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Deadline for next Spire submissions:  
May 15, 2024



*Did you know that Unitarian House is turning 40?*

*Check it out on page 9...*

## Caring Contacts

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

The Caring Network

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## Facing Windows

~ Rev. Eric Meter



### G'Day Mates! Greetings from Down Under

As many of you know, my wife Ann and I are taking our first vacation to Melbourne, Australia.

I'll tell you, it has been more of a challenge to adapt to Australia's summer weather than I anticipated. Thankfully today the high will only be 20 C, but the last two days were in the upper 30s. And yesterday's storm took out power for half a million people across the region.

Our first night here we were so tired we slept through an earthquake, as we did again the other night. I had thought that by leaving California, I was leaving those behind. Not so, it seems.

The how's and why's of our destination choice are a bit complicated, so I'll try to explain as succinctly as I can.

Five years ago, a close friend of Ann's family moved with his then partner, now wife, from the U.S. to Melbourne. They are now a family of three. Last year, Ann's son invited us to visit them with him.

So far, we've done touristy things – a drive along the coast road to an overlook above a series of rock outcroppings called the Twelve Apostles, and to a vineyard – as well as some not-so-typical tourist activities including a tattoo expo and, a first for me, a Valentine's Day themed parenting class. Who knew?

And here I should say that there are some details I'm reluctant to include

because I want to respect privacy concerns of the young family. You see, the plan of a previously arranged marriage for one of them was quite literally and abruptly left behind, along with all family contact with a birth family.

Ann and I are loving being reconnected to the young couple, and are thrilled to practice our grandparenting skills. Ann, of course, is a natural. I'm doing my best. And then, without any fanfare, we were asked to sign the young boy's baby book as grandparents. I'm still emotional even writing about it.

What these young parents (mid 30s both) have done amazes me. Moving to a country only one of them had ever visited. Lining up work from overseas. And now, expanding their family with only distanced support from family and friends. Yes, they are taking advantage of parenting support classes and groups. But still.

While I don't want to get all churchy on them, I can't help but think that being part of a faith community might provide them some very real support. When Ann and I moved to Ottawa, we had loads of support and resources to draw upon. (Thanks to all of you.) And while there is a Unitarian congregation here in Melbourne, it's clear on the other side of town from them. The class Ann and I sat in on takes place at a Catholic church in the young couple's neighbourhood. I'm sure that in time, the couple's circles of support will grow naturally. They have

much to offer others as well. Still, I can't help but wish they had more resources available to them now. I can easily count on one hand all the truly self-made people I've ever come to know. Almost all of us have benefitted from the guidance and support of countless others over the years.

That's what I hope FirstU Ottawa will continue being for young couples like our friends here, and others of all ages and in families of one, to families of ten or more. Well, that's not just a hope of mine. It's an expectation. I have faith that we'll continue in our long tradition of loving support of one another, and for those who may never choose to formally join us.

As you've heard me say many times in many ways, love is the way and the destination.

In shared faith,

~ Rev. Eric



# Religious Exploration - RE-flections with *Jodi McIntosh*



**At FirstU, our vibrant tapestry of community is woven by little hands and young hearts.**

Laughter spills from classrooms, where curious minds chase knowledge and compassion takes root. Inside our classrooms, children form connections that go beyond textbooks. They learn about our principles while also discovering empathy, kindness, and acceptance. As they sit cross-legged, sharing stories and insights, they become part of a living, breathing community. These connections ripple outward, like stones dropped into a still pond, shaping the world they will inherit.

During multigenerational services, children sit alongside elders—the wisdom of ages blending with youthful exuberance. Together, they light the chalice, symbolizing our interconnectedness. The congregation envelops these young ones, teaching them that they belong—to this community and the wider world. By bridging the gap between generations, we strengthen the fabric of our community. We ensure that our values and traditions are passed down while simultaneously adapting to the changing world. Together, we create a more inclusive and vibrant space for everyone, building a future where kindness, understanding, and love remain at the core of our connection.

