



# loughshare

## A Piece of Mike's Mind

*by Rev. Mike Morran*

*(By request, this is a shortened version of the homily to kick off the Capital Campaign on September 24th.)*

In 1871, Colorado was not yet a state, Denver was a relatively prosperous town on the frontier, and rail service North to Cheyenne and East from Kansas City had just begun operating. That same year the very first Unitarian church in the Colorado Territory was founded. Their first meeting was in a small theater on the corner of 16th Street and Lawrence Ave. long before pavement. That church became a beacon of liberal religion in Denver. You are that living church.

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## Transformation

*By Erin Kenworthy, Director of Religious Exploration*

October is a month of change. As the colors of the leaves transform into brilliant reds and golds, the temperature turns crisp, and pumpkin finds its way into every baked good, we also encounter change as we each face the end of another year. I find that just as I have arrived and begun to settle into my work here, another change on the very near horizon presents both opportunities and challenges for our community.

In mid-October, my family will welcome our newest addition. We are a mix of excited and apprehensive, anticipating both expected and unexpected changes in our family dynamic, our hearts, and sleep patterns. When our child arrives, I will be away from my position for eight weeks, and plan on returning just in time to witness the holiday pageant on December 18th. In my absence, the Religious Exploration program will continue to unfold into this new church year, through the combined efforts of staff and volunteer leaders who have stepped up

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Just seven years after the church was founded, just five years after building their first building, expenses exceeded income by \$1000. The trustees held a meeting and voted, "...to turn the social, religious, and especially financial matters into the hands of the ladies of the church, whose zeal, fidelity, faith, courage and executive ability had long since been fully proved." They then advised the "ladies" to sell the property, pay the debts and, "...consider the effort to establish a Liberal Church in Denver a failure."

The women chose to ignore that advice and they set about raising money. They organized tours, outings, concerts, and other events. With Augusta Tabor as organizer, they would disassemble the stove of Mrs. Emily Belden, transport it to locations as far away as Colorado Springs, set it up again and cook dinner for Denver residents who wanted to get out of the city for a day. The debt was paid off and the church reopened.

In 1887, Unity Church, as it was known at the time, sold the original property and built another at 19th and Broadway. There was a sewing room where the ladies of the church taught vocational skills to young girls so they could become employed. In the evenings there were classes for boys who couldn't attend school because they had to work during the day. A group called "Associated Charities," was established at Unity Church which went on to become United Way International. Always ahead of their time, in 1893 the Rocky Mountain News reported that Unity Church had departed from custom by having six women ushers! Scandalous in 1893!

There were good times and bad, there were two world wars, the depression, and the Ku Klux Klan, which pretty much ran the city in the 1920s. In 1946, Frank Keezer, a long time pillar of the church, in a pamphlet called Historical Sketches of the 1st Unitarian Church of Denver, wrote; "For three quarters of a century we have carried on. Sometimes we have staggered, often we have stumbled, but we have never fallen. When the going was hard and difficult we have lifted our heads high and with level eyes marched forward, carrying aloft the banner of our faith, the flag of the free and untrammelled church, the ensign of Unitarianism."

The congregation moved to 14th and Lafayette in 1957, and through the 1950s and 60s, was deeply involved in civil rights, desegregation, and the Congress of Racial Equality. Members of this congregation took part in housing testing to uncover Red-Lining in real estate. The Fair Housing Center operated from our offices.

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***Transformation from page 1***

up to the call. It truly does take a village, our beautiful village, to support our children and families, including my own.

Matt Davis, Marcus Ryan, and Barbara Wilkerson will support programming in their staff roles. Matt will update our website, maintain e-communications with families and volunteers, and plan the activities for Spirit Jam. Marcus will guide our youth programs and support our volunteer youth advisors, while mentoring our youth fellows. Barbara will maintain the space and the care of our Nursery program. Please offer the RE staff your support and resources as you are willing. I am so grateful for each of them, and for their unique gifts and skills that they bring to our Religious Exploration community.

Jen Stephens and Bridget Everhardt have agreed to fill in for me on Sunday mornings while I am away on leave. Jen and Bridget's families are active participants in RE, and I have every confidence in their ability to support this community, our families, and our volunteers. Additionally, the RE committee and the teaching teams will work together to maintain our covenanted program.

Though I will miss you during my leave, baby Bryce, Owen, Jason and I feel so very supported and loved. I feel able to step away with peace of mind, knowing that the people here will hold each other with love and grace, will continue to nurture our children and youth as they grow, and will welcome us back as we face the coming adventures to be experienced in 2017.

