

Annual Report 2013-14



**First Unitarian
Congregation
of Ottawa**

First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa Annual Report 2013-2014

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IN MEMORIAM 2013-2014



“Though days be brief they represent and reflect all time. Creation’s wonders are in us, creation’s tragedies, creation’s miracles and secrets. Our comings and goings are the pulsations of eternity.”

~ *Angus H. MacLean (1892-1969), Universalist Minister and Religious Educator*

2013

David P.W. Wood	January 11
Ian Carruthers	January 23
Leslie Hugget	February 14
Christopher (Kit) Yeatman	February 17
Otto Adamitz	April 14
Roger Eckstrand	April 25
Raymond G. Goddard	May 13
Lillian E. Laakso	May 27
Donald Misener	July 13
Brooks Coll	August 6
Vera (Penny) Kennedy	August 23
Mac Buchanan	August 28
Melanie Davidson	October 1
Dorothy Slykhuis	November 2

2014

Dale Wilson	January 6
Virginia Cameron Lang	January 24
Arthur Forward	February 12
Joseph Mergl	June 2
Dr. Keith C. Arnold	July 21
Charles (Chuck) Rea	August 28

Section One

STAFF REPORTS

Minister's Report

Ending 2013 with a financial surplus

As long as we are alive to the needs of the world and our own needs for spiritual enrichment, there will always be more to be done than we will be able to undertake.

As **Dana MacLean** Greeley once put it, "I feel sorry for (those) who do not rejoice in putting their money where their soul is. And if the treasury already has a large sum of money, then I feel sorry for the people who haven't enough vision to make even that sum inadequate." The mission we serve calls us to use our resources to their fullest capacity, but not to exhaust them.

After many years of operating deficits, there was concern that overspending was threatening our congregation's long-term viability. There was also a collective will to end the practice and a willingness to bear some sacrifices to make it happen. This is not to say that preparing the budget for 2013 was not painful. It was. The intention was that all who are involved with our congregation would feel the pinch somewhere. We cut the budget by 7 percent, and we ended the year 2013 with a small surplus.

Taking this step has meant that we have all had to do without some things, and, at the same time, our staff has had to do more with less. My heartfelt thanks to all involved.

Focus on social responsibility

One of many proud accomplishments of last year was our work supporting the Multi-Faith Housing Initiative (MHI).

Our congregation is involved in supporting many diverse social responsibility projects. We also work to focus attention and raise the profile of a chosen project for a period of time. In spring 2013, we voted as a congregation to focus energy for two years in support of the MHI's campaign to double the units of affordable housing they offer in our

city. Our fundraising efforts started last fall with the dinner honoring Werner and Marjorie Daechsel (Our "Werner Roast" raised \$4,500). Then we had a concert featuring The Big Soul Project (\$692). This year's Tulipathon (MHI's big annual fundraising event) turned into a cold, washed out disaster, but gave all of us who were there good stories to tell, and we still raised \$2,975. Lastly, our Tribute to Pete Seeger Fundraising Concert was a hoot beyond all reckoning. Many thanks to Tony Turner and so many others for the tremendous effort that went into making the concert soar. The concert also raised \$6,788 that was split between Multi-faith Housing and USC Canada.



All of these events involved our connecting with lots of people beyond the circle we usually see on Sunday morning. We didn't just raise over \$11,500 for a good cause---we enlarged the circle of people who know about the work of the MHI, and we enlarged our own circle of good will within the Ottawa community. What social justice project might we choose as a focus in 2015? Talk to me if you have ideas.

Staff

The three people with whom I work most closely are Carolyn Turner (our Director of Operations), Susan McEwen (Director of Lifespan Learning) and Jacob Caines (Music Director). While people coming and going from these positions is inevitable, it is also time consuming; having wonderful people settled in these three positions last year gave us momentum and zip. Combined with having a balanced budget, it gives us a solid base from which to dream a shining future.

Looking ahead

Next spring we will be hosting the Canadian Unitarian Council's Annual Conference and Meeting (ACM) here in Ottawa. We are

planning a revised version of “The Refuge of Three Rivers” for the Sunday morning worship celebration at this event.

In the fall of 2015 we are planning to introduce themed ministry to the congregation. This will involve inviting everyone to join small groups to discuss aspects of how we live out our faith. Watch for further developments.

In the spring of 2016, I am planning to take a sabbatical. It used to be that ministerial sabbaticals were at least six months. However, more of my colleagues are now taking sabbaticals of two to three months, and that is also what I envision. I am planning to travel to India to see firsthand some of the projects being done by the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada, Childhaven International, and Karuna Vihar (a school for those with learning difficulties).
Onward,
~John

President’s Report

I will start by thanking everyone on the Board for their contributions and dedication. It has been an honour to serve with such a talented and focused group of people who are truly working to help our congregation develop a strategic vision and the infrastructure for a sustainable, compassionate spiritual home for our future.

A synopsis of our work May 2013–
May 2014:

- The Board Retreat was held again at Kirkman House, thanks to Ellen Smith, and we agreed to further re-work our financial time lines to align with the strategic plan of strengthening and unifying the congregation, financially and spiritually. We established three major working goals for the year--- which have, for the most part, been met or at least partially met.

1. Growing and warming the congregation—creating a warmer, more embracing space for newcomers and the rest of us, in hopes of adding membership.

Measurement: a 4-5 percent increase in our active membership by September 2014;

positive climate survey results from the membership; Safe Space Committee Plan.

2. Comprehensive survey to include communication practices and preferences and a draft five-year plan for adding new media, technology and a more public community outreach. Actions: ad hoc communications committee formed, survey developed and implemented.

3. Continued rigour in financial planning while seeking to sustain and retain our valued staff. Measurement: balanced budgets and less than 3 percent variance in year-to-date budget outcomes.



We held four Town Hall Meetings this year, all in alignment with our goals.

October 6: Visioning

January 26: Congregational Covenant and Code of Communication

March 2: CUC AGM Resolutions (Denominational Affairs Team)

March 30: Communications Survey Results

Other highlights

- We were fortunate to have Jenn Gray as our ministerial intern; she brought her special spark to our community. Jenn is off to an adventure in her first assignment as a minister and she will be missed.
- The Board conducted an annual goal-setting exercise with Rev. Marsh and will continue to use the evaluation systems used in the past: 360-degree confidential interviews, surveys and a self-evaluation.
- A second successful stewardship campaign was held in the fall; the timing was changed to help monitor and adjust our budget proactively—many thanks to all those who worked so hard on this campaign—especially Doug Cousins and Bob Armstrong!

