

All,

I was embraced and uplifted at a recent Friday night service by *Light is Returning* (chorus: "Light is returning/ even though it is the darkest hour/ No one can hold back the dawn."). Charlie Murphy's song is popular, particularly among pagans around Spring equinox, and it has been adapted into Hebrew and used in Jewish gatherings, too. A particularly lovely recording by [Noah Aronson](#) and [Banot](#) is [here](#). The solstice is just a little over a month away, and I am invigorated by the extra minutes of daylight we are picking up each day. My gratitude today to Shir Tikvah is for the singing we do together that comforts, heals, and motivates. What's yours?

### **The search for a new Executive Director**

I wrote [last month](#) with an update on the work we are doing as we search for a new Executive Director. The Board has empowered a Search Committee to handle much of the preliminary work: Jake Blumberg, Joan Bilinkoff Corbett, Dorothy Goldie, Ben Goldfarb, Rabbi Latz, Carin Mrotz, Bonnie Westlin, and me. The Search Committee will vet candidates, do interviews, engage congregants at the appropriate time, and, ultimately, recommend a finalist to the Board. We have worked hard with staff and the Board to develop a job [posting](#). Please feel free to review the posting to understand what we're looking for, and please share it among your network as we look to build an excellent candidate pool. As a reminder, it is congregational policy not to hire members for professional positions. We will continue to update you as the process unfolds.

We are ever grateful to John's steady leadership for 15 years—almost half the life of the congregation—and we look forward to celebrating him on **June 30 at 7pm** at Shir Tikvah. A small committee is working to design the event and give each of you a way to honor and thank John for his dedication to our community.

### **CO-location at 3400 Dupont**

Many volunteers are working hard at Shir Tikvah and at First Universalist, exploring the possibility of co-location at 3400 Dupont Avenue. There is much to learn and to think about. Recent efforts include the joint co-location retreat held by more than 40 staff and lay leaders on January 20th. Here's a photo of the senior clergy talking to us about the spiritual and communal and political energies behind co-location.



I am particularly grateful to Shir Tikvah member, volunteer, and amazing teacher [Beth Zemsky](#) for challenging us to think and work hard on how two different organizational and religious cultures can succeed when engaged in the ways we are contemplating. The meeting was held in the Cummins Room at 3400 Dupont, a large meeting room/small worship space that would most likely be replaced in the remodeling work that would happen if we were to co-locate. (Thank you to Ho-youll Chang and Sara Rothholz Weiner for helping out as we think about that.) This lovely drawing that hangs in the back of the Cummins Room would be relocated; it is a reminder to First Universalists of a place they love dearly.



The Legal Analysis and Financial Affairs team, working with First Universalist volunteers, is shaping up for Board consideration a preliminary and draft cooperative legal structure, one where we are co-tenants and co-landlords in a truly shared governance

model for the maintenance and use of space. Our Jewish Identity and Spirituality group continues to meet and delve into how we express ourselves in our own spaces and how we might both maintain our intimate Judaism and thrive in co-located space; thank you to leaders Tamar Ghidalia, John Walthour, and Rabbis Latz and Lekach-Rosenberg. The staffs at both houses of worship have had a joint retreat and are looking forward to another that is already scheduled. We have begun the process of analyzing each entity's events calendars and budgets. Rabbi Rappaport and Forrest Yesnes have set committee co-chairs (thank you, Barry Epstein and Aaron Lichtov!) and are starting the work of shaping an education vision consistent with the *Talmud Torah*/Lifelong learning principles I wrote about [last month](#).

There's much more to come on all fronts as we figure out if this is the wise course for us. As mentioned in the e-news, Rabbi Latz and I will be hosting a [chat](#) following *Kabbalat Shabbat* services **this Friday, February 15** to share and hear from you about whether and how co-location might affect the spiritual life and Jewish expression of our congregation. Thank you to Abbie Shain for moderating. There will be opportunities to discuss the financial and legal and other aspects of potential co-location, but on Shabbat we turn from the mundane to the sacred.

If you'd like to get a feel for the First U congregation, feel free to join Rabbi Latz at First Universalist on **Sunday, February 24th** as he'll be delivering the sermon that morning. (As much as you enjoy hearing our clergy in that formerly consecrated Jewish space, keep in mind that the current intention in co-locating is that we would be mostly using a new sanctuary space on a new third floor.)

As a reminder, we have created a [new section](#) on the Shir Tikvah website containing many of our communications on co-location. You are invited to send your comments, concerns, and sparks of enthusiasm to this [email address](#). It is actively monitored though you won't necessarily get a personalized response; signed notes will be part of the discussion.

### **Havdalah for March For Our Lives, honoring the victims of the Parkland Shooting**

We should be so proud of the beautiful Jewish activists we are raising up, the young adults who shape our world now and in the years to come, who teach us and inspire us, and who expand our hearts. If you're an adult member, please come to Shir Tikvah as a witness at Havdalah on **February 23 at 6:30** and have your teens, no matter their previous involvement in March For Our Lives, participate in this *yahrzeit* on the one-year anniversary of the American tragedy at Parkland. Donations are welcomed to [Everytown for Gun Safety](#). STIFTY, our amazing youth group, has organized and

designed this city-wide memorial event on their own, with mentoring from Forrest Yesnes.

I remain ever grateful for the staff we support through [our contributions](#) and who support us through their work.

In hope,  
Bruce

