of 37 volunteers plus 19 Host Committee members contributed volunteer hours during the planning stages and throughout the weekend.

#### **A brief summary of the event**

The CUC's Annual General Meeting was held on Friday during the day, and in the evening the opening ceremony (Ingathering Service) took place in the Algonquin College Theatre. Over 300 people, young and young-at-heart, experienced a keynote speech by Matt Meyer, with Jacob Caines on keyboard. With Matt's encouragement, everyone sang along to his inspirational songs and rhythmic drumming. He shared with us the story of a group of Unitarian Universalists getting together to create a Unitarian Universalist community in Boston. It was a magical evening.



On Saturday, children and youth branched off to "ToUUch the Earth," while adults participated in more than 7 theme-related workshops. The streams were followed by dinner, after which a youth and young adult service was presented at First Ottawa. The evening culminated in a lively Saturday Night Dance Party, organized by Tony Turner and featuring the "Shirt Tearing Boys" and the "SmokeyDokes".

The Sunday morning worship service, "Oh Canada, My Country" included spoken word, song, puppetry and movement to tell a story of connections, ancient and modern. Many members of our congregation were involved in this production. It was beautiful and very moving.

After the service, a multigenerational lunch was held, followed by several afternoon workshops, from World Cafes to Aboriginal Storytelling, from Celebrating Seeds to Yoga with Live Music, and the Confluence Lecture on Sunday afternoon.

After the Sunday evening Awards dinner, the closing ceremony was held, and the soil was passed on to next year's hosts in Vancouver. The Host Committee Co-chairs took this opportunity to thank our many volunteers, both at First Ottawa and the UU Fellowship, for their dedication and many hours of support in making this conference such a success.

*~Marg Lee and Kathy Yach, Co-Chairs*

### **Nominating Committee**

In the spring of 2015, three members of the Board of Directors retired following completion of their terms. Kim Elmer served four years—as Vice-President, President, and Past President; Alastair Henderson served five years—as Member at Large and Secretary; and Rob Cummings served three years as Member at Large.

The Nominating Committee was pleased that Peter Goddard and Charles Lanktree agreed to share their valuable experience and stand for election to the Board. They were elected to serve initial terms of three years at the April Annual General Meeting. Charles and Peter joined continuing Board members Maury Prevost, who will serve the second year of a two-year term, (having previously served a two-year term); Maggie Sharp and Chuck Triemstra, both to serve the first year of second three-year terms; Guy Belleperche and Eva Berringer, both to serve the second year of initial three-year terms; and Terry Kimmel, who will serve the second year of an initial two-year term.

Following the election of Officers of the Board to one-year terms, the 2015-16 Board of Directors comprises Maury Prevost, serving a second year as President; Maggie Sharp, serving a second year as Vice President; Chuck Triemstra, serving a second year as Treasurer; Eva Berringer, serving a

first year as Secretary; Guy Belleperche and Terry Kimmel, serving second years as Members at Large and Peter Goddard and Charles Lanktree, serving first years as Members at Large.

The 2014-15 Nominating Committee comprised Susan Mackenzie (Chair), Margot Clarke, Doug Cousins, Agnes Davis, Marilen Gerber, and Jane Lindsay.

~Susan Mackenzie

## Property Team

Again this past year we have not been occupied with major projects for our building; rather it may be characterized as a maintenance year. Minor projects have been completed as required. Thirty windows have been caulked; carpeting for three entranceways and the Lounge has been installed; and the wording of our mandate with the Board was finalized.

Some projects continue; these include securing costs for wheelchair access to the NOW Room, and a number of minor projects such as the sanding and staining of the doors on the upper level.

Bill Van Iterson has continued to provide us with long-range maintenance plans. Renee DeVry and her team provide countless hours of work on the Meditation Gardens and our campus. In June, several garden tours were held over three days, as the Meditation Gardens celebrated its twentieth anniversary. I personally enjoyed hearing about all of the ways the gardens have been designed to support pollinators.

Lori Clarke, our Facilities Manager, gives a detailed report on the work of her staff at each meeting, and Carolyn Turner, our DRO, provides valuable liaison between us and the Board. Others on our Committee include Neville Grant, Ron Doyle and Alastaire Henderson. We appreciate their work to keep our building functional, safe and beautiful.

~Bob Stevenson



## Friends of the Meditation Gardens

The Friends have had an active year, with fundraising efforts to support the gardens including producing and selling a 2015 Garden calendar, and holding the always-popular annual Halloween Treats sale. To improve our outreach both on and off-campus, a new brochure was produced and distributed, new signage was installed in the gardens, and the bulletin board displays were refreshed. The FB page

[www.facebook.com/First.Unitarian.Meditation.Gardens](http://www.facebook.com/First.Unitarian.Meditation.Gardens)) continues to grow as more

people discover and follow it. Garden photographs are always welcome!

