

FIRST UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST
CHURCH OF
HOUSTON

ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2020



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AGENDA

Welcome — *Rev. Dr. Colin Bossen*

Call to Order — *Carolyn Leap, President*

Appointment — *Parliamentarian, Process
Observer, Time-keeper*

Review Rules of Procedure

Review Covenant

Minutes from Annual Meeting

June 2, 2019 — *Approval by Online Voting*

Presentation: The State of the
Church/ Annual Report

Presentation: Slates of Candidates for
Board and Nominating Committee

— *approval by online voting*

Presentation: Explanation of
Proposed Budget for FY 2020-2021

— *Investing in Our Community*

Adjourn

03

Letter from the Senior Minister

“

In a just world, in a fair world, in the world I'd like to see, we would value human life and the life of all beings, more than we value profit or economic activity.

”

— Rev. Dr. Colin Bossen,
The Persistence of Solitude

It is an understatement to describe this past year as the most unusual year of my ministry. The world as we knew it for the first eight months of the program year and the world today are radically different. The pandemic and, now, the international protests in response to the murder of George Floyd and against police brutality and white supremacy have changed so much about the world and religious life. This would have been a full year in the life of First Church no matter what but events in the world around us have made it even fuller.

The program year started off on an exciting note. We brought on the Rev. D. Scott Cooper as the Assistant Minister of Congregational Life and Tawanna Grice as the Business Administrator. Both have proved to be outstanding additions to the staff and contributed immensely to the congregation's capacity to minister to its members and the larger community.

With Rev. Scott and Tawanna on staff, I spent most of my time in the autumn and early winter working with the Board to draft the goals for the congregation's developmental ministry. I wrote and distributed my assessment report. It formed a basis for many useful discussions and helped me to get to know many members and friends of the congregation better. When the UUA contacted the Board to let them know that I could stay on as your developmental minister, the work we did on the report and on identifying developmental goals made me feel well prepared to take on the role. I am excited to be continuing with the congregation as your developmental minister through July 2025.

Prior to the pandemic, the staff and I focused much of our energy in worship on addressing the intertwined crises of: the resurgence of white supremacy, the global assault on democracy, and the climate emergency. We were able to turn out about 75 of our members and friends to the September Climate Strike and launched a forum series focused on these issues that drew a wide range of participants. In addition, First Church was invited to be a participating space for FotoFest. In collaboration with Michigan State University, we put on "Now is the Time: Leonard Freed's Photographs of South Africa's 1994 Election." While the pandemic curtailed the exhibit, and so much else, we did welcome over 400 visitors in the week it was open and my father and I, as co-curators, have been invited to contribute an essay about the exhibition to *KATALOG--Journal of Photography & Video*, a well respected Danish photography magazine.

The pandemic required that we rapidly move congregational operations online. Christian Holmes, who had been hired as a part-time A/V Technician, was brought on as a 3/4 time Producer so that we could continue to offer high quality worship online. Carol Burrus, Alma Viscarra, and Alex Keimig, who with the retirement of Jon Naylor moved from part-time to full-time, created an infrastructure for our Zoom programming. And Mark Vogel did a fantastic job creating online musical programming that both draws on his considerable talents and those of the other staff and members of congregation. The staff's combined teamwork has enabled First Church to not only survive but actually thrive in the new online environment. We have about 900 households participating in our online programming. We have seen no appreciable dip in our weekly offerings or pledge income and have even seen a handful of new members join in the last weeks.

In addition to my parish work, I continue to maintain an active scholarly life. And in the last year, I have been grateful to have opportunities to present my work at Rice University, the American Academy of Religion, and the Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara. I have also published two op-eds in the *Houston Chronicle* and a piece in the *Journal of Unitarian Universalist History*.

The next year will prove to be a challenging and, I hope, important time in congregational life and in the world. While the congregation has lost the majority of our rental income, Tawanna's hard work in securing a Payroll Protection Loan means that, if our members and friends continue to support First Church, the congregation's financial future should be secure throughout the 2020-2021 fiscal year. I am fairly confident First Church's fiscal health will be strong much beyond that but given how rapidly the world is changing right now I am cautious about making predictions.

The one prediction I will make is that the five years of our developmental ministry together will be fruitful ones. We have accomplished a lot together in the last 22 months and I look forward what we will do together in the future. I thank you for all the support you've shown me and my son over the last year. And, thank you, for the opportunity to serve the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston. I deeply appreciate it and all of you.

love,

Colin

Rev. Dr. Colin Bossen
Senior Minister



Minutes from 2018-2019 Annual Meeting of the Congregation

Meeting Opening

The meeting was opened with a call to worship, opening hymn, welcome by Rev. Dr. Colin Bossen, and a Call to Order by Bob Miller, the Board President

Quorum

Based on First UU Church's constitution, a quorum is met if we have at least 15% of the membership present -- This was easily met and the meeting began after 80+ voting-eligible members entered the Museum District sanctuary. (The number continued to increase during the early portion of the meeting.)