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## **Growing the Flame to \$2.6M**

***by Karen Derrick Davis, Capital Finance Coordinator***

Can you believe it? We have already secured \$1.45 million in commitments toward our renovation project! We are solidly on our way to our goal of \$2.6 million as we move into this second phase of our campaign—the Leadership Phase!

On Saturday, September 24th, we launched this largest phase with singing, dining on great food by Stellar Catering and ice cream provided by the choir, and enjoying wonderful fellowship. Many people

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## Notes from Our Legacy: Augusta Tabor and The Ladies Aid Society

*by Kathlene Sutton—with many thanks to Susan Robertson, archivist extraordinaire.*

In her history of the church's first 50 years, Muriel Mills resorts often to the grim refrain, "The church was on the ragged edge of insolvency . . ." But the First Unitarian Society of Denver rebounded every time. Is it any surprise that "the ladies" came to the rescue repeatedly in FUSD's early years?

In late 1879, the church was only eight years old and Unity Church (the congregation's first permanent home, at 17th & California) was only six years old. Debts had mounted, the temporary pastor had left abruptly, and the all-male board of trustees was ready to shut down the church, "closing the book on the effort to establish a liberal religion in Denver." But the church's Ladies Aid Society balked. Result: the trustees handed over church finances to "the ladies," who kept the doors open, without a paid minister or regular services.

Already on record as the largest single donor to FUSD's first pledge drive in 1873, the Ladies Aid Society accelerated its ongoing fundraising, launching numerous winter parties, summer excursions and other events, including "strawberry festivals" --all open to an entertainment-starved public. An official LAS member, the wealthy and well-known Augusta Tabor hosted many fundraisers (including a strawberry festival commemorated in FUSD's Centennial calendar) at her 20-room home at 17th and Broadway. She is also credited with "spearheading" a later railway excursion to the Garden of the Gods and other nearby sites that "cleared \$351.13" from sales to 161 ticket-buyers.

Before Augusta met and married Horace Tabor in Maine (and they later struck it rich in Leadville's silver mines), she "grew up in the Unitarian-Universalist church, with the rather modern notion that women were the equals of men" (according to Phyllis Perry's *Colorado Vanguard*s). Augusta's independent spirit was tested--and not found wanting--shortly after the Tabors bought their lavish Denver home: historian Caroline Bancroft claims that "delegations from the various churches came to call, each seeking the Tabors' membership," but Augusta rebuffed them all, remarking, "I suppose Mr. Tabor's and my souls are of more value than they were a year ago."

Fortunately, it was the First Unitarian Society of Denver that Augusta ultimately chose to support--before, during and after the Ladies Aid Society's crucial campaign to save the church. Even *The Rocky Mountain News*, in its first edition of 1881, trumpeted the campaign's success in "securing" the "large sum" of \$2,000. But, then again, the newspaper's owner, W.N. Byers, is on record—along with Augusta Tabor—as donating to, though not necessarily joining, First Unitarian.

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We had and still have a well-deserved reputation as the place where groups and individuals that can find no public venue for their meetings or public presentations were welcomed.

In 1965, members of this church marched across the Pettis Bridge in Selma, Alabama. That was the same year our front doors were vandalized with red paint because we hosted Free Cuba meetings and somebody thought we were aligned with Communists.

Over the years, we have welcomed and made space dozens of Peace, racial justice, gay/lesbian and women's rights groups. The Metropolitan Community Church of the Rockies worshipped in our upstairs chapel for years before they bought their own building.

Fulltime agencies that have used our space include the Abortion referral and Counseling Service, American Youth Hostel, the ACLU, National Organization of Women (NOW), American Friends Service Committee, The Gray Panthers, Denver Free University, AA, CA, and NA Groups, Common Cause, The Gay Pride Center, the Denver Gay Men's Choir, the Mosaic Choir, the Freedom Fund and many, many, many more organizations either began here, or began meeting here, because our members were involved, or because we made space available.

In more recent years we've worked on homelessness and affordable housing, mental health, marriage equality, immigration justice, accessibility, peace, gun violence, and more. Last year we received national attention and hate mail from all over the country when we offered sanctuary to Arturo Hernandez Garcia. We've given away over a quarter of a million dollars to local agencies and causes just in the past few years. We are widely recognized in Denver, and nationally among Unitarian Universalists and the Interfaith Community as a congregation that puts its money and its faith to work.