Over the years, the Gardens have become an important native bee sanctuary, and head gardener Renée de Vry and her team continue to work on developing habitat, educational materials and signage. Signs have gone up to recognize that our beautiful gardens have solitary bee habitat built into them, performing an important conservation function as a sanctuary. Renée also applied successfully for TD Environment Foundation funding to build a retaining wall around the new south lawn; the wall will double as native bee habitat (NB: native bees are non-stinging). Look for the new wall to be built in the fall.

A new flowerbed in the Memorial Wing of the North Garden was planted and has established well. The long-term project of switching to a mix of native and non-native plants that are more drought-tolerant and lower-maintenance is ongoing.

### ***Twentieth Anniversary Celebration***

Opened to the public in 1995, the Gardens have grown and matured into an award-winning, public landmark institution. On June 20, the Friends and supporters of the Meditation Gardens gathered to celebrate the gardens' 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The program of music and speeches featured the Gamelan Players and keynote speakers Jan Glyde, on what the gardens have meant in her husband Jack Wright's life; Joe Connor, on the value of the gardens to children and young people; and Alex Campbell, on the spiritual aspects of the gardens. Refreshments were provided and served by volunteers. In November 2014, we joined the Ottawa Garden Council, a new organization encompassing all the public and semi-public gardens in Ottawa. At a June ceremony during Ottawa Garden Days to launch the Council's first-ever comprehensive map of Ottawa gardens, our gardens received a Recognition Certificate from the Council. We're on the map!

[www.gardensottawa.org](http://www.gardensottawa.org)). Renée and her trained assistants delivered a series of tours over Father's Day weekend as part of Ottawa Garden Days.

The Friends are continuing to monitor the negotiations surrounding the LRT western extension to commence in 2018, and making sure our voice is heard. Two documents describing the impact of very nearby construction on the Gardens were prepared and submitted to the Campus Planning Committee to be part of its information package on the campus-wide position on the LRT. We are determined to protect the Gardens as much as possible. They are a treasure we must not lose.

~ *Alastaire Henderson*

### **Holly and Lace Bazaar (aka Fall Fair)**

Our annual Fall Fair is the largest social event in the congregation's year, and it contributes up to 5 percent of the congregation's operating funds. Our biggest success though is in creating a congenial, friendly conglomeration of 300-plus volunteers, with new friendships made and former friendships renewed.

The 2014 Fall Fair succeeded financially due to the many volunteers, the amazing Fall Fair team of 40 plus convenors—and the agreeable weather! These people worked throughout the week before the Fair to organize all the donations, produce beautiful displays and ensure that food, parking, and first aid were provided.

Reducing the environmental impact is improving each year, with more quality goods being delivered, meaning less waste; in addition, our recycling team is active the week of the Fair and the following month to make sure unsold goods are distributed to community service organizations.

The co-operation of the office staff is essential to a successful fair, and their good humour and flexibility go a long way toward the success of the event.

The contributions of the organizing team are invaluable. Thank you to the members of this team, who think about the Fall Fair all year round: Ron Wilson, Katherine Gunn, Ellen Smith, Bob Armstrong, Kate Kirkwood, Jen Brennan, Paula Theetge, and Gwen Harman. We have many volunteer changes going into Fall 2015: Janet Clayton and Nona MacKenzie, after 20-plus years each in clothing, are retiring from convening booths and returning to their roots as worker bees in the clothing department; Ellen Smith, our volunteer coordinator, is moving on; Joan Auden and Ed Cuylits have passed the International Cafe on to the Nagelschmitz family; Gwen Harman, who joined the core team last year, is staying on in a larger role; and Jill Whitford has taken on the task of publicity.



One final change is the change of name to simply **the Fall Fair**. “Holly and Lace Bazaar” is being retired after 30 plus years. As past director of the Fall Fair, I am pleased to be leaving the job in

Sherri Watson’s capable hands; it is already a pleasure to act as her assistant.

~Margaret Linton



## Time and Talent Auction

This year, we will have raised over \$10,000 for the church. Many thanks to our congregation and friends who help make this happen with their contributions and bids, and



to various community associations who shared in the donations. This is a wonderful concept that not only brings in money, but serves as a way of building community within the church body.

Time and Talent requires a group of five people working on it and we recommend a committee of the following:

1. A person to email last year’s contributors to get them to contribute again, attaching a bid sheet to be filled out and returned.

This person will also leave bid forms at the office for the congregation to fill out.

Note: We feel it is important that contributors are able to review their bid sheets to correct errors and make sure it is what they want. They will be given the opportunity to do this.

2. A person to take charge of initial spreadsheet, to input contributions, to keep track of bid sheets and vouchers and to prepare a catalogue of items in the auction.