Staff News

- Jen Brennan has been managing the content of the web site and in recognition of her hard work and additional responsibility, she was given a new title of Office Manager. Congratulations, Jen!
- Kudos go to Carolyn, Jen, Lori Clarke, and all support staff who have made our physical plant a more embracing space for all of us--- the excellent coordination and cleanliness is noticed and appreciated!

Board moves

- When Sharmila Khare had to resign as treasurer, we were grateful that Chuck Triemstra stepped up to assume that critical role.
- Paul Ward retired from his position as a director---Paul has been an incredible resource to us on the Board and we will miss his insight, experience and passion for the work of the congregation.
- We welcome Guy Belleperche, Eva Berringer and Terry Kimmel as new directors.
- Alastaire Henderson should be commended for her hard work as Secretary—I am forever indebted to you Alastaire, for your careful documentation of the board and its work.
- Congratulations to Maury Prevost and Maggie Sharp, who have assumed the role of President and Vice President, respectively. I can see the synergy of this pairing and it promises to be very good for our community!
- Special thanks to the Nominating Committee who works so hard to create good succession for our Board.

Highlights of the year

- Small surplus in 2013 budget
- Fall pledge campaign and a budget process that better aligns with fiscal timelines
- Increased communication through town halls
- Developed, implemented and analyzed congregational communication survey
- Are monitoring the LRT expansion and evaluating impact
- Financial and philosophical review of downstairs space for potential future revenue stream

- Metrics for monitoring membership to assist in fostering growth in our congregation
- Established an Ad hoc Investment Committee to help develop investment policy which aligns with our values and to create a plan to begin divestment of holdings in the fossil fuel industry.

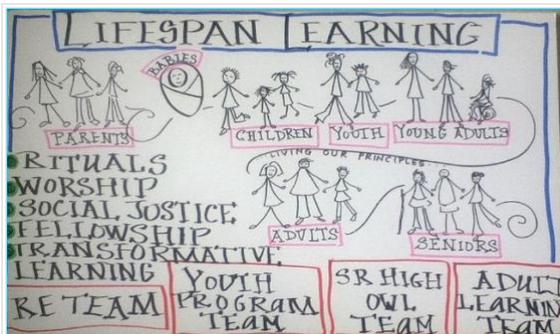
I feel profound gratitude to you, the members of the congregation for your support and encouragement of our efforts over the last few years—I have felt uplifted and supported through my terms as Vice President and President. To the administrative professionals and volunteers who work each day to nurture our hopes and visions by anchoring it in logistical reality—Carolyn, Jen, Lori, Margot Clarke and Brian Cowan—enormous thanks. To the Members of the Property Team and the Social Responsibility diaspora—many thanks for the candid conversations during transition to Policy Governance; my respect and admiration for the care and commitment you have for our congregation. To the Worship Team—John, Jacob and Susan—my personal appreciation for your deep and abiding care that guides our services, our missions, projects and planning—your synergy and strengths are an inspiration.

May we continue to move forward together in unity and conscious connection.

~ *Kim Elmer*

Lifespan Learning

Lifespan Learning refers to the journey of the Unitarian Universalist religious explorer through all the stages of life. Lifespan Learning is about *transformative learning*, a process by which people change the way they interpret the world. This kind of education is central to who we are as a people of faith. A lot of spiritual work has to do with welcoming the dissonance that occurs in unfamiliar experiences. Transformative learning involves some clinging to what we used to think and know even as we wish to step forward into a new paradigm. How do we help each other live this transformative faith? Part of what a religious community can do is to help its members in moving through dissonance. Part of what we can do for each other is create safe spaces where our stories can be shared.



Lifespan Learning includes ritual, celebration, recognition of milestones, and expressions of gratitude. It embraces fellowship, worship, and social justice initiatives. It invites adventure, both inwardly and outwardly. Lifespan Learning builds faith community.

Theme for Lifespan Learning

Our theme for Lifespan Learning in 2014-15 was "Everyone at the Table":

We wove this theme into our children's thematic units, our workshops for adults, and special events like Mystery Pals. By adopting "Everyone at the Table" as a theme for the year, we were shining a light on a foundational concept in our covenantal faith and in our UU principles.

In this spirit, may we go forward together.

Our Ministry with Children and Youth

54 families 79 children 9 youth
While we saw only small growth in numbers of registered participants in Children's Religious Exploration this year, congregants and staff observed greater engagement among our members. We saw more dedicated Sunday morning attendance and more vitality in our Times for All Ages. On many Sundays, our 'Singing the Children on Their Way' required a reprise in order to accommodate the numbers of departing children and adults!

Our youth numbers declined this year, largely due to current demographics: an outflow of older youth with fewer younger youth to take their places. We did, however, see significant commitment in our 10-week Coming of Age program, with 12 junior youth and 12 adult mentors participating in a journey facilitated by an adult volunteer, a senior youth volunteer, and our Director of Lifespan Learning.

In the year to come, we are planning a different structure for Junior High OWL so that younger youth can participate both in this healthy sexuality education program and in the Youth Group. We look forward to beginning again in September with a fall retreat for both junior and senior youth together. We seek to build our youth group by taking a long view that cultivates and supports engaged participation in the years leading up to adolescence as well as in Youth Group itself.

Volunteers

We benefitted from high volunteer engagement this program year, with almost 100 percent attendance at the fall retreat and little need for 'angels' (due to leader absence) through the year. We welcomed many returning volunteers and look forward to their participation again this fall.

All members of our RE Team are returning for 2013-14 and we expect to reach out to some new members for the next year. Our leaders made a revitalized commitment to hospitality this year, and

worked together to create and support a welcoming environment that encourages new families to stay.

We are still seeking more participation from the congregation beyond parents and invite any interested adults to contact our Director of Lifespan Learning to learn more about short and long term volunteer opportunities.

Curricula

This year, we used a published curriculum for 0-4 years and our Director of Lifespan Learning wrote/adapted original curricula in thematic units for 5-13 year olds. With a wide age range working on the same theme, we developed greater community connections and experienced an ease of sharing with the whole congregation.

