

# First Unitarian Church of Oakland

## Nomination for the Moral Beacon Award

The members and friends of the First Unitarian Church of Oakland – and the church itself – demonstrate extraordinary courage and commitment in the work of creating a better world through many programs and a culture of generosity. Their generosity is demonstrated on a regular basis through financial donations, structured programs, and one-on-one outreach to the urban community where the church is located.

### **Chaplain Program**

Let us look first at a new program the church established this year. Like many Bay Area churches, First Unitarian Church of Oakland (1<sup>st</sup> U) has a number of trained ministers who call the church home. Five of these ministers have agreed to provide chaplain services, not only to members of the congregation, but to members of the community. Each of the five chaplains has committed 5 hours per week to this program, meeting with people in need by appointment or during regularly posted office hours. At this time, about 60% of the chaplains' time is spent helping non-church members. They are providing pastoral care to people who come in off the street. Some of those who are using their services are members of organizations which meet in the church (AA, Health Initiative for Youth, Empowerment Ministries, which ministers to street people, e.g.). This is a new, but very strong outreach program and one that is a source of pride to all members of our church.

### **Homeless Assistance**

There are several people who use a portion of our covered portico as shelter overnight. In the morning Church staff make it possible for these folks to use the toilet facilities and to freshen up. Often they are also given food at that time. These people are always greeted with respect by staff and by church members and friends who pass them on the way into and out of the church.

During the unusually cold weather in January, these men – and others – were invited to spend the night inside our sanctuary. Members of the congregation took shifts staying in the building with these guests to enable this ministry.

### **Food Pantry**

Church members maintain a pantry of food for those who come by expressing a need. Not a Sunday goes by without more food being brought to supply this pantry. And rarely does a day go by without someone coming to the church door in need of sustenance. We are grateful that we can provide it.

## **Justice Ministries**

Social justice is a main focus and drive for this community as demonstrated by the number of projects we have been involved with as well as the number of people who work on them. Here are some of the programs from this past year:

- GotCOM, computer literacy training & free computers & internet access to people in our West Oakland neighborhood
- Lafayette School Mentoring Program (our neighborhood elementary school)
- McClymonds High School Merit Awards (our neighborhood high school)
- CA Clean Money Campaign
- Marriage Equality
- Declaration of Peace
- UUA Action Issues
- UU Legislative Ministry, CA
- UU Service Committee
- Center For Urban and Family Life
- Journey Toward Wholeness (antiracism)
- Welcoming Congregation

## **Special Sunday Collections -- \$14,848 (attachment)**

Over the past year, First Unitarian Church of Oakland donated all the monies collected on 11 Sunday mornings to organizations and agencies outside the walls of the church. The total amount donated to these programs was \$14,848. Below are brief descriptions of the organizations which benefited from First Unitarian's culture of generosity. In many cases, First U members also put their time and energy into these programs, above and beyond the financial donations.

Oakland Community Housing -- The mission of Oakland Community Housing, Inc. is to make a positive impact on people's lives by producing and managing quality affordable housing, including rental and home ownership units.

Community United Against Violence (CUAV) -- CUAV is a multicultural organization working to end violence against and within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTIQ) communities. CUAV believes that in order for homophobia and heterosexism to end, we must fight all forms of oppression, including racism, sexism, ageism, classism, and ableism.

Okland, Transylvania / Partner Church -- First Unitarian Church of Oakland is partnered with a Unitarian Church in Okland, Transylvania. We raise money for them through the special collection, by selling their crafts, and with a Transylvania Awareness service and program each year. A number of First U members have visited Okland in person.

Get On the Bus -- A program that enables children to visit their incarcerated parents.

Starr King School of Ministry -- First Unitarian Church of Oakland feels strongly that we owe the Starr King School of Ministry a debt of gratitude for all they have done educating UU ministers and progressive religious leaders for society.

City Slickers -- City Slickers currently operates five inner-city garden plots and sponsors a weekly farmers' market. The nonprofit hopes to install 50 backyard gardens in the coming year, with follow-ups from expert gardeners to ensure the gardens keep running.

Lafayette School Mentoring Project -- The mission of the Lafayette School Mentoring Project (LSMP) is to increase academic achievement and attendance in the students who attend the Lafayette School (K-5) in West Oakland, CA. To realize this aim, LSMP provides no-cost one-on-one academic and enrichment programs to low income West Oakland elementary students at the Lafayette School.

Save Darfur – This program utilizes media outreach, public education, targeted coalition building and grassroots mobilization to pressure policymakers and other decision-makers in the United States and abroad to help the people of Darfur.

Balazs Scholars – Nearly every year since 1994, the Francis Balázs Scholars Program has brought a Unitarian Transylvanian minister to study at Starr King. First U not only helps fund this program through donations, but is one of the churches that alternates serving as the sponsoring/home church for a minister for a year.

Project Harvest Hope -- Project Harvest Hope is working to create a regional response to the new challenges of globalization and social renewal facing Transylvanian villages, including their new effort to assist sustainable rural development and strengthen civil society.

Alameda County Community Food Bank – The mission of this organization is to alleviate hunger by providing nutritious food and nutrition education to people in need, educating the public, and promoting public policies that address hunger and its root causes.

Oakland Youth Chorus -- The OYC was formed in 1974 to bring teens together from disparate areas of Oakland, both to make great choral music AND to foster understanding between teens of different background and ethnic identities. 32 years later the OYC has expanded into a major music education organization.

### **Additional Giving**

In May, 2005, First Unitarian Church of Oakland held a dinner and auction as a church fundraiser. The team which set up the event committed 10% of the profits to an outside charity. The team selected the Lafayette School Mentoring Project as their beneficiary, donating an additional \$1,200 to the mentoring program (beyond the \$1700 collected during the Sept. 10th Sunday service).

### **Holiday Spirit**

Our members and friends donated more than 100 wrapped Christmas presents matched to a child's age and gender. While we can not be certain of the dollar sum of all the gifts donated, we estimate that each gift was in the \$10 range. Thus, the congregation donated about \$1,000 of presents to needy children through two ministries that use our church facilities: 1) Empowerment Ministries which ministers to street people; and 2) UROJAS, an evangelical faith community which ministers to individuals in transition or recovery.

## Special Sunday Collections in 2006

<b>2006 Sundays</b>	<b>Collection Sum</b>	<b>Special collections</b>
<b>Feb 12</b>	<b>\$1420</b>	<b>Oakland Community Housing</b>
<b>March 12</b>	<b>\$450</b>	<b>Community United Against Violence</b>
<b>Apr 2</b>	<b>\$1370</b>	<b>Okland, Transylvania ~ Partner Church</b>
<b>Apr 23</b>	<b>\$1075</b>	<b>Get On The Bus</b>
<b>May 21</b>	<b>\$1018</b>	<b>Starr King School for the Ministry</b>
<b>June 11</b>	<b>\$885</b>	<b>City Slickers program</b>
<b>Sept 10</b>	<b>\$1700</b>	<b>Lafayette School Mentoring Project</b>
<b>Sept 24</b>	<b>\$1760</b>	<b>Save Darfur Program</b>
<b>Nov 19</b>	<b>\$2400</b>	<b>Balazs Scholars / Harvest Hope</b>
<b>Dec 3</b>	<b>\$1150</b>	<b>Alameda Food Bank</b>
<b>Dec 10</b>	<b>\$1620</b>	<b>Oakland Youth Chorus</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$14,848</b>	<b>12 programs</b>