This person will also:

Make up a final list of items for bid days

Contact last year’s community organizations by letter to ask them to contribute again.

Thank community organizations once the T&T is finished (individual emails)

On the last week of bidding, contact contributors who had no bids to see if they will agree to drop the price.

3. A person to handle publicity for the Auction: notices in church bulletins, electronic newsletter to members;

This person will also: make up signs as needed; and set up/put away tables with bid sheets and items for three Sundays of bidding.

4. A person to take over after auction finishes. This person will:

Input buyer data from bidding sheets into spreadsheet for use in invoicing the buyers; notify donors of who bought their service; prepare the master list of what is owing to use for collection; and organize collection of money and manage delivery of non-service items to buyer.

5. A person to organize collection of money each of 2 or 3 Sundays and then follow up with office if payment has not been made.

The church needs to start recruiting people for T&T early in the New Year. It is entirely too time-consuming for one or two people to take on, but with the above-mentioned job descriptions, the work can be done.

~Pat MacDonald, Margaret Linton,  
Joan Auden

## Joint Lay Chaplaincy Committee

Lay chaplaincy is an outreach program which provides meaningful marriage, memorial, and dedication ceremonies to the larger community.



[WWW.CUC.CA](http://WWW.CUC.CA)

### Purpose

- ✚ Lay Chaplains prepare and lead “rites of passage” (e.g., weddings, funerals and memorial services, child dedication services, etc.)
- ✚ For the general public and, in congregations without ministers, for members of the congregation
- ✚ Following CUC guidelines and policies and congregational policy and guidelines

Because it is important that we present a consistent face to the public, First Unitarian and the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa (UUFO) have formed a joint committee to direct the program. Members over the past year were Rev John Marsh, Donna Bowen-Willer (Chair), Bob Armstrong, Susan Mackenzie, Indigo Holley (UUFO), Alex Campbell (Lay Chaplain), and Nicki Bridgland (Lay Chaplain).

Donna Bowen-Willer has completed her term. Bob Armstrong is now the Chair. Indigo Holley has resigned, and a new representative from the UUFO will join the committee soon.

We currently have two lay chaplains—Alex and Nicki. When our new intern, AJ Galazen, arrives, he will also perform external rituals. As long as we have an intern, we expect that two lay chaplains will be able to meet the demand. We do hope, however, to increase the demand by more effective promotion of the program in the Ottawa area.

In the calendar year 2014, our lay chaplains performed 18 marriages, 8 memorials, and 3 dedications.

~Bob Armstrong

## **SECTION THREE SOCIAL, PERSONAL (ALPHABETICAL)**

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### **Arts Night**

Another successful season of Arts Night has gone by. The last Friday of every month (Sept.-June), some 30 to 40 people enjoy an evening of readings, visual art and musical performances. Writers, visual artists and musicians of any style are invited to give us a sample of their art.

This year, our writer presentations ranged from cultural heritage, to humour in Canadian writing and a travelogue; visual artists included painters, photographers, a glass artist, and a quilter; and on the musical side, we heard a mandolin player, violinists, singers and pianists.

The evening is always varied and informative. Books are usually available for sale as well as paintings and CDs.

The audience is not left out as it is encouraged to participate in the 'Open Set' at the beginning of the evening. The performance of any style is limited to 5 minutes and we are usually treated to 3 of them.

There is a charge of \$5 for the evening. The annual averages for Arts Night improve every year. For the 2014 – 2015 season our average attendance for the nine months of the season rose to 35, and the average proceeds of \$134 was donated to First Unitarian.

*~Elisabeth Morrison*

### **Bridge Group**

The role of the congregation's Bridge Group is to strengthen informal relationships within the congregation through sharing a common interest in playing bridge.

In the 2014-2015 season, a total of 51 people participated for one or more evenings. The average attendance at each of the seven sessions was 14 players. Over the season, the players donated \$455 to the congregation.

For information on the Bridge Group, contact [tarrel@theArmstrongs.ca](mailto:tarrel@theArmstrongs.ca).

*~Tarrel Armstrong*

### **Caring Network**

Executive members: Marlene Campbell, Margot Clarke, Alexandra Devine, Ria Heynen, David Hudson, Jennifer Shaw-Read (welcomed as a new member), and Marianne Wood.