We explored:

Getting to Know My UU Faith Home

- *Our Church Building/Campus
- *Creating and Sustaining Sacred Spaces
- *People around the Church
- *Our Social Justice Commitment
- *Rites of Passage
- *All Ages Thanksgiving Service with Child Dedication
- *Meditation and Prayer
- *Worship

Celebrations of Light: Exploring World Religions

Children chose from Cooking, Music, or Yoga/Creative Movement as pathways to learning more about World Religions. Groups were mixed age based on interest.

- *Diwali
 - *Hanukkah
 - *Santa Lucia Day
 - *Winter Solstice
 - *Kwanzaa
 - *Advent
 - *All Ages Mitten Tree Service
- Everyone at the Table: Diversity and Inclusion*
- *Children's Worship: All My Friends and Neighbours
 - *Inviting and Listening: Benevolent Curiosity and Radical Hospitality
 - *Courage and Forgiveness: One More Step
 - *Communication: From Heart to Heart

*Love: Come, Come, Whoever You Are

*All Ages Service with Mystery Pals
From Farm to Table: Exploring our Seventh Principle

*Covenant: Who are we and how are we together?

*Food in our Interconnected Web I

*Field Trip to Bloomfield Farm

*Food in our Interconnected Web II

*Food as Fuel for our Bodies

*Food as Spiritual Practice

*Planning a Special Meal Together

*Our Closing Feast!



We offered Our Whole Lives (OWL) healthy sexuality education at the Senior High level on a November weekend and supported the Montreal congregation in offering a second weekend in February. We also shared this program at Elementary levels (Kindergarten-Grade 1 and Grades 4-6) in our congregation from February to May.

A small contingent of our youth participated in the UU United Nations Office Spring Seminar in April, making travel connections with our neighbours at the Kingston Fellowship. We also saw some of our senior youth attend CanUudle (the youth component of the Canadian Unitarian Council's Annual Conference and Meeting) as participants and leaders. We welcomed the CUC's Youth and Young Adult Coordinator, Ariel Hunt-Brondwin to Youth Group one Sunday to help us consider our hopes, intentions, and visions for youth community. Ariel reminded us of the value of contemplative youth ministry, of making space for and supporting times of reflection in the inward journey. Our Youth Group visited Coming of Age to make connections and prepare for the latter group's all-ages 'campfire' service, offering a welcome to Youth Group as part of worship.

We shared mixed-age gatherings on Sundays from the end of May until the end of June, welcoming children, parents, and youth helpers to join in chalice lightings, storytelling, crafts, and active work & play until we finally bid everyone farewell until September.

Social Justice Project

Our RE social justice project this year related to our congregation's partnership with the Multi-faith Housing Initiative. In the fall, we learned about the way our principles call us to social action and about what MHI is and does. An MHI representative visited and gave us cardboard house banks which we decorated and took home for coin collecting over the winter—with the intention of bringing our donations to the Tulipathon, a spring fundraising walk for MHI. This year, heavy rain and cold temperatures truly put a damper on the walk; however, families could still donate their savings and we had some hearty young souls out splashing in the puddles and saving worms.

Our RE Library

Lifespan Learning Assistant Marie Gabe maintains and develops our Religious Exploration Library, a rich resource for Sunday morning programming and for families who borrow books to enjoy through the week. Our Library has become a welcoming and quiet space for families who arrive early or stay later at church as well as for teens working on homework. Marie has been cataloguing our collection on our 'fundraised' computer, using up-to-date library software that allows us to better know and track our books. She continues to work on improvements to the physical space and shelf organization, as well as recruiting and supporting volunteers in time-flexible roles. Please be in touch with us if you would like to contribute to our efforts.



Adult Learning

Many thanks to outgoing Adult Learning Team Chair, Eva Berringer, for providing these highlights of our program this past year:

**Building our Facilitator Community Workshop*

**Compassionate Communication Workshop*

**Compassionate Communication Learning Circles*

Our initial Building our Facilitator Community Workshop led to a Compassionate Communication Workshop and from there, two learning circles which will continue this fall in a small group ministry format, laying the ground for 2015-16's thematic ministry groups.

**Discussion on "The Righteous Mind"*

Led by Rev. Frances Deverell, this group used the book by Jonathan Haidt as a basis for exploring the state of dialogue between liberals and conservatives, and how we can find a non-violent way to work together to solve serious problems like inequality and climate change.

**Hamlet by Shakespeare*

Led by Rev. John Marsh, this exploration of a well-known but confusing play was very well attended.

**Reproductive Justice Course*

This course was co-led by Margaret Linton and Rozanne Lepine, and we wish to acknowledge Margaret and Rozanne for their insightful development of the curriculum, exploring issues of reproductive justice in the Canadian context.

**Spirituality and Philosophy Group (formerly Integral Life Practice)*

This group has continued to meet bi-weekly to explore topics selected by consensus to expand and deepen search for meaning and personal development.

**The Way of Mindfulness*

Under the guidance of Colleen Glass, Maryan O'Hagan and others, this group practises mindfulness meditation to reduce stress and increase calm attention, providing skills that increase awareness in moment-to-moment living.

***Yoga**

Two yoga practices were ongoing: an evening practice of gentle yoga and a daytime yoga for seniors and everyone else.

***Reading for Growth**

Three groups (two fiction, one non-fiction) explored relevant issues through the reading and discussion of thought-provoking books.

Our Adult Library

Many thanks to volunteer Brian Cowan for offering this summary of activities in our Adult Learning Library, located in the Lounge. The church's self-serve lending library for adult congregants is located in the Lounge. The library consists of about 1,400 books and other materials (e. g. a few CDs and DVDs) concerning a variety of topics related to our approach to religion and spirituality. Among the diverse categories of books on our library shelves are works on Unitarian Universalism as well as on the history of Unitarian Universalism. Other categories of books include Feminine Spirituality and Science and Spirituality. Books and other materials can be borrowed for four weeks and can be renewed.

As part of our overall adult library, we have, in a separate location in the church, a small library Archive consisting of our very old, or antique, books (printed before 1920) and some heritage books of a scholarly nature. Among our oldest books is a set of three volumes containing some of the writings of,

as well as a biography of, Hosea Ballou (1771-1852) who was a prominent Universalist minister and theologian. These volumes were printed between 1854 and 1856. Archived materials may be borrowed by congregants upon request to the lending library volunteer, Brian Cowan, briancowan@rogers.com.