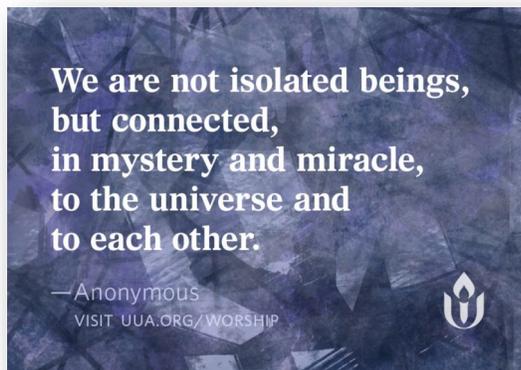
It is not only the children who are creating connections in our space. Our youth group might not be visible during regular church gatherings, but they're a tight-knit crew connected by more than just Sundays. This safe space fosters deep friendships through monthly meals together, lively discussions, and even light hearted games of hide-and-seek. Over shared meals and open conversations, they build strong bonds, supporting each other's journeys.

They may not be front and center, but their laughter and shared experiences quietly weave a vital thread into the fabric of our community. They're a hidden force, proving that connection goes beyond normal hours and traditions. In our youth group, the threads of friendship are strong, reminding us that community spirit comes in many forms.

In this sacred space, we honour the delicate threads that connect us all. Our congregation is a tapestry of love, where every stitch matters. Our stories intersect, creating patterns of resilience and hope. As we breathe the same air, gaze at the same moon, and share our stories, let us remember we are never truly alone. We are part of the interdependent web, and our connections are both our strength and our legacy.

**Mystery Pals:** One way that we encourage connection in our congregation is through our annual tradition of Mystery Pals. What is the Mystery Pals program? It is an opportunity for our children and youth to connect in a genuine way with the rest of the congregation. A child or youth is paired with an adult congregant and over a 4-week period they communicate with each other by leaving messages, puzzles, small tokens for each other in the Mystery Pal post office. After the four weeks we will have a gathering where the mystery is revealed, and the pals can meet each other. Sign-up will begin in March and the program will begin on April 7<sup>th</sup>. Look for sign-up opportunities on Sunday mornings and as advertised in the eUU.

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



## Splinters from the Board ~ Brent Nicolle



*“There are no strangers here; only friends you haven’t met yet.” – William Butler Yeats*

A couple of months ago, the Board received a very unusual email from a stranger, excerpted here:

*I tried very hard to be involved with a group, who or what doesn’t matter, it is a reflection of the whole. Due to the words and action of some of the members, they made it very clear I was NOT needed in any way. I have withdrawn. [...]*

*Please remember I did meet a few wonderful accepting people. It is just **the racists are too loud, too pushy and too bossy and way too mean.***

Wow. For the leadership of a congregation committed to “individual and communal action to dismantle racism”, this was a bombshell. To be honest, I initially didn’t believe that this was my FirstU community I was reading about; after all, the Board email address occasionally gets targeted by spammers, and there weren’t a lot of details in the original email.

Someone from the Board followed up, reached out and eventually met with the author a couple of times. We discovered that this was indeed a real visitor to a small group at FirstU. They are unlikely to ever join us again, but they were willing to share their experience. They shared their very real perception of **feeling so unwelcome that they assumed others in the group were racist.**

I do not believe that any group at FirstU is being consciously racist. However, I do find it easy to believe that people in any of our small groups **get so comfortable with each other** that they forget to consider the perspective of someone joining for the first time. For someone used to a lifetime of micro-aggressions, feeling unwelcomed or dismissed is just another barrier to full inclusion.

We aren’t identifying the group involved (nor the person) because we think this is likely a problem with more than just one group. We all need reminders to be more welcoming of new people, more aware of different lived experiences, and more receptive to new ideas. I have learned it takes time and mental energy to say **“help me understand how your perspective is different from mine”**. This is hard work but necessary: this is how we grow.

Here’s some good news: There are usually **first-time visitors every week** at Sunday service, and plenty of “fairly new” people. There are lots of opportunities for us to practice our welcoming skills. To start, try “Hi, my name is \_\_\_, I’m not sure we’ve met. Have you been here before?”

This is likely my last Splinters column; my term as your President is drawing to a close in May. It has been both a challenge and a pleasure. I promise I won’t go too far, and I’ll continue welcoming the friends I haven’t met yet.

Yours in faith,

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

**All of who you are is sacred. All of who you are is welcome.**



Unitarian Universalism

## Ajashki – What's Growing On

As we move into our fourth year, Ajashki has made some changes. What started out as a special reconciliation *project* with FirstU, has evolved into a reconciliation *program* at FirstU. We appreciate this growing confidence in and support for Ajashki shown by the FirstU leadership and the congregation.

We now have biweekly meetings with FirstU staff, Jen, Michelle and Rev. Eric, and our board liaison, Guy Belleperche, to keep everyone in the loop and to share ideas.