During 2014-2015, two "Caring Contacts" were assigned each month from the list of volunteers held by the group's Coordinator, Margot Clarke. Their names, with contact information, were advertised in the Communique, E-UU and Spire as Contacts who were prepared to find short-term help for the expressed needs of congregants, stay in touch with joys and concerns, and share appropriate and timely information with others in the congregation, especially through Caring Cards. Basic training and ongoing support were provided, and all Contacts took turns at the "Caring Table" on Sundays during their month of special "caring". Contacts arranged: 20 drives; 35 telephone visits; 79 Caring Cards; and 10 personal visits; and 1 casserole. Beyond these listed "statistics", countless caring acts by members, friends within the congregation, and the staff helped form our community's network, supporting those in need or celebrating special joys throughout the year. The Spiritual Care Council was informed of situations where visiting or phone calls beyond the scope of our group and our monthly contacts were anticipated. Alexandra Devine acted as the Caring Executive liaison at the Council meetings, and submitted names for the "In Memoriam" column for each Spire.

Four Memorial Receptions were arranged by the special coordinators for this activity under the leadership of Isabel Burrows and Evelyn Algar, following memorial services held in Worship Hall.

Other activities as a group:

- “Life’s Next Chapter: It’s Your Move”, a workshop for those contemplating moving or other accommodation changes in their lives, was held on October 25 with 36 attending, and several guest speakers providing important preparation and transition information.
- A coffee hour in February honoured Heart Month and Caring within the congregation.
- A restaurant luncheon was held for Christine Deane and Lyn Gerley on the occasion of their retirements after many years on the Executive, with a few special friends of the retirees joining us.
- A mid-April “thank-you” breakfast paid tribute to all Contacts and provided an opportunity for exchanging thoughts on the work. We welcomed several new Contacts, and thanked those others who have retired from this responsibility.

~Alexandra Devine

### **Crafty Crafters-Knitters**

The Crafty Crafters-Knitters continued to meet every Wednesday throughout 2014-15, to knit, crochet, enjoy each other’s company and exchange information, ideas and opinions. Along the way, we supported each other through life’s milestones, such as a special birthday, a move, or a loss.

As usual, we generated significant revenue for the congregation. This included over \$2200 from our booth at the Fall Fair, and an additional \$1257 from our Mitten Tree Sale, Unitarian House sale in January, and informal sale of items to each other and our friends. All proceeds were donated to the congregation.

We look forward to the coming year of weekly meetings which provide valued fellowship, as well as producing hand-crafted items for sale. We appreciate the support of the congregation’s staff in providing a comfortable environment for our meetings.  
~Rosemary Bonyun



### **Old Ottawa South/ Glebe/Centretown Neighbourhood Group**

The group met at members’ homes every month between September 2014 and June 2015, except December, and, unexpectedly, in March (see below). Homes included Unitarian House, where a number of our members have moved.

On September 21, 2014 and June 20, 2015 we had potlucks/planning (and social) meetings. Other meetings were:

October 19 – Irvin Waller, on his recent research on crime and its prevention

November 23 – Linda Goonewardene, our Community Minister, on “Addiction: Treatment & Recovery”

January 18 - Ann Denis, “The Upcoming Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their relevance for Canada”

February 15 - Maury Prevost, “Current affairs at First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa”

March 15 – last minute cancellation of the meeting, due to flu outbreak

April 19 - Jaime Dunton, “I am a UU, yes I am”

May 24 - May 24 - Julie Harris, “Taking and Giving: Working as a Historian for Inuit”

~Ann Denis

## Unitarian Seniors' Program

This program was started many years ago by Sue Van Iterson. Up to the end of 2014, in the last week of the month (except December), the group gathered on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday for a short service in Worship Hall at 11:30, followed by lunch at noon in Fellowship Hall, and at 1:00 p.m. enjoyed a varied program of talk, music, reminiscence, current affairs and general interest topics. However, due to difficulty in finding volunteers willing to take on the task of organizing the lunch, the Planning Committee agreed that as of January 2015 the event would be held in the afternoon, with a snack rather than a lunch. The new format is as follows: a service at 1:00, followed by a program presentation from 1:30 to 2:30, ending with a snack from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. The program continues to be well attended, with numbers averaging 35 to 40 per month.

The service, which lasts half an hour, is led by a volunteer drawn from members of the Seniors' group, congregation staff and other willing congregation members. The range of approaches and topics is wide and rewarding, often surprising and always of interest.

The program is set up well in advance and is as varied as possible. We have concerts and a carol-sing in November, talks on local issues, story-telling, travelogues, and anything of interest suggested by the group. Guest speakers/topics in the past year were: What's Cricket? an amusing introduction to the game of cricket; a concert by musician Sneazy Waters and his guitarist; Christmas music led by Jacob Caines; K. Turner Transitions on seniors and relocation; Christine Duport-Switzer with guide dog, Erie, shared her experience of learning to live with blindness; Elisabeth Morrison and Sam Clemann gave a wonderful concert in March; Angela Beale spoke on How Beads have Changed the World; Sheila Green, Unitarian GoGo Grannies, presented on Compassionate Grandmothers (Canada and

sub-Saharan Africa); and Carol Rothery spoke on life on the Maniwaki Reserve. A planning committee meets three times a year to review and plan programs.