Forming part of our library in the Lounge is an index card catalogue of our library materials (including those in the Archive). This catalogue, in a small filing cabinet, lists our lending material by title and by author. Since January of 2014, we have, as part of a project involving the adult, youth, and children's lending libraries, been computer cataloguing the lending materials in the Lounge and the Archive. We hope to have this cataloguing task completed by late 2014 or early 2015.

~ Susan McEwen



Lay Spiritual Care Visitor Program

This is my fourteenth year as Spiritual Care Visitor and Supervisor of Volunteer Lay Spiritual Care Visitors. Approximately 20 visits were made this year.



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 year, I was invited to join the Interfaith Council for seniors as the UU representative. This 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 program 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 Unitarian Seniors Program events held in Worship and Fellowship halls.

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

~Ellen Bell



Section Two

KEY COMMITTEES

Nominating Committee

This past year was quite active for the Nominating Committee. At the Annual General Meeting on April 27, 2014, Maury Prevost was elected President, replacing Kim Elmer (who became Past President—an ex officio member of the Board). Maggie Sharp was elected Vice President and Alastaire Henderson and Chuck Triemstra were elected as Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. As officers of the Board, all of these positions are for terms of one year.

Following Kim Elmer's move to ex officio, Paul Ward's retirement after six years and Sharmila Khare's resignation, the Nominating Committee was very successful in finding three new Board members, all of whom bring very valuable experience and expertise to the Board. Eva Berringer and Guy Belleperche were elected to three-year terms and Terry Kimmel to a two-year term. All three are serving as Members at Large.

In April 2015, Alastaire will be completing her final three-year term, while Maggie, Chuck and Rob Cummings will be completing the third year of their initial three-year terms. Maury will be completing his first year of a three-year term (having already served a previous two-year term).

The Nominating Committee is comprised of the following members: Doug Cousins (Chair), Margot Clarke, Marilen Gerber, Anita McLean, Agnes Davis and Susan Mackenzie

~*Doug Cousins*

Property Team

The past year has not been occupied with major projects for our building; rather, it could be characterized as a maintenance year. Minor projects have been completed as required. We were able to secure 100 comfortable new chairs for Fellowship Hall. Drainage on the south side of our building

was improved. All of the windows were checked and caulking was done where necessary. This will help to reduce our energy costs. Some projects are ongoing. These include the wording of our mandate, securing costs for access to the Now Room for wheel-chairs, and a number of minor projects.

Bill Van Iterson has continued to provide us with long-range plans. Renee DeVry and her team provide countless hours of work on the Meditation Gardens and our campus. Lori Clarke, our Facilities Manager, gives a detailed report on the work of her staff at each meeting, and Carolyn Turner, as Director of Operations, 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*

Denominational Affairs Committee

After a period when the leadership for this team was open, Frances Deverell stepped in as acting chair with the goal of recruiting a new team and renewing the energy for our participation in denominational affairs. Our big thanks to both Elizabeth Bowen and Margaret Linton, who have taken or shared responsibility in this area for many years.

A team composed of Maury Prevost, Margaret Linton, Elizabeth Bowen, Eva Berringer, Anita MacLean and Frances Deverell drafted the new updated terms of reference and proposed them to the board. These were in line with the new CUC guidelines for delegates to the Canadian Unitarian Council's Annual Conference and Meeting.

This team also actively advertised for and recruited delegates to the May CUC Annual Conference and Meeting as follows: Rev. John Marsh, Maury Prevost, Anita MacLean, Eva Berringer, Frances Deverell, Rev. Linda Goonewardene, and John

Twemlow, with Susan Tanner and Marilyn Prevost as alternates.

Delegate Anita MacLean proposed a motion for a group of social activists from Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice (CUSJ): to study the Palestinian situation for two years and come up with a Unitarian strategy for speaking out. The resolution (Human Rights in Palestine and Israel) was controversial and was procedurally delayed so no vote was taken. The meeting felt that the intention of the resolution was not clear. Procedural errors were also made by the CUC that meant that people were looking at earlier versions of the motion instead of the final version.

Maury Prevost agreed to stay on as a full-time delegate for a two-year term, and Eva Berringer and John Twemlow agreed to be full-time delegates, (available to the CUC for on-going discussions and advice) for a one-year term.

Frances Deverell also attended the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists bi-annual meeting in February, representing Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice.

In the meantime a large team of members of First Unitarian Congregation, ably co-chaired by Kathy Yach and Margaret Lee and our staff (John Marsh, Susan McEwan, and Jacob Caines) are preparing to host next year's CUC Annual Conference and Meeting, at Algonquin College here in Ottawa. Thank you Kathy, Margaret, and all those who are involved. Your contribution to the CUC is really appreciated.

The next event we want to promote will be our Fall Gathering in Halifax with a Halloween theme of "Frightened by the Future: Congregations Adapting to Change."
~Frances Deverell

Lay Chaplaincy Task Force

Lay chaplains perform rites of passage, including weddings, memorial services and child dedications, for both members and non-members, thus providing outreach for the congregation and meaningful ceremonies for the community.



Lay chaplains are appointed by their congregations and their appointments are renewed annually at the spring AGM.

Our congregation is generally served by three lay chaplains, who may be appointed for two terms of three years each. Caroline Elson retired in July 2013 after completing six years of service; Jan Glyde retired as of May 1, 2014 after completing three years; and Bob Armstrong completed his six-year term mid-May 2014, but remains as a member of the Task Force and will continue to act as a mentor to incoming chaplains this year. In addition, he will remain a chaplain for the purpose of leading memorial services at Beechwood Cemetery.

Our new lay chaplains, Alex Campbell and Nicki Bridgland, completed their training period and were accepted by the congregation at the April AGM. They have signed contracts with First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa, 1` and are licensed by the province of Ontario to perform marriages. They are now actively serving.

Lay chaplains are supported in their work by the joint Lay Chaplaincy Task Force of First Unitarian and of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa; the task force consists of Donna Bowen-Willer, Susan Mackenzie, Bob Armstrong, Indigo Holley (representing the Fellowship) and the Rev. John Marsh.

We appreciate the superb outreach work done by our lay chaplains, past and present, in bringing awareness of our faith into the community at large.

The task force plans to initiate a search for another lay chaplaincy candidate in early 2015 with the intention that she or he complete the training and be licensed in 2016.