Meeting Guidelines

The procedural rules for the meeting were reviewed:

No person may speak for more than two minutes at a time. No person may speak more than once on any one item until others who haven't spoken (and wish to) have spoken. After initial presentation, debate time for each item shall be 10 minutes, extended by 10 minute intervals desired by the voting membership (majority vote). Once debate ends, the question is called (and a vote is taken).

The congregational covenant was reviewed.

Roles

Meeting Facilitator -- Bob Miller, Board President
Parliamentarian -- Jeff Skarda

2018 Annual Meeting Minutes

The 2018 Minutes were approved.

Voting on Slate of Candidates for the Board of Directors and Slate of Candidates for the Nominating Committee

Each was moved and seconded, followed by opportunity for discussion (if any) before voting. These motions require a majority vote to pass. Nominations from the floor are permitted prior to voting on the candidates for Board and Nominating Committee but there were none.

Slate of Candidates for Board of Directors 3-year terms:

Johanna DeYoung
(Thoreau Campus)

Ruth Hoffman-Lach
(Museum District Campus)

Joan Waddill
(Museum District Campus)

2-year terms (unexpired terms):

Bill Nelson
(Museum District Campus)

Scott Singleton
(Museum District Campus)

Motion to approve this slate of Board candidates **PASSED**.

Slate of Candidates for Nominating Committee (all 2-year terms):

David Collins
(Museum District Campus)

Doug Kohn
(Thoreau Campus)

Noelle McSherry
(Museum District Campus)

Motion to approve this slate of Nominating Committee Candidates **PASSED**.

Presentation on the Church

(Bob Miller, Rev. Colin)

This presentation covered many areas of church life, as noted in the Annual Report: Church membership and financial health (the church is in good health and programming is strong), the Tapestry campus' decision to 're-become' an independent congregation, the opening of the new Thoreau campus, governance and governance change processes by the Board, a path forward for ministry, the Board's consideration of Developmental Ministry, and recommended changes to the constitution (see below). Staffing for growth and staffing increases/decisions (including hiring a Membership Coordinator) were discussed. The proposed budget was explained and discussed.

Voting on Proposed Constitutional Amendments

Each is moved and seconded, followed by opportunity for discussion if any before voting. Constitutional amendments require a two-thirds vote to pass.

A) Proposed Amendments to the Constitution

1) "In Article 4, Paragraph B, the word 'nine' shall be replaced by the word 'seven'.

This proposal was to reduce board size from 9 to 7. This motion DID NOT PASS.

2) "Modify Article 7, middle of the 2nd paragraph to read: 'Upon the resignation, death, disability or dismissal of a Senior Minister, the Board will, as soon as practical, hire qualified interim and/or contract ministers. When the church is prepared to call a settled Senior Minister, a Special Meeting of the Membership shall be called for the purpose of electing a Search Committee of seven members.'"

Continues on page 13

Assistant Minister's MESSAGE

I began serving First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston on September 1, 2019, having been hired as Assistant Minister of Congregational Life. My duties were defined as devoting fifty per cent of my time to each of the campuses; leading the Museum District's Pastoral Care, Membership, and Social Justice efforts; and leading and coordinating the Thoreau campus operations, including planning Sunday services and supervising campus programs. I would also offer pastoral care and officiate rites of passage for both campuses. The Membership and Communications Coordinator, Alma Viscarra, was identified as reporting directly to me.

By October, it became clear the AV issues at both campuses needed more attention, and overseeing that became my responsibility as well. The Media Technician's (Christian Holmes) role and hours were increased at my request, and that job shifted from reporting to the Music Director to reporting to me. This increase proved prescient, as it placed

Christian in a position to step up and increase his role further when online services became necessary.

The one church on two campuses is a unusual model.

This is especially true when the second, smaller church was its own entity prior to a merger – as opposed to splitting off from the larger. Because of this, each campus has its own

culture. I was still learning to navigate and negotiate these differences when the pandemic hit.

Museum District – my office is on the Museum District campus, with those of the other staff. Prior to the shelter-in-place order, most of my work was done during office hours here. I would typically preach once-a-month at the Museum District, and sometimes again help lead the service when not preaching.

Thoreau Campus – prior to March 22, when we went to online services, I was preaching about once-a-month at Thoreau, and there once more each month to lead services with a video sermon. I was also there in person for monthly Campus Advisory Team meetings. In February, I began having weekly "office hours" in Fort Bend County, alternating between the church and the University Branch Library, in order to be more accessible to the Thoreau members.

Changes after the Pandemic – once we discontinued meeting in person, nearly everything changed. Most of my interaction with the staff, and all of my interaction with congregants, is now over Zoom, email or phone call. I now am involved in planning and participating in virtually all recorded Worship Services.

I had several trips planned for Study Leave as well as vacation, such as a First Year UU Ministers' Conference in Boston, and the Festival of Homiletics in Atlanta. These were, of course, cancelled or converted to virtual experiences.

A UU Church is a place to share questions and emotions, and this pandemic is providing more than usual of each. Ministry is comprised of a great deal of listening and reacting with love to unforeseen events, and I've gotten my share of those, even before my first year anniversary. I look forward to continuing to minister to and with you, both virtually and in-person.