We have a telephone group who call before meetings, volunteer drivers, and people willing to lead services, MC the meeting, convene snacks and handle other tasks. As well, we have a Treasurer who looks after our money, and a Secretary who takes notes of meetings. There is plenty of room for new ideas. Think about joining us. You'll enjoy it!

~Paula Theetge



## UU Writers Group

(personal report)

I have been attending the UU Writers Group every second Tuesday for more than two years.

This group continues to provide a valuable forum for writing new stories and receiving personal critical feedback from other writers. There is no such thing as perfection in the craft of writing; a writer can always improve with further practice. The UU Writers Group meetings provide structure for on-going practice. By requiring impromptu writing on a suggested topic at the beginning of each meeting, the group ensures that the muse will visit, even if sometimes reluctantly. The feedback from the other members to the prompted writing exercise, and to other writing that we bring to the meeting, gives useful suggestions for sharpening our skills. Considering the considerable benefit that I derive from the UU Writers Group, I anticipate continuing to attend for the foreseeable future.

~Thom Whalen

## Women's Personal Growth Group

Exploring, growing and taking care of our inner selves is what the Women's Personal Growth Group is all about.

We welcome all women to our monthly meetings, held all year on the first Wednesday of the month (second Wednesday if the first is a holiday) at 7:15 p.m. in Room 6, lower level.

WPGG has an informal agenda. Check-in happens as we prepare snacks.

Then we may discuss a planned topic with readings distributed ahead, or an idea or book that a member mentions takes hold and off we go to in-depth talk.

Together, we explore resources, share our own experiences and learn from one another.

Having developed a deep trust, we are comfortable sharing our joys and concerns. The Women's Personal Growth Group allows us to get to know and support one another on a personal level. Meetings have 4-7 attendees. Please join us; we would love to see you.

~Evelyn Algar



## **SECTION FOUR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY COUNCIL STEERING COMMITTEE & WORKING GROUPS**

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### **Social Responsibility Steering Committee**

The Social Responsibility Council (SRC) guides the work of 9 Working Groups (WGs):  
Child Haven International Working Group  
Canada-Nepal Working Group  
Environmental Working Group  
Unitarian GoGos Working Group  
Global Justice Working Group  
Mental Illness Working Group  
Poverty Awareness Working Group  
Refugee Working Group  
United Nations Working Group

Note: Two working groups that supported refugees we had taken into sanctuary, Samsu Mia (2003-2004) and Shree Rai (2007-2009), have concluded their work. The Welcoming Congregation WG lost energy but we are attempting to revive this important action, collaborating with the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa. The Social Responsibility Steering Committee (SRSC) is responsible for allocating the social responsibility budget, which is set at 3 percent of the congregation's annual pledges. This represents a significant congregational commitment, given the current financial situation. In addition to the funding from the congregation (\$12,450 in 2014-15), the working groups have raised approximately \$45,000 for a variety of worthy causes. Our congregation's commitment to social responsibility is inspiring and its continued support is appreciated. Each working group submits a Work Plan for the year's activities, including financial requests and its membership from the congregation. The SRSC allocates its budget towards the working group requests.

At the request of the Board of Directors, SRSC organized the selection of a new congregational Social Responsibility focus at the April 2015 Annual General Meeting. Two proposals were submitted to the SRSC and considered. The Environmental Working Group proposal was "Seeds & Soil for a Changing Climate", on a theme of food security and climate adaptation, in partnership with USC Canada.

The Global Justice and Poverty Awareness working groups proposed to "Inform the congregation and general public about major issues related to the well-being of Aboriginal People; provide direct, in-person assistance to Aboriginal People in the Ottawa area or elsewhere; assist Aboriginal People ... to advance some of the important issues which need to be addressed; and raise and contribute money for various purposes related to Aboriginal issues."

The congregation chose Aboriginal Issues as its focus for the next two years. This new area of involvement replaces the Multifaith Housing Initiative focus (2012-2014) and its capital campaign. An Aboriginal Issues Coordinating Group has begun planning for this congregational activity 2015-2017. The SRSC consists of Ron Wilson (Chair), David Hudson, Ed Willer and Alastaire Henderson, plus Ria Heynen and Anita MacLean sharing a position representing the working groups; Katherine Gunn is an adjunct non-voting member. We invite members of any working group or of the congregation at large to consider volunteering for the SRSC.

The congregation can be proud of the work of the social responsibility working groups. We encourage members to join one of the working groups. Your participation will be rewarding for you and our community.