~Donna Bowen-Willer

Holly and Lace Bazaar (aka Fall Fair)

Our annual Fall Fair is the largest social event in the congregation's year, as well as contributing 5 percent of the operating fund of the congregation. Our biggest success this year was in creating a congenial, friendly conglomeration of 300 plus volunteers with new friendships made and former friendships renewed.

The 2013 Fall Fair once again exceeded previous years in number of volunteers and in making a sizeable profit. There were 22 booths, managed by 42 co-convenors, aided by an organizing team of 9 people, who worked throughout the week to organize all the donations and produce beautiful displays for the bazaar and ensure that food, parking, and first aid is provided.

Measures to reduce the environmental impact are improving each year. With more quality goods being donated, there is less waste; our recycling team is active the week of the Fair and the following month making sure unsold goods are distributed to community service organizations.

The office staff cooperation is essential to a successful event, and we thank them for their flexibility and tolerance in this week when their work space is usurped by Fair activity.

The contributions of the organizing team were and are invaluable. Thank you, Ron Wilson, Katherine Gunn, Ellen Smith, Bob Armstrong, Kate Kirkwood, Jen Brennan, and Paula Theetge!

~Margaret Linton



Section Three

SOCIAL, SPIRITUAL, PERSONAL GROWTH GROUPS (alphabetical)

Arts Night

Arts Night is one of the best-kept secrets of the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa! On the last Friday of each month, from September to June (December excepted) Joycelyn Loeffelholz, founder of Arts Night, invites guest artists to come and share their art with us.

Writers, visual artists and musicians of every genre imaginable come and present various kinds of artistry. Some artists are professional, some writers have already published works and may bring along some of their books to sell, visual artists often come loaded with their work, and musical artists display some of their talent, even their own compositions. Other artists may be amateurs and less well known, but all these artists have in common a passion for the art or craft which they present. As each is allowed only a 20-minute presentation, the evening always seems too short, and we all would like to see or hear more from them.

At the beginning of each event, members of the audience are invited to join in the “open set”, a time when, for five minutes, anyone can read a poem or story, sing or play an instrumental piece, or show some of their pieces of art. It is a time when they can present themselves to a very appreciative audience.

A short refreshment break gives us a chance to talk to the various artists, and to view or purchase some of the works they have brought along. The rest of the evening is spent in an open question and answer session where we learn more about what motivates each guest artist.

September 27, 2014 will mark the beginning of the twelfth season of Arts Night. Mark your calendar and come out to support the arts at our church!

We have quite a number of faithful attendees, but the artists themselves frequently bring their friends and family along for the occasion, which has boosted the average seasonal attendance up to thirty-five people. A fee of \$5 or pay-what-you-can is collected at the door, which has this past season brought our average monthly intake up to \$162, all of which was given to the congregation.

~*Elisabeth Morrison and Joycelyn Loeffelholz*

Bookshelf Report

The Bookshelf had another successful year of steady sales. Because our last west-end independent bookstore—Collected Works—closed, we are now buying our adult books from Amazon.ca. This means we can not only offer books at amazingly low prices, we can also take requests. Children’s books are bought from Books on Beechwood, and the UU books from Boston’s Beacon Press.

Our main purpose remains one of service, to make literature of high quality easily accessible at very reasonable prices to members of the congregation. In addition, we are able once again to make a donation of about \$300 per annum to the church.

We are open most Sundays from September—June, and as well as selling books, we provide a welcoming corner for people to chat and discuss books and life.

Any members who are authors and wish to sell their books, please let us know. We will provide a small table by the bookshelf where you can sell your writing.

All this is made possible by our wonderful committee of volunteers; many thanks go to Valerie Cousins, Mabel Ong, Susan Mackenzie and Sue Wheeler.

~*Margaret Zielinski*

Bridge Group

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

In the 2013-2014 season, a total of 30 people participated for one or more evenings. The average attendance in each of the eight sessions was 16 players. Over the season, the players donated \$825 to the congregation.

For information on the Bridge Group, contact Tarrel Armstrong at tarrel@theArmstrongs.ca.

Caring Committee

During 2013-2014, two "Caring Contacts" were assigned to each month of the year. These volunteers were available to keep in touch with joys and concerns in general, responding to expressed needs and sharing information with others in the congregation. Basic training and ongoing support were provided to new contacts through more experienced contacts and our Coordinator, Margot Clarke. The names of each month's Contacts appear in the Communique, the eUU and the Spire, as well as being posted near the Caring Table on Sundays.

The Spiritual Care Council was informed of situations where visiting or phone calls beyond the scope of the monthly contacts was anticipated. Lyn Gerley continued to be the Caring Executive link with the Council, and to submit the "In Memoriam" column for each Spire.

Contacts arranged 5 drives; 21 telephone visits; 69 caring cards; and 5 personal visits. Beyond these statistics, caring by members and friends within the congregation helps form our community's network, supporting those in need or celebrating special joys throughout the year.

Two Memorial Receptions were arranged during the period July 2013 through June 2014 after memorial services in Worship Hall.

As a group we managed two coffee hours, one in February to honour Heart Month and caring within the congregation. In late April an enjoyable breakfast allowed us to thank volunteers and provided an opportunity for exchanging thoughts on the year's work. We welcomed several new Contacts, and thanked those others who have retired from this responsibility. We also thanked Helen Wells and

Mary Lou Curtis who retired from the Executive, and were pleased to add and welcome Marlene Campbell and David Hudson.
~Alexandra Devine



Crafty Crafters - Knitters

The Crafty Crafters-Knitters continued to meet every Wednesday throughout the year, to knit, crochet, enjoy each other's company and exchange information, books, puzzles and opinions.

Several new members have joined us during the year. We are always happy to welcome newcomers, whatever their skill level, and to share our yarn, patterns, ideas and friendship. On a sad note, we lost long-time member Penny Kennedy, who passed away in August 2013.

As usual, we generated considerable revenue for the Congregation, including about \$2000 from our booth at the Fall Fair and over \$400 from our share of the Fabric and Yarn Sale. In addition, we turned in \$1535 to the Congregation from our Mitten Tree Sale, Unitarian House sale in January, and informal sale of items to each other and our friends.

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



Friends of the Meditation Gardens Fundraising

We sold 2014 calendars in late 2013 and early 2014, and held two perennial plant sales, in May and early June. Although sales were moderately good, we decided to suspend the plant sales next year and refocus on other fundraising efforts. To improve our planning and fundraising capacity, the Friends now meet monthly.