That was part of the reason the City Council voted unanimously about a month ago to designate 1st Unitarian Denver as a site of historical significance.

I know of a lot of other churches, but hardly any that have been as busy and as influential as this one. And all that is wonderful, and I am so proud and humbled to be part of this community and this history. And all of this raises the question... what about the next 147 years? What will those

**REMINDER!**

Have you been to a couple of services and wondered more about the roots of Unitarian Universalism? Have you been involved in a Core Circle and really gotten to know the congregation? Are you ready to embark on a journey of the mind, heart, and spirit? Then our "Finding Yourself at First Unitarian" is made for you. It is **Saturday November 19th at 9:00a**. Register with the office by email or phone (303-831-7113 x0).

# It's Nearly Election Time!

*by Amanda Trujillo, Racial Justice Project Co-Chair*

Legislation and public policy do not impact all persons equally, particularly when it comes to the criminal justice system. For this reason, the Racial Justice Community Action Network (RJCAN), a subcommittee of the Racial Justice Project at FUSD has reviewed the ballot and has made some recommendations:

**Amendment T (also known as the “No slavery, no exceptions” amendment)** - It is a common misconception that slavery has been constitutionally abolished. However, currently both the Colorado constitution and the US constitution provide for an exception to the prohibition of slavery through the prison system. The Colorado Constitution reads: “There shall never be in this state either slavery or involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for a crime.” Amendment T would remove this exception. RJCAN recommends a “YES” vote on Amendment T because the Colorado Constitution should not legitimize slavery in any form.

**Amendment 70 (constitutional amendment raising minimum wage to \$12 by 2020)** - Many of Colorado’s lowest paid workers (often persons of color) cannot afford to live in the cities they work in while gentrification continues to take over many neighborhoods. To assist in closing the gap between wages and cost of living, RJCAN recommends a “YES” vote.

**Denver Referred Measure 2B (amend the city charter to include the office of independent monitor and citizen oversight board)** - The office of independent monitor and citizen oversight board is an ordinance born from the pattern of racially biased police violence with impunity across this country. RJCAN recommends a “YES” vote to formalize both into the city charter, assuring a vote of the people should a future mayor or city council want to dissolve either.

RJCAN also recommends congregants living in the 1st and 2nd Judicial Districts take extra time to learn about the District Attorney candidates running for office. The District Attorney is perhaps the most influential position in the justice system and these races often run uncontested. This year constituents in these two districts do have a choice.

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volunteered to make the event a success—many thanks to everyone who pitched in!

Now, through early December, volunteers will reach out to most of the congregation through one-on-one visits to invite you to contribute financially to this ambitious project. This personal approach is the standard best practice for capital campaigns. Because we are asking everyone to stretch, most commitments will be paid over three years.

Please visit the project website at [www.fusdcapitalproject.org](http://www.fusdcapitalproject.org) to see the video and get more information. You can also visit our permanent display in the community room on the south/14th Avenue wall.

Legacy Phase	Leadership Phase	Community Phase
<p><b>June – Sept 2016</b> \$1.40M</p> <p>The forty-five congregants who have brought us this far and set the stage for success. Volunteers visited one-on-one to complete commitment forms with donors.</p>	<p><b>Oct – Dec 2016</b> \$45K (to-date)</p> <p>Largest part of the campaign.</p> <p>Visits to 150 congregants to invite their participation in the campaign.</p>	<p><b>Jan – Mar 2017</b></p> <p>Outreach to broadest community—inside and outside the church.</p> <p>Final push to reach our goal through special fundraising events such as “selling the new chairs,” children’s fundraising projects, etc.</p>

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What will those who come after think of us in the 2nd decade of the 21st century? Will we leave them prepared? Will they be proud of us?

Here’s what I know. All over the city, indeed all over the world, 1st Unitarian has stood for and spread the core values of liberal religion – the worth and dignity of every person, justice in human relations, an unflinching search for both social and spiritual truth, the deep conviction that you and I can think differently, and still be united in love and good will.

These are the aspirations of the free and untrammelled church. These are values worth holding up with ...our heads high and with level eyes marched forward. And while I have no idea what causes or concerns will occupy the minds and spirits of the next five generations of Unitarian Universalists, what their names will be, what color their skin, or who will have need of being welcomed in those future days, I know well, and insistently, and passionately, that I want them to have a place to be.

Let’s make them proud!