*~David Hudson for Ron Wilson*



## Aboriginal Issues Coordinating Group

In May, an open meeting for all those

interested in the new Aboriginal Issues congregational focus reviewed the proposal details and began drawing up working plans. The Aboriginal Issues Coordinating Group was formed, with representatives from the Poverty Awareness, Global Justice and United Nations WGs, Environmental WG, Lifespan Learning Council, Worship Committee, Board of Directors and the SRSC. The first educational action brought information to the congregation about the June 2015 closing events and final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. See [www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca)

The first practical activity was support for the Odawa Native Friendship Centre's meal program at Shawenjeagamik (Centre 510), the Aboriginal drop-in on Rideau Street. See Poverty Awareness report below and [www.odawa.on.ca/home.html](http://www.odawa.on.ca/home.html)

~Katherine Gunn

## Canada Nepal Working Group

The Canada Nepal Working Group supports Nepali-speaking Bhutanese refugees and Nepalese immigrants coming to Canada. There is a monthly meeting designed to support single parents, couples, and families, where they can freely share their pain and gain self-confidence and self-esteem. The goal is to help mothers and young people escape from their isolation. Recreational activities are also provided, especially for youth, where they can participate and get involved in the community. We connect people with service providers in the wider community.

Activities such as intergenerational events help to strengthen family and community connections. This helps with adjustment and integration into Canadian society. About two

hundred families have participated in this group to date. Some of the other programs that are offered for this group are dance classes and various cultural activities. The main aspiration of this program is to build communication skills, with broad knowledge in terms of understanding the gaps between generations.

Members act as witnesses at Immigration and Refugee Board hearings, correct the English in refugees' Personal Information Forms and provide household items and settlement support for new immigrants. Congregation members also help teach English to refugee and immigrant children and family members. First Unitarian youth act as volunteers for our events

The Canada Nepal Working Group collaborates with the UN Working Group and Unitarian Go Gos in holding fundraising events.

The WG supported 15 families with their settlement, and provided mentoring for 51 people. We assisted with a Nepali language school from July 2014 to June 2015.

The group organized the fundraising Nepali Gala in May that helped to raise money for the victims of the earthquake in Nepal. We also sell items from the Women's Foundation in Nepal and send the money through Child Haven to Nepal. See

[www.womenfoundation.org/](http://www.womenfoundation.org/)

~Tara Upreti, Chair



## Child Haven International Working Group

The goal of the Child Haven

International Working Group is to promote awareness among all ages in our congregation of the existence and function of Child Haven International (CHI) and to raise funds for its operations. CHI assists children and women in developing countries who are in need of food, education, health care, shelter and clothing, as well as emotional

and moral support, by operating nine homes for destitute children: six in India and one each in Nepal, Tibet in China, and Bangladesh.

The working group worked with Religious Exploration (Director of Lifespan Learning and Youth Group leaders) to promote awareness of the work of Child Haven International amongst First Unitarian's youth. This included a presentation to the Youth Group by a Child Haven International volunteer, who described the importance of Child Haven's homes to their communities, as well as the role and opportunities for international volunteers who work at Child Haven homes in various locations.

Together, group members and the Youth Group organized and held a successful coffee house fundraiser in May. In addition to showcasing the talents of First Unitarian's youth and adult congregants, the coffee house provided an opportunity to describe the work of CHI to those attending. Over \$500 generated through contributions and ticket sales from the event was forwarded to Child Haven International. Please see more information at [www.childhaven.ca/](http://www.childhaven.ca/)

~David Luck and Karen Blakely

### **Environmental Working Group**

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) continued to educate congregants on environmental issues and on applying the Seventh Principle --"Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part"--in their choices as congregants and as responsible citizens.

The Fall General Meeting of the congregation approved the EWG motion to divest from petroleum industry investments because they contribute to climate change. In January, EWG assisted the Office in directing Doherty & Associates to divest our investments in such companies over the next 12 to 18 months.

The group prepared a congregational focus proposal on seeds and food security; the local partner organization was USC Canada, [www.usc-canada.org](http://www.usc-canada.org). Although this proposal

received substantial support at the April AGM, an Aboriginal Issues congregational focus was chosen.

One EWG member joined seven walkers from the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa to raise funds for USC Canada's work with seed-saving farmers in remote regions of Ethiopia. See [www.seeds.ca](http://www.seeds.ca) Our request for SRC funding of a Bullfrog Power premium for a year of the congregation's energy (for heating), June 2015--June 2016 was approved. The premium pays for developing green natural gas to add to the grid an amount equal to the conventional natural gas used. See [www.bullfrogpower.com](http://www.bullfrogpower.com)



Property Team members Bill Van Iterson and Bob Stevenson updated us on progress in making the building more energy efficient and reducing water, electricity and natural gas usage from a baseline of 2004. EWG continued to support Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) farmer Gord McGregor's Saffire Farms, ([www.saffirefarms.ca](http://www.saffirefarms.ca)) which delivers fresh organic vegetables and herbs to subscribers. WG members planted, tended, and harvested a third season's on-site vegetable plot, and distributed the produce to residents of Unitarian House and the fresh herbs to the Parkdale Food Centre.