In the gardens

We lost several perennials, shrubs and trees from winter kill this year due to the long, hard winter. However, emergency feeding of emerging queen bees with raw honey after the prolonged cold (with no significant thaws) helped ensure that our gardens are one of the few local gardens with a strong bee presence.

Spring Clean-up volunteers got a lot of work accomplished at the start of the season. Under Renee's direction, volunteers continued to work on the multi-year project of naturalizing the gardens to make them hardier and easier to care for. They removed raspberries from the southwest briar berm, and put in a milkweed bed (for butterflies) and other perennials. The Fire Pit area looks much better after removal of large boulders and tall weeds.

Well/Water update

The Friends consulted with local business Mannion's Pumphouse on continuing issues with low water flow from the well drilled in 2010, and confirmed that, although we have a functioning solar panel and submersible pump, the well's recharge rate has become too low to be useful any longer.

We are investigating diverting floodwater from the increasingly heavy rains due to climate change, to avoid more erosion

in the gardens and provide an alternate water source. It's time for Plan B; we are looking into installing a cistern, and repurposing the solar panels and submersible pump to power the system.

Educational

An "herb walk" in the fall with Anne, from Mother Earth Naturals on Richmond Road showed participants how to identify many useful herbs growing around the gardens. Volunteers have created and installed many new plant identification signs, a bulletin board and a new donation box. A second bulletin board is in the works for posting more detailed information about the gardens' plant, animal and insect life. We have instituted monthly volunteer days, followed by lunch and a tutorial, for everyone interested in volunteering in our gardens and/or learning more about gardening. The first volunteer day was held August 14, with a tutorial on basic care of irises.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank all our volunteers and supporters, and to direct a special thanks to our major donors: Jim and Barbara Darragh, Marlene and Alex Campbell, Kay Walker, Susanne Ahlers and Bradley Ralph.

The Friends are very much looking forward to 2015 and celebrating the 20th anniversary of the gardens' opening to the public in 1995! There will be a garden party ... stay tuned.

~Alastaire Henderson



Old Ottawa South/Glebe/Centretown Neighbourhood Group

The group met at members' homes every month between September 2013 and June/July 2014, except December. 'Homes' included Unitarian House where a number of our members have moved.

On September 22, 2013 and July 6, 2014 we had potlucks/ planning (and social) meetings.

Other meetings were:

Oct 27 – (with Riverside Neighbourhood Group – at Unitarian House) Jenn Gray led a discussion on her experiences and our hopes for Ottawa (an exchange with our interim minister)

Nov 24 – David Chernushenko - 'The joy of not driving'

Jan 19 Alastaire Henderson - 'First Unitarian's Meditation Gardens'

Feb 16 (with Riverside Neighbourhood Group – at Unitarian House) David Jeanes - 'A Critical Review of Ottawa's Plans for the LRT'

March 16 - Frances Deverell 'My experiences at the recent ICUU meeting in New York'

April 13 – Doris Jelly - 'Travels in Greenland and Labrador'

May 25 – Maury Prevost - 'Report from Montreal' (on the latest CUC annual meeting).

~Ann Denis

Reading for Growth Group - Monday

The Monday Reading for Growth Group has met every month last year except the month of August. Our meetings take place every second Monday afternoon of the month. This is a Non-fiction book club. We have ten members and are always inviting guests who may want to try it out before becoming a member. The maximum number is 12 but visitors are welcome.

The meetings usually start with a short business discussion. Then each member is invited to name a book that they have read that they would recommend for reading later in the year. Also, each person is assigned a

month for which he or she will choose the book. We have a list of the members and the books that they have picked for discussion for the next three or four months. We try to plan well ahead so that the books can be ordered from the library in time.

One person each month is responsible for the initial presentation of the current book and then each person in the group takes about five minutes to give his or her initial response to the book. After that an open discussion ensues which can be very lively, informative and entertaining. We really enjoy these discussions. Some books that were read this year are Collapse by Jared Diamond, In Praise of Slow by Carl Honore, The Land Grabbers by Fred Pearce, Allah, Liberty and Love by Irshad Manji, Champlain's Dream by David Fisher, and Conversations With a Dead Man by Mark Abley, to name a few.

Our group is very interested in continuing next year. We are hoping that this program will continue successfully for some time to come.

~Anita MacLean

Seniors' Program

This program was started many years ago by Sue Van Iterson and continues to draw regular support. In the last week of every month except for December, on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, the group gathers for a short service in Worship Hall at 11:30 am, followed by lunch at noon in Fellowship Hall, and at 1:00 pm some item from a varied program of talk, music, reminiscence, current affairs, general interest, etc. The program continues to be well-attended, with numbers averaging 40 to 45 per month.

The Service, which typically lasts for 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.

During the summer months of July and August, the lunch is a brown bag (bring your own) affair. This past year the lunches were catered by Unitarian House on a trial basis, which proved to be successful and will be continued next year. Lunch is always characterized by a hubbub of conversation and laughter. Presiding over each lunch is a volunteer convenor who looks after the room setup, the provision and/or distribution of whatever is on offer and clean-up afterwards. The convenors are helped by other volunteers. We are always looking for people who are willing and able to help – please think about serving the Congregation in this way.



The after-lunch 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 else of interest to the group. Congregation staff also play their part. Guest speakers/topics in the past year were: Ottawa Field Naturalists on Ottawa-area birds; Janice Gray on her annual trips to Egypt; peace walk to Jerusalem (Mony and Alberto); turning family history into historical fiction (Valerie Cousins); the making of a Minister (Jenn Gray); the Camino de St-Jacques; war-time memories of our seniors; Scots; Christmas music led by Jacob Caines.

This is all put together by a planning committee which meets three times each year to review and learn from what has happened and to lay out the events and the program forward. This past year the Committee donated \$1,000 to the purchase of the new chairs used in Fellowship Hall, as

well as \$300 towards the purchase of a general use headset microphone.

We have a telephone group who call before meetings; we have volunteer drivers; we have pools of people who are willing to lead services, to be MC for the meeting, to convene lunches, to volunteer to work, to deal with the publicity, to book the rooms, etc. We have a Treasurer who looks after our money, a Secretary who keeps notes of meetings. There is plenty of room for new ideas. Think about joining us, it's fun.