Rev. D. Scott Cooper
Assistant Minister of Congregational Life

NOTE FROM THE

Congregational

Business

Administrator

Having joined the staff of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston in September 2019, I was eager to use my various years of experience and education to apply it to the needs of the church. I was new to the "UU world" and have since found it to be a community (in my opinion) that needs to be recognized by everyone in the world. I had only read about Unitarians in my college Ethics text book years ago. The paragraph or so dedicated to Unitarians did not provide enough awareness that there are selfless human beings in a non-judgmental, liberal religious environment who would welcome everyone to worship. People that are focused on the inherent good in themselves, as well as others is how I believe everyone should want to live.

Facilities

I immediately began to work on ways to improve the building that housed such wonderful individuals. We were able to complete the installation of new carpet throughout the church, as well as the resurfacing of the hardwood flooring in the Channing Hall (of which I negotiated a 5% savings). We were immediately tasked with the extensive elevator repairs, which included repairing major parts that were not included in repairs completed prior to my joining First UU, of which I negotiated an additional savings of \$20K. In addition to these major repairs, several minor repairs have been completed to date including painting, sheetrock repair, ceiling repairs in sanctuary, décor, tile installation in bathroom, removal of old/damaged furniture through the church, as well as many more improvements that are underway.

Finances

While tasked with improving the financial status of the church, I have faced several challenges, including the use of two separate systems to account for all transactions that may occur. I have found that extensive work still needs to be done to insure that all financial records are audit compliant. I have also found

that the current church management software used can be utilized to meet all of the church's needs. Therefore, after staff has been properly trained, the additional software will eventually be adapted so that one system will be used. I am certain that the new fiscal year will bring about great improvements to both the church's finances, as well as the record keeping process.

Personnel

I applied for and we have received the Payroll Protection Program Loan administered through the Small Business Administration. This loan was designed as an incentive to retain employees. The SBA will forgive this loan at 100% as long as 75% of the funds received are used to cover payroll costs. During the pandemic, we have had a great member of the church and staff member (Jon Naylor) retire, we have brought on our AV Technician (Christian Holmes) as a 3/4 time employee to assist us with the exceptional online services, as well as added our Family Ministry Coordinator (Alex Keimig) to our fulltime administrative staff. We believe the additional hours dedicated to these staff members will form as an asset to First UU.

Reopening of the Church: Many of us are anxious to return to the church. We miss seeing our friends and the ability to socialize with someone other than the same people for the last 3 months. We are uncertain of the course the pandemic will take in the next several weeks/months.

Both Museum District and Thoreau-Richmond has been closed since March 17, 2020 due to the Covid19 pandemic. Some of our staff are working both in the office and remotely. Since daycare facilities are considered essential, Discovery Kids (MD rental) is currently occupying the building. We value our members and wish to take all necessary precautions needed prior to opening the doors to the churches. Beginning July, both campuses will undergo extensive cleaning and

disinfecting of all areas. Throughout this process, we have maintained the routine cleaning of both churches, including extensive sanitizing. After visiting the Thoreau-Richmond campus last month, I found that the grounds need to be treated for pests several times prior to it being deemed safe for members to meet. There are also several large tree limbs that are deemed unsafe. I am working with the facilities team to address these areas of concern for Thoreau-Richmond. (The plan for reopening will be presented to the Board for review/approval at this month's Board meeting. After approval is received, the plan will be shared with all members.)

In closing, I would like to thank each and every member that has given so selflessly in the 9 months I have been with First UU. Whether it is the changing of the lighting throughout the church to be energy efficient, donating the beautiful floral arrangements on Sundays, lending art work, counting the Sunday collections, donating pastries/goods/fruits, maintaining our garden & compost, taking donations to the EAC, watering the gardens, responding to late night emergencies at the church, volunteering, being there for each other during surgeries, several of the "Thoreauvians" and their countless hours of maintaining the Richmond location, the members who are always there when I reach out to them for their expertise, the list could go on and on. I am the one person in the church that is blessed enough to witness most, if not all, of the great things the members do for the church, and others. Many of you contribute and wish to remain anonymous which is why I did not list names. I intend on working this fiscal year to ensure that the buildings that house all of these wonderful people are both aesthetically appealing and financially secure for years to come.

Warmest Regards,

Tawanna Grice
Congregational Business Administrator

RE for Children & Youth AND Adult Programming

Worship Services

Each Sunday at the Museum District, a Big Idea (story for all ages) was provided at the beginning of our worship service, created most often by Carol Burrus. At Thoreau, this was provided and most often created by Nina Benedetto, then Alex Keimig.

In early Fall, we began the Chalice Lighting Family program at the Museum District, with a different family lighting the chalice in the worship service each week.

We had our first Blessing of the Backpacks at both campuses. Our RE children brought their backpacks, and in a ceremony we blessed the children and their backpacks and gave them a bookmark with UU messages of love.