~Alastaire Henderson

### **Global Justice Working Group**

This Working Group has been active, with a group of about 20 people meeting bi-monthly.

Our summer service speaker in July was Ben Powless, Mohawk, of the Indigenous Environmental Network, who gave us his *Reflections on Environmental Justice from a First Nations Perspective*.

Ria Heynen and Anita MacLean organized an eight-lecture series on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with between 35 and 80 attendees. We also assisted with the lecture by Dr. Jeff Halper, Coordinating Director, Israeli Committee against House Demolitions. In addition, our group hosted a large Democracy Now event with Fair Vote Canada.

As indicated above, the working group developed the "Aboriginal Issues" proposal, along with the Poverty Awareness Working Group, that was adopted as the congregational Social Responsibility focus for 2015-2017. The Fair Trade section of our group continued monthly sales of chocolate and coffee products, as well as Zatoun olive products from Palestine, after the Sunday service.

Bill Van Iterson visited Guatemala last winter on a trip organized by Inter Pares. The group was introduced to three issues: human rights abuses during the 1980s, the impact of mining and migrant workers' rights. Bill arranged with Inter Pares to present a panel discussion on these issues at a public meeting in January.

Several of our members attended the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa in September to review the by-laws of Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice (CUSJ); however, in keeping with Canada Revenue Agency rules, the Global Justice WG is not a part of CUSJ.

*~Bob Stevenson*

## **Mental Illness Working Group**

The Mental Illness Working Group of seven core members continued this year to support Ancoura, a not-for-profit organization in Ottawa dedicated to providing housing and a supportive community for adults living with mental illness. Through support to Ancoura, the working group continued its work of raising awareness in the congregation and the broader community concerning the challenges of mental illness for caregivers and their loved ones. See

[www.ancoura.ca](http://www.ancoura.ca)



**Fundraising:** The WG organized a benefit concert in support of Ancoura in March, featuring the Big Soul Project Community Choir. Over 500 people attended the event at Southminster United Church, resulting in a donation of over \$10,500, plus another \$1,000 donated by our congregation to Ancoura, and \$1,228 from donations at the door, from Big Soul Project itself, Katharine Elliott and ticket sales collected directly by Ancoura.

**Raising Awareness:** The members of the WG devoted all their efforts to organizing and managing all aspects of the staging of the Big Soul project concert. Several members of the congregation as well as many other people in Ottawa attended the concert which featured, in addition to the singing, two testimonials from choir members on the importance of supporting people living with mental illness and a summary by Richard Haughian, Chair of Ancoura, of the services it offers the residents in the three houses it supports. Plans are progressing to open a fourth house later in 2015.

**Collaboration:** The Poverty Awareness Working Group has shared furniture donations with Ancoura for some of the Ottawa housing locations, and assisted in delivering and moving furniture.

*~Paul McGinnis, Chair*

## **Poverty Awareness Working Group**

The Poverty Awareness Working Group meets monthly, with approximately eight regular active members, and maintains a wider mailing list.

We continued to support the Multifaith Housing Initiative (MHI). Our MHI fundraiser in September with the Big Soul Project choir raised \$6,125. In March we hosted MHI's Annual General Meeting. For the Tulipathon fundraising walk in May, First Unitarian

contributed \$2,975 to over \$24,000 raised for MHI. Ria Heynen and Werner Daechsel sit on MHI committees. Happily, MHI's proposal for the Longfields affordable housing project was accepted, to be partially funded by the City of Ottawa. See [www.multifaithhousing.ca](http://www.multifaithhousing.ca)

In October, Micah Garten addressed us on the activities of the Shepherds of Good Hope shelter, to which we made a financial donation.

We continue to collect furniture, household goods and appliances for women leaving Minwaashin Aboriginal Women's Shelter by collecting goods, storing them in rented space and then delivering them to the new homes. We assisted 27 women and 34 children, with assistance from congregational and other volunteers. This brings the total number of moves to 176 over the past seven years. See [www.minlodge.com](http://www.minlodge.com)

Some members of the WG mentor students in the Pathways to Education program; we funded ten students at a summer camp at Carleton University. Members support the Students Will All Graduate (SWAG) program through the Carlington Community Health Centre to mentor students from social housing.