We also have more structure around our Circle of Support volunteers. Each volunteer now has a formal position based on their interest:

- Sharen Bowen, Reconciliation Coordinator;
- Lynn Kofmel-Preston, Makerspace Coordinator;
- Patti Wunsch, Construction Coordinator;
- Meghan Dunn, Food Coordinator; and
- Jan Andrews, Finance Coordinator.

This structure has been useful in helping people to understand what each volunteer's role is at Ajashki.

We would also like to say a kitchi meegwetch (big thank you) to Guy Belleperche who recently volunteered to be our board liaison.



Something that is new at Ajashki this winter is the makerspace. The idea behind the makerspace is to teach participants, or Future Food Warriors (FFWs) as we call them, about entrepreneurship, making useful and practical products and learning new skills. Led by our incredibly skilled Makerspace Coordinator Lynn Kofmel-Preston, we teach FFWs how to make products people may be interested in buying. Some of our first items created in the makerspace were decorative holiday planters and boughs, which we almost completely sold out of before the holiday season. They were an instant hit!

The next thing we started working on were knitted items such as dish cloths and scarves. We also were lucky enough to have Tess Frost volunteer some of her time to show us how to stick weave. Afterwards, we decided we could make headbands and guitar straps with this process.

As we continue our journey with the makerspace, we are looking for more eco-friendly products to make, related to the themes of gardening and climate change. Keep an eye out for Ajashki makerspace products for sale coming soon.

The grow towers are back! After a short hiatus and a real good cleaning, the grow towers are up and growing again. We have planted lettuce, Swiss chard, arugula and everyone's favourite...kale! Most are still small seedlings, so it will be a few weeks until they are ready. An announcement will be made when the greens are available after the Sunday service.

With an annual budget of \$100,000, Ajashki survives mostly on grants, for which we apply regularly. FirstU has generously committed \$10,000 this year towards Ajashki (plus their in-kind contributions of space and administrative support), and we have a few dedicated financial supporters, some of whom contribute monthly. Meegwetch/Thank you!

If you'd like to help our program grow, please go to our [web page](#) for more information about how to donate.

~ submitted by Kayoki Whiteduck  
Ajashki Lead Educator



## Meet a Member: Evelyn Algar



Evelyn was born in Whitehorse the second of five children, four girls and a boy. In addition to these siblings, her foster sister, Heather, came to live with the family at six months old. Heather has Down syndrome. She lived with Evelyn's parents until she was 16 years old and still lives in Ottawa in supportive housing.

With no high school in Whitehorse at the time, Evelyn's father, a customs officer, transferred to Ottawa so the children wouldn't have to board. The family lived in Britannia Village and Evelyn went to Grant Public School, then later Pinecrest School. While she was in public school her father suddenly said, "We have to see Europe!" They took off and the whole family drove through England, France, Netherlands, Germany, and Italy! The siblings are very close, and in August 2023 returned to Whitehorse together.

After graduating from Carleton University with a degree in geography, Evelyn worked at the National Library cataloguing books. During the evenings she took library technology classes at Algonquin College. After more classes taken at Carleton, she received her honours equivalency degree. She was then accepted at Western, graduating with a Masters of Library Science. A year later she returned to Ottawa where she worked as a cataloguing librarian in government documents. The transliteration of Inuktitut to English was a highlight.

Evelyn led an active life and loved to travel. She was a member of the Canadian Hostelling Association as well as cross country skiing and canoeing groups, travelling one year by canoe from Ottawa to Kingston. After graduation she journeyed with her sister and a friend through Western Europe. She later went to Hong Kong and travelled for more than 3 months through Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand.

She met her husband, Fred Brown, at the Jack Purcell Community Centre's International Folk Dancers of Ottawa. She attended a folk dancing workshop in Turkey, which was followed by a tour through the eastern part of the country. Their wedding featured Turkish food for dinner, followed by folk dancing.

Fred and Evelyn have 2 children, Dylan and Tamara, who participated in the RE program at the church. Dylan is now a police officer. Tamara went to UBC, worked in farming and is now working for a land trust in Peterborough.

Evelyn came to First Unitarian Ottawa in September 2000. She is very active in the church, working behind the scenes looking after memorial receptions and hospitality on Sundays. She also leads the Women's Personal Growth Group which meets once a month, Mondays, on Zoom.