Multi-generational Services

Four multi-generational services provided opportunities for all ages to come together in worship at both campuses and were positively received; a summer offering, Water Communion, Bread Communion and our annual Christmas Pageant. We were planning to also have Flower Communion but were unable to do so due to the pandemic.

Music At the Museum District, we put together children from our regular Closing Circle group with our First UU String Band, bringing the opportunity to prepare a song for worship to our families twice during the year.

Youth Service

The Sunday before Earth Day, our Museum District High School youth created an on-line service with the theme of facing the climate crisis during our time of pandemic. Participating in the service were 6 of our high school youth, including two seniors who did part of the sermon: Erin Prochazka and Aiden Murphy and four others: Deklan Brown, Maya Thibaudeau, Emma Thompson and Maren Brown.

Religious Education Classes We provided weekly religious education for all age groups until mid-March at both campuses. Recruiting for teachers continues to go quite well. At Museum District, we brought in three new recruits and all others were returning volunteers. At Thoreau, we brought in one new recruit and all others were returning volunteers.

At Museum District

Our Summer Program provided one group for all ages and was well-received. It had the regular pattern of attendance, higher in June and end of August.

We continued Spirit Play for our youngest RE children. Our older elementary group got a new name Spirit Explorers and we continued to develop lessons based on the church-wide themes providing connection between the Big Idea and the lessons, plus the opportunity for families to share experiences on the same themes on a given week. This group also had multiple Sundays in the Herb/Vegetable/Flower garden, planting seeds, learning about compost as well as harvesting the bounty. They also enjoyed making and sharing fruit and green salads with the congregation AND packing beans & rice for the Emergency Aid Coalition.

The newly named YoUUth Unit, our middle school group learned about loss and death, Unitarian Universalism, while regularly taking trips to Java Lava Café, playing Apples to Apples and making visits to the nearby Glassell Sculpture Garden.

We have one 8th grade youth this year, Bailey Hall, who began her work on Coming of Age materials just before the pandemic, so meetings were moved to on-line. She will be creating a CREDO which she will share with her family, her COA leaders & mentor and a small group of other members of the congregation.

Our Youth Group (high school) met weekly exploring both the climate crisis (many participated in the Climate Strike) and Spiritual Practices. They worked with a handful of other youth in our Houston Cluster of UU churches to put on a weekend-long Youth Rally at Bay Area Church January, with social service projects, worship run by our youth and lots of time for socializing and building leadership skills. They worked for four months putting it together.

Post Pandemic Offerings: After mid-March we started offering On-line Programs for families to see which ones might work: RE for Families on Wed evenings and Thursday afternoons, Story Time on Saturdays, Weekday Reading Club, YoUUth Unit group, and Youth Group.

At Thoreau

Our Younger Group (which was in the process of renaming when the pandemic interrupted services) explores lessons based on church-wide themes in connection with nature and the natural world. The outdoor resources at Thoreau provide a rich well from which to draw real-life experiences and observations that connect the Seventh Principle, in particular, with the other Principles as well as the general wider themes and Big Ideas.

Our Older Group (which was in the process of renaming when the pandemic interrupted services) explores lessons based on church-wide themes in connection with interpersonal and community relationships, including communication and working together to build a better world. The Older Group also participated in the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service held at the Ismaili Jamatkhana Center in Fort Bend County, Texas, to contribute to multiple hands-on service projects benefiting the local community.





MUSIC Department

The Music Program at First Church is thriving, and has begun to evolve and grow in new directions. In 2019, we mourned the loss of our dear, long-time keyboard artist, Bob Fazakerly. Replacing Bob is no easy task! But we press on, while honoring his memory.

The organ has begun a multi-phase repair project (originally spearheaded by Bob). Mark Vogel occasionally performs on the organ, and we have also featured guest organist, John-Eric Gunderson, performing for a special All Souls music service. During this service, the Sanctuary Choir performed Gabriel Faure's beautiful "Requiem." In addition to organ, this piece was also accompanied by a guest violinist and harpist. Throughout the year, other guest musicians have been featured, further expanding the variety of musicianship we are able to offer.

When the Thoreau campus added James Westfall, an excellent musician who often collaborates with his vocalist wife, Kathleen, this opened up an opportunity for pianist, Teruhiko Toda, to split his time working for Thoreau and the Museum District. Teru performs with us at the Museum District about twice per month, and also has been accompanying our Thursday evening choir rehearsals. This past year, we have also increased the Band presence on Sunday mornings. A new drum set was purchased, and band musicians were featured in worship at least twice per month.

We have increased the amount of Spanish language music presented in Sunday worship, including the weekly Chalice Lighting. The choir has presented one anthem sung in Spanish, and with the purchase of "Las Voces del Camino" - the Spanish-language hymnal - for our Sanctuary, we are singing Spanish hymns at least once per month.

Since our services went online in the spring of 2020, the Music Program has evolved in new directions, while still providing meaningful music experiences for our congregation and members of the choir. Mark has worked from his home music studio, producing recorded music for our online services, and has also begun several virtual collaboration projects with congregant instrumentalists and singers. He has also continued to meet with the Choir regularly, online. These virtual gatherings are primarily for community, but also involve some singing (although this is limited by the technology) and other music-related experiences.