~Paula Theetge

Section Four

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY COUNCIL (SRC) STEERING COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUPS REPORTS

SRC Steering Committee

As chair of the SRC Steering Committee it is my pleasure to report on SRC's this year. The Council comprises 11 working groups. The SRC Steering Committee (SRCSC) empowers the working groups by maintaining fiscal accountability. The SRCSC is responsible for allocating the social responsibility budget, which is set at 3% of the congregation's annual pledges.

I would like to thank David Hudson, Mike Wheeler, Katherine Gunn and Ed Willer for their continued hard work on behalf of the congregation by serving on this committee.

SRC's funding goes to support charities in our community by sponsoring, through our working groups, fundraising dinners and concerts, which this year have raised over \$20,000. For more details refer to the annual reports of the working groups. We have helped refugees to become established in Canada, and women in shelters to establish independent living for themselves and their children. We have funded educational programs for youth at risk.

The congregation can be proud of the work of the social responsibility working groups. Some of their annual reports follow. Please read these reports for more details. We encourage members to join one of our groups. Your participation will be rewarding for you and our community. Read their reports and contact the group that interests you.

Our commitment to social responsibility is inspiring. Thanks to the congregation for its continued support.

~Ron Wilson, Chair

Global Justice Working Group

Our group of a dozen people works to focus attention on our Second Principle: "Justice, equity and compassion in human relations". During the past year, we have been involved in a variety of activities to further the Second Principle. Many of our members took part in meetings and rallies organized by groups involved in the issues of the Middle East, the Energy East pipeline and Canada's First Nations.

In summer 2013, we hosted speaker Louise Profeit-Leblanc, who talked on "The Role of Art as a Means of Reconciliation for First Nations". We worked with Frances Deverell, president of Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice (CUSJ), in promoting "Social Action Movie Night". Six films were shown over the winter.

A major focus during the past year was the Middle East. In January, Anita MacLean and Dr. Hassan Diab presented their views on the current Israeli-Palestinian situation. In March, our working group provided a venue for Jonathan Cook to speak on the same area. Worship Hall had a full house as "JC" from Nazareth discussed the situation of Israeli Arabs.

Anita MacLean and Frances Deverell worked hard at the CUC ACM to present a motion to study "Human Rights in Palestine & Israel". This was postponed indefinitely. However, many congregations across Canada will run study groups on this topic starting this fall.

Global Justice was able to make donations to a variety of groups and individuals, including Transforming Communities, a development project in El Salvador; Climate Fast; Dr. Hassan Diab, Homes Not Bombs, Ecology Ottawa, CUSJ, Pathways to Education and SWAG (Students Will All Graduate), Justice For Harkat Committee and Seedy Saturday.

~Bob Stevenson

Refugee Working Group

The Refugee working group has been inactive this year as we wait for the processing of our applications to bring two Ethiopian women to Canada as refugees. One application was sent in 2012 and another in early 2013. I have been chair-person since 1999 and until two years ago we had no trouble with our applications except for the long time to process them. The average time now between the application and the refugee(s) arriving here is 42 months. Since 2012 we have had to deal with several examples of red tape. It is very frustrating because one young woman has relatives here and we are ready to help.

Let's hope that the applications will be expedited this year and that they arrive in 2015.

~ Bob Stevenson

Mental Illness Working Group

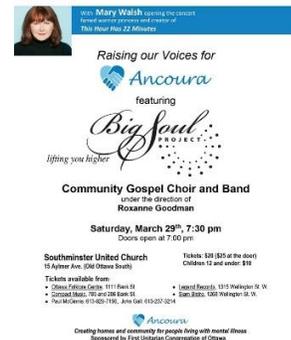
The Mental Illness Working Group (MIWG), consisting of seven core members, continued this year to support Ancoura, a not-for-profit organization in Ottawa that is dedicated to providing housing and a supportive community for adults living with mental illness.

Over the past few years, the MIWG has concentrated its fund-raising activity on the sale of Christmas and Greeting cards. The success of this initiative provided some financial support to Ancoura. MIWG did not commission the production of any new cards in 2013 but the committee members did sell, throughout the year, some of the remaining cards left from past years. We were able to contribute \$1000 to Ancoura from the proceeds of these sales. Some cards were donated to an Inuit organization in Ottawa.

Then in the spring of 2013, MIWG decided to take on an ambitious fund-raising concert for Ancoura in 2014. Given the amount of work required to organize and manage this event, the group set aside other planned activities for the year and devote

virtually all its available time and effort to this initiative.

MIWG began planning for this benefit concert, featuring the Big Soul Project Community Gospel Choir and Band, by analyzing several locales; eventually we made arrangements to host the concert at Southminster United Church. The Committee planned for publicity, arranged the printing of tickets and posters, liaised with Big Soul Project, arranged event insurance, and sold tickets.



During the year, the group engaged Ancoura itself and also the church's Poverty Awareness Group (PAWG) in several of the planning and early sales activities.

~Paul McGinnis

Environmental Working Group

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) was active on several fronts.

The group participated with Adult Learning in bringing in two speakers on renewable energy in spring 2014. In February, Ottawa Renewable Energy Co-op's Keith Shackleton and Bullfrog Power's Graeme Cunningham shared the stage as speakers on developing sources of solar, wind and hydro-electric energy.

We continued to educate congregants on environmental issues, and how to apply the Seventh Principle in choices we make as congregants, in our personal lifestyles, and as responsible citizens. We prepared and presented a motion on fossil fuel divestment to the AGM on April 27. The congregation approved the motion to halt all new investment in fossil fuel stocks. It also

mandated an ad hoc investment committee to explore divesting from all fossil fuel stocks in the congregation's portfolio that appear on the 'Carbon Tracker' list of top companies involved in extracting and producing such fuels. The ad hoc committee will report to the Board and Finance Committee in fall 2014.

We also provided opportunities to lobby governments, calling for action to address urgent environmental problems and climate change;

We continued to liaise with the Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) farmer (Gord McGregor of Saffire Farms) who has delivered fresh organic vegetables and herbs to the church grounds for several seasons to congregants and friends.



For a second season, we planted, tended, and harvested from an on-site vegetable plot, and distributed the produce to residents of Unitarian House.

EWG members worked with worship; associate Bob Armstrong to prepare and participate in a summer EWG service on the theme of local sustainable food. Our speaker, Bill Shields, discussed the philosophy and operating principles of enterprises such as Hintonburg's West End Well Food Co-op.