*~ submitted by Margaret Zielinski*

## In Memoriam

**Joyce Beare-Rogers** ~ 1 December 2023 (b. 8 September 1927); wife of the late Dr. Charles Graham Rogers; survived by her sister Marian Grove (late Murray Grove), her daughter Anne (Peter Magee), and grandchildren Amy Fraser and William Fraser.

**Beryl Maxine Hunter** ~ 4 February 2024 (age 86); survived by younger brother Neil Hunter, his wife Bonnie and family, her older brother Donald (the late Marion), her sister Lynn Morrison (Gerald), nieces and nephews.

**Carole Ann Yeaman** ~ 5 February 2024 (age 82); survived by daughters Kristi, Niki and Erika and two granddaughters, brother Stewart and sister-in-law Julie Yeaman; pre-deceased by her parents Captain James Yeaman and Muriel Fitzgerald, and late-life partner Grant Harland.

### Also in our thoughts with condolences:

To our former Choir Director **Jane Perry's** partner, Cora Castle, Jane's mother, family and friends on Jane's death, 17 January 2024 (age 52).

Upon the death of **David Garrow**, to his parents Louise and Don Garrow, and to his wife, Laura McGrath and family.

To Jodi McIntosh and husband, Cam, on the death of Jodi's father, **Larry McIntosh**, on 2 January 2024.

## Environmental Action Group (EAG)



### Riding on Sunshine – An EV Story

It's a beautiful, sunny winter day as I drive across town to visit a friend. My car seems to glide along the road, accelerating easily and almost noiselessly. Not for the first time, I'm struck by a happy thought: "I never have to buy gas again!"

In December 2023, my husband and I became the proud owners of a new electric vehicle (EV), a Volkswagen ID4. And we love it!

We are concerned about the climate crisis so we knew our next car had to be electric. Globally, we have less than six years to cut our greenhouse gas emissions in half (2030) and 25 years to reach net zero (2050). In other words, we will all be driving electric cars soon.

We went with an EV rather than a hybrid (which has both a gas engine and an electric battery) because we wanted to stop contributing to climate change. EVs also require very little maintenance because there are so few moving parts. No more oil changes, no muffler or sparkplugs replaced, etc.

Some people worry about the battery running out and not being able to find a charging station, a phenomenon known as "range anxiety". For us, it hasn't been an issue at all. For example, my husband's commute to Kanata and back uses 16% of the battery. Charging the car overnight easily replenishes that and more.

We also did a road trip to St. Catharines, 550 km away. We stopped to charge twice each way and, since you charge while you're stopped for lunch anyway, it added only 40 minutes to each trip. For three of the charging sessions there was no wait, and once we waited 20 minutes for a charger to become free. There are apps that tell you where charging stations are,

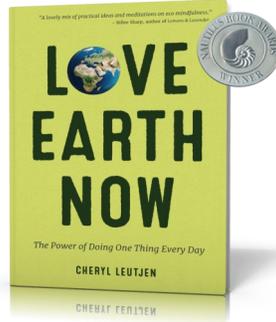
which ones are in use or free, and which ones are working or out of service.

We're also quite happy to no longer be giving money to the oil companies. A full battery charge costs about \$6 (at home, low overnight rate) and gives us about 350 km of range (400 km in the summer).

While it's true that some of the electricity we charge the car with comes from gas power plants, that amounted to only **10.4% of electricity generated in 2022**. It was only 4% in 2017, but the provincial government is **massively expanding gas power plants**. (But that's an issue for another article!)

I'm excited to think what our neighbourhoods will be like in 10 years, when most of the cars on the road are electric, or in 25 years, when all of them are. Our streets will be so much quieter, and our air will be so clean.

~ submitted by Jennifer Balcom



### Hope in Action

*Love Earth Now: The Power of Doing One Thing Every Day* by Cheryl Leutjen, 2018

The title caught my attention. With so much information available regarding climate change and what contributes to it, I have found myself feeling like it was all too BIG. I did not know how to find out who to connect with or even if there was willingness to share the information I was seeking. I began searching the internet to try and find policies about a company's commitment to the environment regarding the products they were selling; not only

their commitment to Canada's environment but to the countries and companies that were a part of their supply chain. I realized that this was an overly ambitious project and, disappointedly I abandoned it. Then I saw this little book at the library.