During this difficult time, we hope that our Music Program can offer some comfort and healing.

Mark Vogel
Music Director

The post-pandemic offerings mentioned above are intended for all individuals from either campus to find community and fulfillment, and do not differentiate between participants from either the Museum District or the Thoreau campuses.

Special Programs

We joined with other Houston area UUs to attend the local youth Climate Strike on September 6, with signs and yellow t-shirts. Leading up to the Strike, we did a great deal of engagement and worked to support local youth leaders. About 75-90 UUs participated.

At the Museum District, we had some of our usual annual family activities: Feast of All Good Children and Pumpkin Carving. We were planning our regular Easter parade, but were unable to do so due to the pandemic. Instead, we provided some Facebook engagement but that proved to be minimally engaging.

Inquiry Sessions

Our part of these eight, different rotating information sessions, we offered one for

Religious Education for children and youth and another for Adult Programs.

Parent's Group (babies-Pre-K)

This group met twice a month, but in mid-March started meeting online once a week. Until March, Parent's Night Out met monthly to provide support and social opportunity to about 10 parents. After the pandemic, the group met once on a Friday night (after children were in bed) to play an online game.

Parents' Morning Out at Thoreau continued until Mid-March, but did not move online due to the play-nature of the usual meet-ups.

Seven families joined us at Willow Waterhole in November for a community service project, weeding, planting and maintaining the plants there.

RE Welcome Team

At the museum district, we started a special group of Welcome team members who were knowledgeable about religious

education and whose main role was to help new families get situated and followed throughout the morning to help them feel comfortable, get information and begin to feel connected.

OWL (Our Whole Lives Sexuality Program)

For K-2nd - Seven children from our congregation attended the sexuality education program designed for this age group on Sunday mornings just before church, along with a group for parents to support their being their children's primary sexuality educators. It was well-received and appreciated.

For 7th-9th - Nine youth from our area UU churches and the community at large attended our sessions which ran from January until mid-March when the pandemic hit. We had an on-line meeting for closure until we can meet in person (we were two sessions short of finishing).

Continues on next page

Long-range Planning & Leadership

Our RE Leaders Circle has been meeting every other month or so for almost two years now. We continue to explore our current programs and provide long-range planning that is considering minor and major changes to meet the needs of the families in our congregation and community. We met for two different sessions along with our teaching teams to continue brainstorming how to best meet the needs of families and move ritual and spirituality more into the home.

Thoreau Campus

This year, we hired Alex Keimig as the Thoreau Family Ministry Coordinator at 1/4 time. Alex has also spent time at the MD campus assisting the museum district RE program five hours per week. This arrangement also provided the opportunity for guidance/training as Alex was new to UUism and to this role. Between Alex's start and the pandemic, the program was growing and becoming more stabilized.

Since the pandemic we have combined all online offerings from staff and volunteers at Museum District and volunteers at Thoreau into one web page, as choices for everyone at both campuses and for newcomers.

Adult Programming

We have built on last year's success for our Adult Programs. We decided to adopt the name: Adult Programs and Events, as it is more descriptive for newcomers. We had a very successful Race & Identity series with between 25 and 40 people attending each Thursday for several weeks. In addition, Aisha Hauser joined us again for a Saturday two-part workshop about white privilege and leading a service on Sunday.

We offered a Leadership Development Workshop for all leaders in Sept, an Adult Programs Leadership Workshop in Nov, a Right to Vote event in January, Code Blue Film screening in March. We had significant plans for engaging the whole congregation in green efforts for 5 weeks leading up to Earth Day, but much of it was cancelled due to the pandemic.

We provided Zoom Trainings for Beginners AND Zoom Policy Training for several weeks as we transitioned to on-line programming.

Our Adult Programs at Museum District continued with Sunday morning Discussion Circle, Meditation Group, Changing Women, String Band, Climate Action Team and others meeting other times, such as our Garden Team. When groups moved on-line, many of our adult groups not only continued, but grew. An additional weekday Discussion Circle was added, as well as a Creative Writing Group. At Thoreau, Adult Discussion Group continues to flourish with weekly meetings (now being held online since mid-March) offering information and exchange of ideas about topics pertaining to current events. Other Thoreau groups, such as the Women's Book Group, the Men's Group and the Second Thursday Discussion Group have also moved on-line.

