

All,

This is one in a series of updates on “leaning in” to co-location with First Universalist at 3400 Dupont Avenue South. You can find the October congregational presentation summary [here](#). My remarks from the High Holy Days can be found [here](#). The phrase “leaning in” is intended to convey the congregation’s commitment to an honest and thorough exploration of the possibilities of co-location at First Universalist. Nothing has been decided yet, but the intention is to try to solve the concerns and work toward positive solutions that harness the potential of co-location for both congregations.

Since the Board voted in August 2018 to “lean in” to this co-location possibility, the board, staff, and certain congregants have been actively and deeply engaged in the work of leaning in. All of this work—and the many other efforts I’ve not mentioned here—benefit from the excellent insight and support from our talented staff.

- Our initial work around the question of “is it impossible for the two congregations to fit in a remodeled space at 3400 Dupont Avenue South” has concluded that we could fit. (That does *not* mean that each congregation will necessarily find the architectural conceptual plans we will now develop to be acceptable.) Thank you to congregants Ho-Youl Chang and Sara Weiner for helping out on this continuing work.
- A team of folks have begun work on determining if there are legal and financial structures that could house these co-located entities. We are not yet negotiating with First U but rather working to determine if there are possibilities that could work. Thank you to board member Amy Funk, Howard Orenstein, Judy Hollander and (volunteer) consultant Jay Arneson for their help on this topic.
- Whether we co-locate or not, the synagogue needs to dramatically strengthen its financial position. Thank you to board members Jeff Danovsky, Anne Trockman, and Luke Weisberg for beginning this work, with the assistance of consultant [Kim Snyder](#).

On November 9, 2018, we welcomed First Universalist’s senior co-ministers [Rev. Justin Schroeder](#) and [Rev. Jen Crow](#) to the *bimah* to teach with us and to pray with us. They also announced that they had come to learn from us, an openness we welcome. Their beautiful remarks can be read in their entirety [here](#). Some of Rev. Schroeder’s opening remarks are included here:

*And we know, also, that we are gathering in a time of rising anti-semitism, rising white nationalism, and white supremacy; we are here just weeks after the horrific attack on the Tree of Life Synagogue. We are with you on this Anniversary of Kristallnacht.*

*We cannot possibly know the particular grief and anguish and resilience that lingers and lives in you right now, but we can say that we care deeply about you.*

*We can say that we bring our broken hearts and our love with us into this space. We are here, breathing with you, aching to create a more just world.*

*And it is that shared commitment, a commitment to heal the world, to love the hell out of the world, that we see as the driving force behind the conversations we’ve been having about the possibility of co-locating at 3400 Dupont Ave S.*

Rev. Schroeder and Rev. Crow spoke of the joy in our collective potential: “It brings me delight to think about how we might walk and roll and journey together in particular ways; it makes my heart sing to think that we might do a program like Beloved Conversations gathering, bringing our people together in small groups to learn about race, racism, whiteness, and what it means to be a multicultural, multiracial congregation.” Rev. Crow also acknowledged the work we would need to do now, and on an ongoing basis if we co-located:

*This co-locating we are exploring is grounded for us at First Universalist in a desire to live even more deeply into our faith and the claims it places on our life. We long to make real our commitment to environmental justice and community engagement, finding ways to reduce our environmental footprint and use the building at 3400 Dupont to its fullest. We long to put ourselves into deep relationship with people who are different from us, that we might learn and grow and create relationships that change who we are and call a deeper work for justice out of us. We yearn for the spiritual challenge of rejecting the capitalist idea of mine, all mine, and leaning into the practice of sharing with all of its requirements for articulating our own needs and listening and responding to yours.*

I strongly encourage you to [read their words](#).

You may also recall that John Humleker is retiring in June 2019 ([read more here](#)). The Board is engaged in determining how to help Shir Tikvah continue to rise as we design our staff team for the future. If you'd like to be involved in our planned celebration for John and all that he has done, please [email Sara](#).

As we enter a season of literal darkness (caused by the Earth's [obliquity](#), a word I just learned), let us continue to be a source of light—as we kindle the *Hanukkah* candles, as we call for social justice in the world, and as we care for and comfort each other wheresoever we gather.

In hope,  
Bruce Manning