"*Earth is speaking*", writes author Cheryl Leutjen. "*Are you ready to listen?*" (p.244). I was inspired! Cheryl combines the BIG and the little. She brings the reader into her world of self-inquiry regarding the BIG issues that contribute to climate change, leading the reader toward becoming more earth-conscious. Through events in her everyday life and community, and with such a funny tongue-in-cheek way, Cheryl shares from her heart (as well as her research) her deep feelings and the struggles she experiences to do her part for Mother Earth. She boils things down to bite-size doable ways to which we all can contribute by doing even just one little thing every day.

I have much to learn from Cheryl's diligence to make every drop of kitchen faucet water do double duty. There is a pitcher at her kitchen sink to collect veggie rinse water for use in her garden. Cheryl collects the water used to rinse the dishes for soaking other dishes that need rinsing before putting them into dishwasher. The water from dishes used for raw meat does go down the drain.

I now keep my plant watering pitcher by the sink (forgotten when in the cupboard) to collect the colder water as I wait for it to get to warm, and will do likewise for filling the Brita, using another container. I will add the veggie wash water to the watering pitcher on the days that I do need to water my plants, otherwise it will stand too long. Just several apartment-sized efforts that can mitigate some of the kitchen tap water waste.

Alas, my biggest use of water is my wonderful soak in the tub. I am not so sure that I break-even here!

~ submitted by Susan Spence

# UU Connections Update

This article highlights some upcoming activities for our congregation and congregants related to our membership in the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC).

## CUC Annual General Meeting (AGM)

This year's CUC AGM will take place online by Zoom on Saturday, May 25th at 12:30-4:00pm Eastern. FirstU will have six voting delegates participating in the AGM; selection of these delegates will have been largely completed by the time of publication. Observers are also welcome. Both delegates and observers need to [register](#).

Three motions have been proposed for the AGM that are open for feedback until March 15:

- Defunding Fossil Fuels, submitted by Vancouver Unitarians - Among other things, this motion encourages congregations and individuals who are banking with the five major Canadian banks to move their accounts elsewhere and remove fossil fuel companies and the five banks from their investment portfolios. FirstU removed fossil fuel companies from our investment portfolio in the 2015-16 time-frame.
- Repudiating Terra Nullius, submitted by FirstU Toronto - This motion adds *Terra Nullius* to the motion approved in 2023 for the CUC to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery. See below for more information on this subject.
- CUC Goal and Strategic Priorities for 2024-2026, submitted by the CUC Board. This is an annual motion, but the 2023 version was not approved, making it more critical than usual to approve this year's version.

You can find these motions [here](#).

The deadline for feedback on motions is March 15 and several of the feedback sessions, likely including one at FirstU, will have taken place before publication. Two feedback sessions organized by the CUC will take place in March:

- Wednesday, March 6 at 12:30-2:00pm Eastern: [Motions Feedback 4](#)
- Saturday, March 9 at 1:00-3:30pm Eastern: [Proposed Goals](#). This session will test drive the use of formal consensus to assess the Goal and Strategic Priorities (motion).



## Sharing Our Faith

FirstU will have a "Sharing Our Faith" service on March 24, led by Rev. Eric. This service will include a special offering for the CUC's Sharing Our Faith fund, which supports projects that enhance ministry, growth, and outreach for congregations and for the Unitarian Universalist movement in Canada. For more information on the fund and how it has been used in the past, go [here](#) or watch the new [video message](#).

## The Doctrine of Discovery and Terra Nullius

Call to Action #49 in the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission says: "We call upon all religious denominations and faith groups who have not already done so to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius*".

The 2023 CUC AGM motion to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery urged member congregations to do the same, and the 2024 amendment includes *Terra Nullius* in this provision. We discussed this at a meeting of the UU Connections Team in January and concluded that we need to learn more. A good place to start is reading the 2023 and 2024 motions on this subject, both of which are in the Motions for the 2024 AGM referenced above. Appendix C at the end of the 2023 motion has five pages of reference material, with many links to more detailed articles.

~ submitted by Maury Prevost,  
Chair, UU Connections Team  
[uuconnections@firstunitarianottawa.ca](mailto:uuconnections@firstunitarianottawa.ca)

# Unitarian House - Happy Birthday!

It has often been said that Unitarian House is the elder offspring of the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa. Well, this year that offspring turns 40 and the next few months will celebrate this milestone. Here are a few events to which the congregation is invited to celebrate with Unitarian House and to support the only not-for-profit and registered charity full-service retirement residence for seniors in the City.

On **Thursday, March 21**, there will be a **“Cocktails and Mocktails”** fundraiser to commemorate the first residents who moved in forty years ago. Come and enjoy a drink, and hear some stories from the ‘*Memory Books*’ of residents over the years.