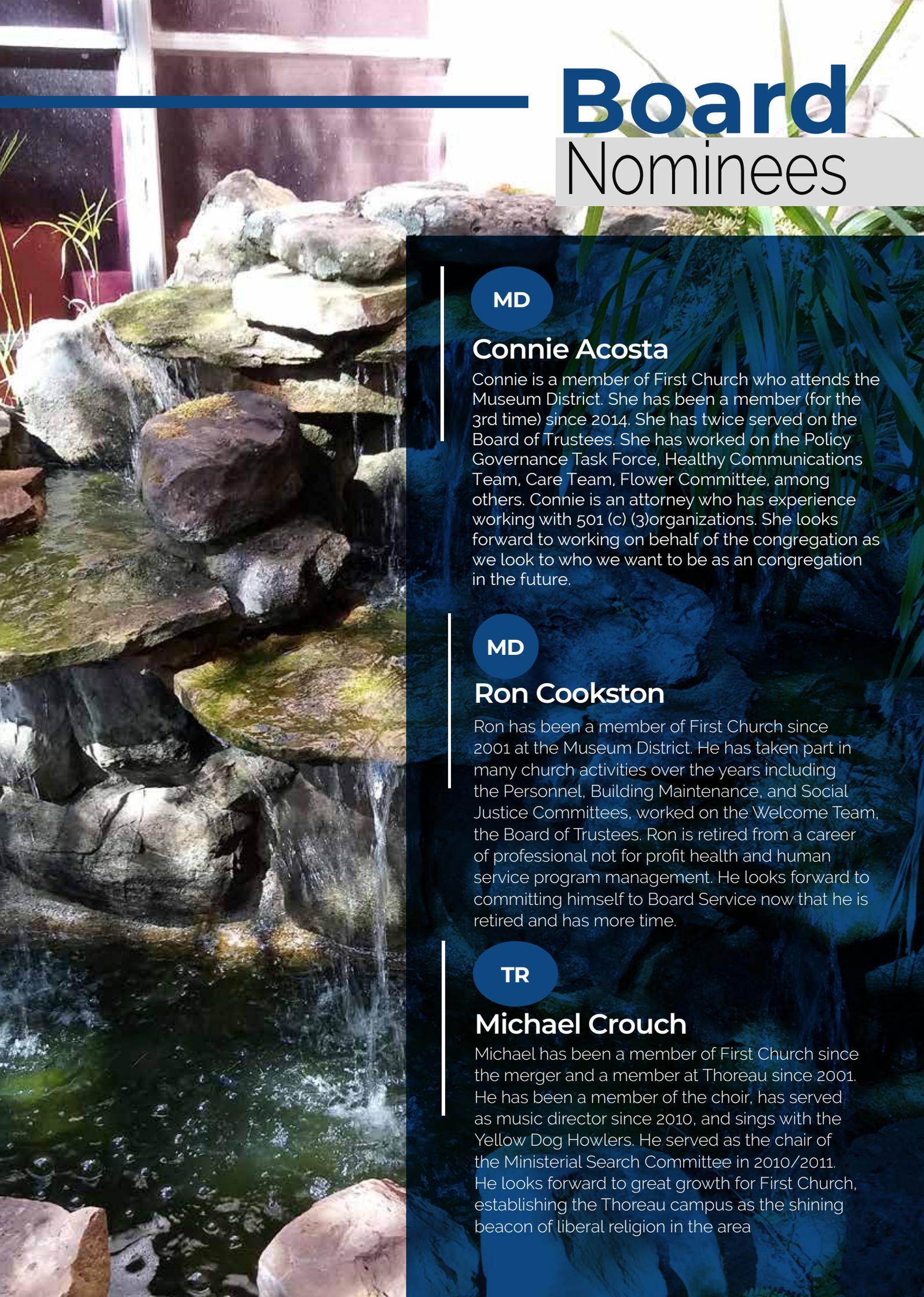
After we moved our services on line in mid-March, we added a weekly Sunday Reflection and Sharing Group to offer an opportunity for members and friends to drop in to a weekly group to share about their current situation in the pandemic and also to reflect on the themes of the services.

Continuing Education

Having applied last year for the Credentialing Program for Religious Educators, (UUA and LREDA -Liberal Religious Educators Association) Carol attended her fourth UU Renaissance Module in July at the UU Mountain on Multi-Cultural understanding, as well as an afternoon workshop on white privilege. Carol also attended the Renaissance Module on Worship, in November at the annual LREDA conference in Baltimore. She is working on her portfolio.

Carol Burrus
Director of Religious Community





Board Nominees

MD

Connie Acosta

Connie is a member of First Church who attends the Museum District. She has been a member (for the 3rd time) since 2014. She has twice served on the Board of Trustees. She has worked on the Policy Governance Task Force, Healthy Communications Team, Care Team, Flower Committee, among others. Connie is an attorney who has experience working with 501 (c) (3) organizations. She looks forward to working on behalf of the congregation as we look to who we want to be as an congregation in the future.

MD

Ron Cookston

Ron has been a member of First Church since 2001 at the Museum District. He has taken part in many church activities over the years including the Personnel, Building Maintenance, and Social Justice Committees, worked on the Welcome Team, the Board of Trustees. Ron is retired from a career of professional not for profit health and human service program management. He looks forward to committing himself to Board Service now that he is retired and has more time.