[www.pathwaystoeducation.ca/en/ottawa](http://www.pathwaystoeducation.ca/en/ottawa)

We financially support Ottawa West Community Support (OWCS) which assists elderly and disabled people to live in their own homes, and provides financial assistance to the Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre. See [www.owcs.ca](http://www.owcs.ca) and [www.pqchc.com](http://www.pqchc.com)

With the elimination of federal funding for Ottawa homeless drop-in centres, we are cooperating with other Ottawa groups to support the meal program at Shawenjeagamik (Centre 510), operated by Odawa Native Friendship Centre, with \$150 per month, and 2-4 volunteers once a month, from September to December 2015. See

[www.odawa.on.ca/programs/dropin.htm](http://www.odawa.on.ca/programs/dropin.htm)

~Mike Wheeler

## Refugee Working Group

First Unitarian Congregation has been assisting refugees to settle in Canada since the 1960s. The Refugee Working Group last sponsored two young Ethiopian men in 2011–2012.

Since that time we have been working to sponsor two young Ethiopian women. There have been considerable delays in dealing with the paperwork for their cases, and we have recently resubmitted their documentation. We hope to have some positive news about them this year. In addition, we are assisting an Ottawa man to sponsor Syrian family members who are presently in Lebanon. He is assuming full financial responsibility for their resettlement. The Working Group appreciates the annual funding through the Social Responsibility Council that allows us to accumulate the needed funds in anticipation of refugee arrivals every few years. In sponsoring a federally admitted refugee, the congregation assumes a responsibility of \$6,000 for an individual's first year in Canada.

The Refugee Working Group has helped to resettle 10 families or individuals through the federal refugee immigration program over the past 16 years. The average time now between application and arrival of a refugee is 42 months. The group assists incoming refugees in areas such as tutoring, getting donated household furnishings, and many aspects of settling into Canadian society.

~Bob Stevenson

## Unitarian GoGos Working Group (GoGos)

The Unitarian GoGos Working Group has about thirty members and meets monthly. It raises awareness and funds for grandmothers and the grandchildren orphaned by AIDS that they are raising in sub-Saharan Africa, through the Stephen Lewis Foundation's Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign.

In November, our gift boutique and craft sales of Joan Gillespie's beautiful quilted items and Kazuri jewellery, local art and other gifts raised \$4,430. We collaborated with the Canada-Nepal Working Group on one sale and shared the income.

Additionally, we raised \$1,694 by selling calendars that our member Sheila Green helped to create for the Foundation.

Our annual "Party for Africa" at the church in February treated approximately 100 guests to a wonderful homemade meal. Guests enjoyed the lively music of Mango Upstart, our silent auction and a show about Sheila



Green's trip to Africa with the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign. The generosity of our guests plus the Silent Auction brought in \$7,100.

The GoGos' annual Garden, Goodies and Gifts Sale of plants and home baking, crafts and gently used jewellery, with the GoGo Grannies of Aylmer, raised \$3,200.

At the Unitarian Seniors' Tea, with a theme of compassionate grandparenting, Joan Turner led the worship service and spoke about her experiences grandparenting in Canada; Sheila Green described her African trip where she met grandmothers raising their grandchildren.

We fundraised approximately \$250 each month from sales of our homemade Granny Squares, plus extra from our Christmas bake sale and donations, for a total of \$2,817 this year.

Over the years, we have increased our donations to the Stephen Lewis Foundation considerably and this year contributed over \$18,000. We also make an annual donation of \$200 to the congregation.

~Sheila Green

### **United Nations Working Group**

In 2014-2015, the UN Working Group had another active year. We organized the United Nations Sunday in October with guest speakers Claudette Dumont-Smith, Executive Director of the Native Women's Association

of Canada, and Peter Dinsdale, Chief Executive Officer of the Assembly of First Nations, who both spoke about their perspectives on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

[www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf)

The UN Working Group again contributed to the effort to find a Canadian speaker to the UU-United Nations Office (UU-UNO) Spring Seminar in New York. Since the seminar topic was criminal justice systems, we were very glad that Dr. Irvin Waller agreed to be a panelist. Irvin Waller is an internationally renowned criminologist and a member of the congregation. He spoke about the proven ways in which incarceration rates can be reduced, resulting in better lives for individuals and communities, as well as reduced public expenditures. The UN Working Group supported seven youths and one youth advisor to attend the seminar.

[www.uua.org/international/events/seminar/international-criminal-justice-punitive-restorative](http://www.uua.org/international/events/seminar/international-criminal-justice-punitive-restorative)

The working group undertook a letter writing action on the Canadian ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty.

[www.un.org/disarmament/ATT/](http://www.un.org/disarmament/ATT/)

In June, the group organized the annual Sunday service to celebrate Canada's National Aboriginal Day. Gilbert Whiteduck, Algonquin, former Chief of Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation, spoke on his perspective on right relations with Aboriginal Peoples. The morning began with guest Barbara Hill, Algonquin, performing a smudging ceremony in the beautiful Meditation Gardens. Following the service, the conversation continued on how to move forward toward reconciliation in a discussion circle on the back terrace of the church.

~Katrin Nagelschmitz