In April we’ll be holding a fundraising **Dinner Murder Mystery** at the **Chateau Cartier Hotel** in Aylmer, Quebec. The menu for this exciting event will begin with a Cartier Salad served with house dressing, followed by a choice of herb marinated chicken supreme or roasted salmon with lemon dill sauce, served with

potatoes of chef’s choice, roasted seasonal vegetables and glazed carrots. The vegetarian option is pasta of chef’s choice, and the dessert is crème brulée with berries. The date for this celebratory event is **Thursday, April 18**, and the cost is \$150 per person, for which you’ll receive a charitable donation receipt for \$50. We still need sponsors for this event, and items for the Silent Auction. Please contact Sabine Couture [retire@unitarianhouse.ca](mailto:retire@unitarianhouse.ca) for more details.

All are invited to join the residents, staff, and volunteers at Unitarian House for a **Celebration of Joy and Thanksgiving** in Worship Hall on **Friday, May 31**. This will be followed by a BBQ in the Courtyard.

Our 40th Anniversary celebration will continue with a **Golf Tournament** on **Thursday June 27**, at the Chateau Cartier Golf Course in Aylmer. All golfers, women and men, are invited for a 9 or 18-hole option. Come and join volunteers from the Men’s Breakfast

Group - Brian Castledine, Larry Jones, Chris Hughes and John Rutherford. Those who don’t golf are invited to join in with a relaxing option at Kōena thermal experience with over 50,000 square feet of spas, hot tubs, and relaxation areas, or dinner only option.

Then, there will be a **Beer Garden** in the Unitarian House Courtyard on **Friday, July 19** with an entertaining band to accompany those who enjoy dancing or listening to lively music.

In **September**, on a date still to be announced, we will have a **Family Day** with entertainment for children and adults, with a BBQ, to which all are invited.

For more information, and to register for any of these events, please contact Sabine Couture, our Interim Administration and Marketing Manager, at Unitarian House [retire@unitarianhouse.ca](mailto:retire@unitarianhouse.ca), 613 722 6690 Ext. 234. Do please come and celebrate with us this milestone event in our history.

~ submitted by Alex Campbell



# FirstU Finances and the Pledge Drive: Your Questions Answered

**How did we do?** The 2024 pledge drive resulted in 203 pledges, our participation goal, and \$330,000, about 5% short of our monetary goal. This was a significant accomplishment in a difficult financial year. You can find a detailed report [here](#).

**How do pledges fit into the larger picture?** FirstU is entirely self-funding. There is no central body to support us. The pledge drive each autumn is part of our budget process for the next year. Pledges form 70% of our income. The rest comes from rentals, fundraising (mostly the Fall Fair) and donations that were not pledged. Our expenses fall into three categories: programs (social justice, RE, music), operations (upkeep, the annual audit) and the largest, staffing (Minister, DRE, Music Director, office & custodial staff). Budget drafts are scrutinized by the Finance Manager, Finance Committee, and the Board, and finally the budget is approved

by the congregation at the annual fall meeting.

**Why are donations always more than pledges?** One reason is that at times we receive large gifts from living individuals or bequests from estates. These gifts have played a big role in keeping our deficits manageable. As well, some people are reluctant to commit in advance to a pledge. This might reflect financial uncertainty or some other reason. But when the time comes, they are willing and able to donate. This is greatly appreciated, but knowing in advance is a big help. A pledge is a promise, not a legal obligation.

**What if I'm new?** We regularly welcome new people. Donations from new members or those just getting to know us are more than welcome at any time. Even better if you could let us know how much you plan to donate in the current year. And you can pledge for the

next year during the fall campaign. You don't have to be a member to donate, and you don't have to donate to be a member.

**How are we doing financially?** FirstU is rebuilding. Our membership and income were on a demographic decline for a few years even before COVID. We have been running deficit budgets, and this will continue for a few years. Several substantial gifts and estate bequests have kept things from being even worse. Our building plans will contribute to reconciliation with Canada's first inhabitants and put us on a sound financial footing for the future. In the meantime, to set your minds at ease, the Finance Committee is working on a long-term financial forecast, along the lines of best case, worst case, most likely case. Stay tuned!

~ submitted by Phil Nagy, Pledge Chair and Treasurer



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



# First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa

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

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

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

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

Mary Ella Keblusek: Vice President

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