TR

Michael Crouch

Michael has been a member of First Church since the merger and a member at Thoreau since 2001. He has been a member of the choir, has served as music director since 2010, and sings with the Yellow Dog Howlers. He served as the chair of the Ministerial Search Committee in 2010/2011. He looks forward to great growth for First Church, establishing the Thoreau campus as the shining beacon of liberal religion in the area

Nominating Committee



Georgette Dredge

A very dedicated member at First Church since 1983, Georgette is currently a leader with the Membership Team, is part of the Welcome Team and serves as a worship associate. Over the years, Georgette has also volunteered as registration chair for the services auction, career counselor for young mothers with PRH and member of steering committee for Healthy Parenting, to name a few. Some of you may remember the baked treats she brought for coffee hour for 2 ½ years.



Deidre Hammons

Deidre is a UU since middle school, attending Emerson Unitarian Church. She has been a member of First Church since the merger and a charter member at Thoreau since 1996. She has served in various church roles, including on the Board of Trustees, Membership, Welcome, Stewardship, newsletter, and as a High School RE Teacher and Youth Advisor. Deidre is a born and raised Houstonian and Chemical Engineer from The University of Texas at Austin. With 25+ years in project management, sales, operations, and continuous improvement, she currently is a Process Improvement Manager with CHEP USA, a global supply chain logistics company. She looks forward to encouraging people who are committed to the work of our faith to serve in leadership roles in our church community.



Sue Prochaska

Sue has been a member of First Church for 19 years. She has been a member of the Personnel Committee, Stewardship team, Garden team, and the choir. Sue works for Rice University as their Director of Benefits. She is currently a member of the nominating committee, and looks forward to serving another term.

Developmental MINISTRY

Identity - Mission / Vision / Covenant

"What kind of a church do we want to become?"

- Discern who we are now, where are we going in the future, and how we will treat one another.
- Build a culture of mutual trust and develop effective ways to have open and transparent communications with each other (members, Board, clergy and staff).
- Craft a Mission, Vision, and Covenant that are common knowledge and, along with a Strategic Plan and Annual Vision of Ministry, inform decision-making.
- Governance, Ministry, and Administration:

"How can we have a healthy relationship with our Senior Minister and with the UUA?"

- Implement and refine our new Principles of Governance, including our new management and administrative structure.
- Expand the financial capacity of the Church in order to sustain fair compensation, enhance our physical plant, grow programs, and achieve Honor Congregation status in the UUA Annual Program Fund.
- Prepare the congregation to call a Settled Minister
- Multiculturalism, Anti-racism, and Inclusion:

"How can we increase diversity in our church and work to dismantle white supremacy?"

- Engage the congregation in deep dialogue on multiculturalism, anti-racism, true inclusion, and our journey towards spiritual wholeness.
- Align the institutional framework of the Church with the proposed 8th Principle of Unitarian Universalism.

Encourage the increased involvement of members from underrepresented groups in congregational life and Church leadership at all levels.

- Build a diverse, intergenerational, multicultural Beloved Community in the Church

Multi-site Model: "What is our vision for and commitment to multi-site?"

- Assess our two-campus model and clarify our vision for two campuses.
- Optimize our current two-campus operating model and establish best spiritual, programmatic, and administrative practices for the Church to thrive and realize our potential in both locations.

Growth and Membership Engagement: "More people should be here with us – how do we engage them?"

- Provide more structure and opportunities for engagement within and beyond the Church:
 - In congregational life -- spiritual and intellectual growth, pastoral care, building community, finding meaning, contributing skills to teams and committees, developing leadership, etc.
 - With community needs, programs, and organizations, so that the Church is visibly engaged with our partners.
 - With larger organizations like the UUA, UUSC, and Houston are UU congregations.
- Increase active membership and provide a path for involvement of members, their children and youth.

Minutes, 2019 Meeting

Continued from page 05

This proposal recognized the Board's authority to hire contract ministers (including Developmental Ministers) until the church is ready to begin the process of selecting a new settled Senior Minister. This motion PASSED.

3) "The last sentence of Article 8, Paragraph A. Endowment Fund shall read 'The Senior Minister is authorized to spend up to 0.5% of the Endowment Fund (as of the beginning of each fiscal year) on activities intended to increase the fund.'"

This proposal recognized that there is no longer an Endowment Committee reporting to the Board and replace 'Endowment Committee' with 'Senior Minister.' This motion PASSED.

The meeting was adjourned and Bob Miller thanked all for attending.

Membership

New Online Membership Process

During this period of online programming, in order to become a member of First Church, an individual must:

- Fully complete an online, New Member Profile, including contact information. Members are encouraged to contact the church to update their information whenever it changes.
- Submit a Pledge of Record.
- Prospective members will be asked to attend a Zoom "Meaning of Membership" class. These will be offered at least once-a-month, and the time of the class may be dictated by when those interested are able to attend.
- Prospective members will also be asked to meet one-on-one, via Zoom or a phone call, with one of the ministers.