~Alastaire Henderson

Unitarian GoGos Annual Report

The Unitarian GoGos number approximately 30 members. We meet on the third Thursday of the month. We raise funds and awareness for the grandmothers and the orphans they

are raising in sub-Saharan Africa, delivered through the Stephen Lewis Foundation, Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign.



On September 22, the Unitarian GoGos attended the Unitarian church service and served squares and coffee at coffee hour. Two members, Alison Chitty and Sue Williams, spoke to the congregation about our organization. We were received warmly and it was a very positive experience.

On October 27, a one-day Gift Boutique was held at a private home featuring many beautiful quilts and quilted items made by one of our GoGos, Joan Gillespie. There was also Kazuri jewellery, local art and a variety of other gifts for sale. The total raised for the Stephen Lewis Foundation was over \$2,000.

On Saturday, February 9, the Unitarian GoGos hosted approximately 100 guests to our fourth annual African Dinner in Fellowship Hall. Our guests were once again treated to a wonderful three-course African dinner, with appetizers, wine, and live dinner music, all cooked and served by the GoGos. Thanks to the generosity of our guests, and a very successful Silent Auction, we raised over \$8,000 for the Stephen Lewis Foundation.

This year in March, one of our GoGos, Sheila Green, went to Africa for 3 weeks in March as part of a group of 22 Canadian grandmothers representing the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign. She will be available to speak about her visit to anyone who is interested.

On April 5, our group hosted Granny Fest, a one-day conference of all the Grandmother groups in the Ottawa-Carleton area. All agreed that the venue was wonderful.

On May 11 and 12, the Unitarian GoGos, together with the Meditation Gardens, held

a huge Plant and Garden Sale. This year, we also sold home baking, some beautiful Kazuri jewellery, and a large assortment of gently used jewellery. Also this year, Kenneth Mugayehwenkyi was our special guest at our Sunday sale. Kenneth is Founder and Executive Director of a project in Uganda, "Reach One Touch One Ministries", which is supported by the Stephen Lewis Foundation. He was interested in how our grandmother groups raise funds for projects like his own which supports over 150 grandmothers and 120 orphans. He was warmly welcomed and greatly enjoyed his visit. Our sale raised \$2,461 in total for the Foundation.

Thanks once more to everyone who loyally purchases our homemade Granny squares. We continue to make a steady income of approximately \$250 a month, plus extra from our annual Christmas bake sale and donations. We raised \$3,029.85 for this past year. We really appreciate the ongoing support!

Over the years, we have increased our donations to the Stephen Lewis Foundation considerably. To date, we are credited with raising \$223,330.72. This figure sent to us recently by the Foundation represents a combination of fundraising and donations given in our name.

Generally each year, the Unitarian GoGos makes a donation of \$200 to First Unitarian Congregation, in sincere appreciation of the extensive support and encouragement we receive from the congregation.

We will continue to raise funds and awareness and to stand in solidarity with African grandmothers as they raise their grandchildren, fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic and advocate for basic human rights for themselves and grandchildren.

~Sheila Green

United Nations Working Group

In 2013, the UN group hosted Bruce Knotts, Executive Director of the Unitarian Universalist United Nations

Office (UU-UNO), in January. The visit included a circle of consultations with Aboriginal leaders to introduce Bruce to the issues facing Indigenous peoples in Canada, Bruce also had a full day of meetings with officials at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, focused largely on issues of gender equality.

In February, the group hosted Rev. Fulgence Ndagijimana, of the Unitarian Church of Bujumbura in Burundi. Both visits were collaborations between First Ottawa and the Fellowship of Ottawa.

The working group presented two Holtom Lectures. In October 2013, Ian MacKay, of Queen's University, spoke on the militarization of public discourse in Canada. In spring 2014, we collaborated with the Harvard Club of Ottawa to bring Dr. Donna Hicks to speak at our church. She discussed the role that dignity—or the lack thereof—plays in conflicts and relationships ranging from the international level, to work, and family.

In June, the group organized the Aboriginal Sunday service, at which architect and thinker Douglas Cardinal was the guest speaker. We also helped the CUC to arrange for Mr. Cardinal to be a keynote speaker at the 2014 UU-United Nations Office Spring Seminar, which focused on the current situation, the rights, and the perspectives of Indigenous peoples. Two youths and six adults from the congregation participated, including Rev. Marsh.

The working group is excited that not one but two young people of the congregation interned at the UU-UNO, both of whom had been previous participants at the seminar.

We are thankful for the support of the congregation for all our activities.

~Katrin Nagelschmitz

Welcoming Congregation Working Group

The Welcoming Congregation Working Group (WCWG) actively promotes the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) people in all their diversities in our church.

The working group involves itself in outreach to like-minded community groups, social evenings and educating the congregation on related issues. This past year, we continued to be in contact with Capital Rainbow Refuge (CRR), which is working on organizing its second sponsorship of LGBT refugees to Ottawa, in partnership with the Canadian Unitarian Council, an



arrangement that our board supports. The CRR raises the necessary funds to support the refugee(s) for one year, the CUC signs the Sponsorship Agreement Holder papers, and individual members of our congregation help out where they can with gifts in kind or time spent getting the refugees settled.

Last summer, the first refugees, a Muslim lesbian couple we all co-sponsored in 2012, became self-supporting. Members of CRR and the WCWG continue to keep in touch with these brave women. Two members of our group attended a “second anniversary in Canada” party for the couple in July 2014, hosted by CRR.

Last August, a group of congregants took part in the Capital Pride parade as usual, and WCWG registered First Unitarian for this year’s Pride parade, August 24. We feel it is important that LGBT and straight allies alike embody the Unitarian principles of a Welcoming Congregation. See <http://cuc.ca/welcoming-congregations/>

At the same time, active involvement in the WCWG has fallen off sharply during the past year, mostly because of members’ personal or work commitments of one kind or another, so we were not able to do some of the outreach that we wanted to do. While it is true that LGBT people can generally find a welcoming place in our congregation these days, acceptance is only part of the story. We know there are still lonely, isolated individuals in Ottawa—such as LGBT teenagers, refugees and seniors—who would benefit from knowing more about and sharing Unitarian values such as the inherent worth and dignity of every person
~Barbara Freeman

Many thanks to Rosemary Bonyun, Jen Brennan, Carol Card, and Alastaire Henderson for their work on this annual report. And an especially big thank-you to all the individuals who wrote up and submitted articles!!