



All,

Shir Tikvah is celebrating Purim! Our youth group, STiFTY, hosts a carnival for our kids on Sunday, March 17 and the congregational *megillah* adaptation is on Wednesday, March 20 (or, as I like to call it, the “Meal and Spiel”). Information and the RSVP is [here](#) and it is going to be great. One of my most treasured Shir Tikvah memories is Purim 2012—a re-telling of the book of Esther as a story of Marriage for All—unifying our tradition and our work in the streets, while marrying men to men and women to women (and, really, any other pairing howsoever they might identify). We defeated that particular Haman and then made marriage equality happen, but so much work remains to be done. If you’d like to get connected to social justice work through Shir Tikvah, drop us a [line](#). If you’d like to deepen your understanding of your tradition, drop us a [line](#). If you’d like to rest and recharge, come sing and pray with us, Thursdays at 7:45 am, Fridays at 6:30 pm, and Saturdays at 10:30 am.

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

The Board’s Search Committee continues the work of finding us a dynamic new Executive Director (see last month’s [letter](#)). We have developed a job [posting](#), as I shared last month. *Please* share the posting among your network as we look to build an excellent candidate pool. The position closes March 22nd. As a reminder, it is congregational policy not to hire members for professional positions.

### **Celebrating John Humleker**

We look forward to celebrating John on **June 30th at 7pm**. If you’d like to be a lead sponsor of this event in John’s honor, please email [Barry Epstein](#) or [Jeff Danovsky](#).

### **Co-location at 3400 Dupont**

I have written and spoken [at length](#) about the practical pulls to co-location: finances and square footage and elevators and parking lots and ramps and classrooms and new a/v systems and a larger worship space and and and... While I am a secular mouthpiece for many hundreds of hours of work done by dozens of volunteers exploring these questions, co-location is a religious and spiritual project. Rabbi Latz gave the sermon at First Universalist on February 25th and you can hear his full remarks [here](#) or read them [here](#). As part of that sermon, Rabbi Latz taught:

The great leader, poet, activist, thinker, human rights giant Audre Lorde (z”l) once said, “When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.” [...] I am here today in part because our two congregations, as you know, are seriously doing an unbelievable amount of work to explore co-location—not because either of us is failing or shrinking. We’re two congregations in Minneapolis who are growing and thriving. We’re doing this because we have expansive vision. Because we seek to build something together. Because we wish to be co-creators, co-collaborators, of a neighborhood and a community that dismantles anti-Semitism and white supremacy and racism and collaborates to build a world of mutual respect, trust, justice, and love. Because we dream of a world where we are brave, where we are brave as we confront our internal prejudices, our fears, our longing, and our dreams, where we are not helpless, but responsible for our own destiny.



Because together, Shir Tikvah and First Universalist are looking to privilege compassion over fear, racial justice over structural inequality, hope over cynicism and despair.

After his remarks, Rabbi Latz and I received much warmth and heard much excitement from First Universalist congregants, perhaps because their leaders have been amplifying and reflecting their own similar thoughts. On February 3rd, Rev. Jen Crow preached a beautiful sermon entitled “When Vision Fails.” I’ve had to cut the poetry of her work for this purpose, but you can listen to it [here](#). Rev. Crow described First U’s completed fundraising campaign, *Not for Ourselves Alone: Building an Inclusive Future*, which was centered around

[Our desire] to make our building into a more effective tool for our mission. We wanted it to be more welcoming, more accessible, more useful to our community, and more financially and environmentally sound. We wanted our building to reflect our commitments to racial and environmental justice, and we wanted to put our largest resource to the best possible use for not just ourselves, but for our community, too. [1] [we have had] conversations with Shir Tikvah, ... synergies and shared commitments of our two congregations... commitments to racial justice, ending white supremacy culture, environmental stewardship, and creating spaces that reflected our values and our dedication to the community....

We are a people that trusts in the truth as we know it—that all are whole and holy and worthy, that all should be welcome here and everywhere, that our strength lies in our collective power, not our individual strength. We know that as we listen and learn from others and as we share our own life experiences from the various complex and complicated contexts that created us, we will grow in strength and power and love. We share a vision of love and justice here at First Universalist, and there are many things we can trust—not the least of which are those three things I learned during my own times of great change—our friends will catch us, our community has a purpose in the world, and compassion, for ourselves and each other, will always be a key practice. So as we move through the conversations and whatever shape our future takes, let us lean on the things we know to be true.

Dropping from the soaring heights of spiritual engagement to the details on the ground, I can report that both Shir Tikvah’s board (at our March 7th meeting) and First Universalist’s Board (at their February 27th meeting) have decided to focus on exploring and developing one of the possible legal structures a subcommittee has developed, a structure that could serve each organization and the purposes of co-location well. It is a structure that has been both successful and stable for [similar projects](#), like Temple Beth Emeth and St. Clare’s Episcopal Church in Ann Arbor.

Using monies from the newly created **Zera (Seed)** fund, we are going to retain architects Miller Dunwiddie, who have been working with First Universalist for years. The *Zera* fund has been created by anonymous donors to support Shir Tikvah in its co-location work and in its new and intense fundraising work. People other than the fund’s founders have also contributed and if you’d like to help cover the operating costs of this work, please contact [John Humleker](#).

Don’t forget, there’s a co-location [FAQ](#) on our website and we’ll always be glad to hear from you by [email](#).



### **Racial Justice Task Force**

Some years ago, the Board set three priorities that it continues to follow today. The one I write most about these days is the question of our facilities. I have written [previously](#) about strengthening *Talmud Torah*/Lifelong Learning. I want to update you briefly on the third, our work on racial justice and equity. The Task Force, led by Tamar Ghidalia and Jim Rubenstein, continues its work in many spheres. They have recently brought to the Board a statement of purpose and principle which we intend to hold up, examine, and meet in all of our work. The Board intends to formally adopt it shortly and you'll be seeing it on the website.

In a similar vein, we should be so proud of the 13 Confirmation students who just traveled to D.C. to study, to worship, to workshop, and to ultimately lobby Minnesota's representatives on issues like climate change, gun violence, and racial inequality in the criminal justice system. Thank you to Rabbi Latz, Rabbi Lekach-Rosenberg and to wonderful teacher/congregant/JCA superstar Dave Snyder for leading this trip. Permit me a small presidential privilege to show off my daughter Nora, Mira Katz-James, Aliya Appelsies, and Rep. Angie Craig (who, along with her wife, is a Shir Tikvah member):



We should be awed by the programming our staff and volunteers make happen through [our contributions](#).

In hope,  
Bruce