Members:

(As of Dec. 2019)

282 MD

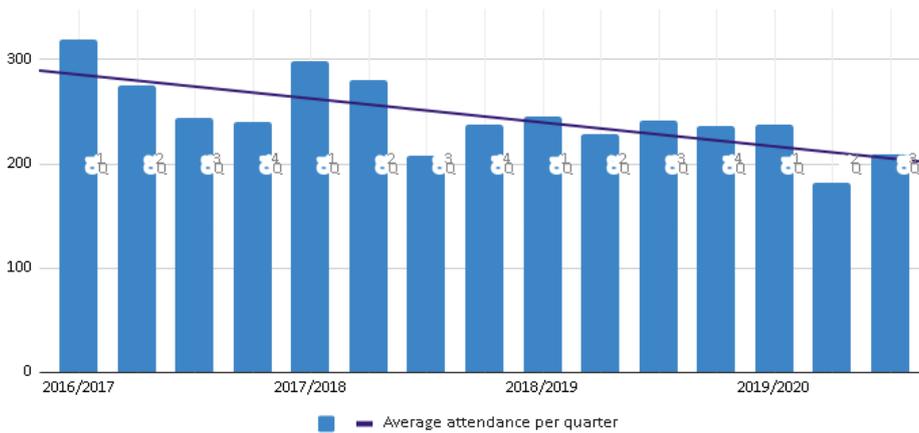
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Attendance

2019-2020 FY

Museum District Campus Attendance

(Quarterly Average with Trendlines)

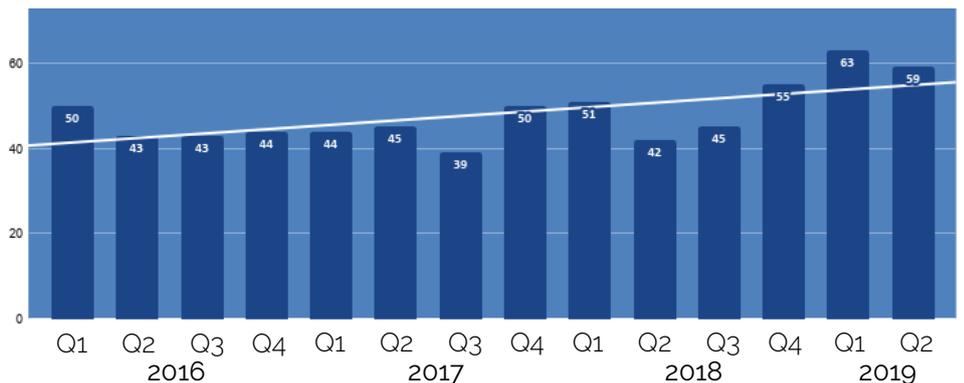


Because of the pandemic, we have shifted to online programming. Currently, our average YouTube views of the services during the first week is 297.

As more families engage with our online services and group meetings, we will continue to track overall participation.

Thoreau Campus Attendance

(Quarterly Average with Trendlines)



2020-2021 Budget

Income

Pledge	623K
Shared Offering	54K
Rental Income	50K
Endowment	30K
Auction	41K
Gifts and Other	37K
Reserve*	139K
TOTAL	977K

All numbers rounded to the nearest thousand.

- * Includes a payroll-protection loan

Special Gifts Campaign

2019-2022

The Thoreau Campus Special Gifts Campaign is more than two-thirds pledged, with much of that money collected and put toward now-completed projects. These improvements to the campus include the completion of the playground, leveling the soil for drainage optimization, upgrades to the cabin, and additional flat screens. An upcoming project is the classroom to nursery conversion.

Expenses

Financial Obligations

Dues	50K
Construction Loan	4K
Fees	6K
Endowment Transfer	4K
SUB-TOTAL	64K

Program

Social Justice	33K
Religious Education	2K
Music	11K
Welcome	8K
Membership & Publicity	6K
Worship	11K
Stewardship	4K
Leadership	4K
SUB-TOTAL	74K

Facilities

Maintenance	55K
Utilities	40K
Office	23K
Insurance	34K
SUB-TOTAL	152K

Personnel

Staff (FT & PT)	686K
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TOTAL EXPENSE

977K

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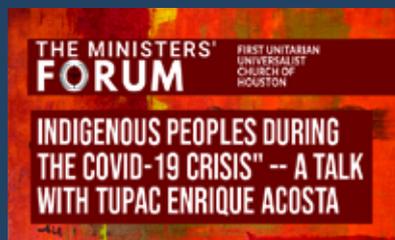
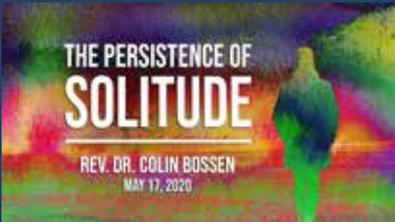
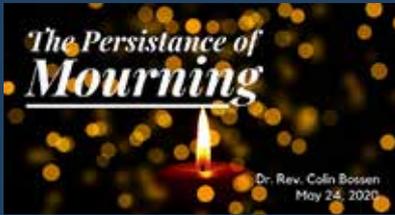
Thank you members and friends for volunteering and sharing these wonderful pictures with all of us!

Caring, Long, Inclusive, Church Community



Thank you for
joining us in
making the
world a
better
place!





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