



## **THE ALLIANCE ALERT**

### **May-June 2021**

**The Women's Alliance of the  
Unitarian Church of All Souls, Inc.**



### **MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

**By Christine Goodwin**



As we welcome the warmer weather and appreciate the new blossoms on our city streets and parks, we look forward to renewed outings with our Women's Alliance group. It will be a treat to see one another in person, experience interesting cultural offerings, and maybe even have lunch together.

I hope that most of you have been able to receive the vaccinations, and will be ready to resume some social activities, even while we continue to wear masks and practice safe distancing.

I want to thank the almost 50% of WA members who responded to the Women's Alliance survey sent out in March. Here are some highlight results of the survey:

- Two percent of us are new members, the rest are evenly divided: 32% have been members for 1–5 years, 32% have been members for 6–10 years, and 34% are long haulers, over 10 years.
- Fifty-two percent participate in WA outings.
- Almost 90% are interested in continuing WA programs over the summer.
- There is interest in a WA advocacy program, with the greatest interest divided among "Women's Issues," "Neighborhood Volunteer" and "Voting Rights."
- Over 90% of respondents are comfortable Zoom participants.
- The background of our members is heavily tilted towards writing, editing, and journalism, by just over 40% of respondents!

Members had many good suggestions that we will follow up on, such as:

- "Make phone calls to say hello — just a friendly chat."
- "Have some events in the evening or on weekends, so working people can attend."
- "Continue Zoom even after we can meet in person."
- "Plan some intergenerational events."
- "Start 'getting to know you' Circles to encourage friendships among members."

We will send a survey reminder to non-respondents soon, because we need your ideas, your interests, your participation, and your enthusiasm.

Hope to see everyone on Zoom or in-person soon.

## WOMEN'S ALLIANCE OUTINGS RESUME!

By Mary Geissman

With the advent of spring and with many members getting vaccinated, Program Co-chair for Events Alix-Marie Hall organized two exceptional April outings to view and learn about some extraordinary art.

Three of us joined Alix and her husband at MOMA PS1 in Queens to view the Niki de Saint Phalle exhibit. An amazing artist, Saint Phalle created very colorful, larger than life sculptures — many of women and some of which serve as slides in playgrounds. She also made jewelry, perfumes, films, and artworks featuring various social justice messages on the AIDS crisis, gun control, climate change, and family planning.

Two weeks later nine of us joined Alix in visiting two galleries on the Upper East Side followed by lunch. The first stop was the Leila Heller Gallery to view “Beyond the Realm,” the exhibition of contemporary artist Soraya Sharghi. We then went to see the exhibit of Fausto Melotti ceramics at the Barbara Mathes Gallery, followed by a leisurely lunch. Afterwards, five of us visited Salon 94, where we viewed more works from Niki de Saint Phalle.

Despite the terrible rainy weather, it was so good to be able to see fellow Alliance members in person again as well as enjoy some interesting art. We thank Alix for organizing these events and look forward to future outings in the warmer weather.

At the Leila Heller Gallery, Soraya Sharghi's artwork "Indefinite Flow" is obscured by Heli R-F. Blum (kneeling) and, standing l to r: Mary Ann Lang, Sandra Lotz Fisher, Mary Ann Van Osdol, Alix-Marie Hall, Elizabeth Paterson, Joan Flesch, Ingrid Krinke, Maureen Marwick, and Mary Geissman.  
(Photo courtesy of Sandra Lotz Fisher.)



## NEW MEMBER PROFILE: NANCY BLAIR

By Alynne Wesson

As Nancy Blair, All Souls' weekday receptionist for a year and a half, sat among the daffodils in the All Souls front garden during a short break in April, a child on the way into soccer practice turned and made a beeline to greet her and share the latest excitement. As All Souls' unofficial "COVID czar," Nancy had already taken the temperatures of the girl and her caretaker earlier in the day and taken down their contact information and health histories for purposes of possible contact tracing in the future. And so she waved them into the building for Super Soccer Stars (the program rents space from the church in Reidy Friendship Hall.) She is both a friendly greeter whose smile is quite perceptible from behind her mask and a health-safety watchdog, the church's first line of defense in these COVID times.



It's all in a day's work in the new normal for Nancy, a former editor and reporter who covered technology before she became a longtime stay-at-home mom, and now empty-nester with a daughter in college. From 2017 to 2020 she also served as a coordinator of the Wednesday-night feeding program at Brick Presbyterian Church, where she is a member and recently completed a three-year term as deacon.

She is handling so many tasks at All Souls it seems easier to ask what she doesn't do. A few minutes on a recent Monday afternoon included "policing," as she calls it, to make sure visitors to the building were keeping their masks on and continuing to social distance; answering all phone calls to the church; and warmly welcoming all who enter, including volunteers for Monday Night Hospitality — "I try to support and encourage every volunteer who comes in. They are appreciated."; and graciously accepting a large delivery for MNH from the food waste-solution non-profit Rescuing Leftover Cuisine.

"Nancy raises multitasking to a whole new level," says Alliance member Laura Pedersen, who has relied on Blair's help and support for multiple church projects. "Compound tasking? Geometric tasking? She can simultaneously take your temperature and lay out a newsletter while booking a wedding."

Involved with All Souls beyond the scope of her job, Nancy is the editor and photographer of the new and much admired All Souls Garden News (about which, she points out, Bill Bechman has the final word). You can email her at [nancyb@allsoulsnyc.org](mailto:nancyb@allsoulsnyc.org) for a copy. And she recently joined the Women's Alliance because, she says, she thought it might be a fun way to meet people for outings and cultural events.

All Souls Senior Minister Galen Guengerich was quick to respond about her role at All Souls. "As our weekday receptionist," he writes, "Nancy is the first voice many people hear when they call All Souls, and she's the first face many people see when they arrive. We couldn't be better represented by her warm and welcoming presence. Nancy radiates the best of the great family of All Souls."

## THE YEAR IN REVIEW

### A peek into the pandemic lives of Alliance members

Who's writing her memoirs? Who freaked out at Rockaway Beach? Who's gone to the birds? Read on as members of the Women's Alliance fill us in on their lives in the time of coronavirus. Several of their stories have been edited for length but appear in full in the supplement that was emailed with The Alert.



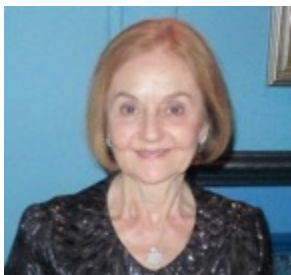
**Cynthia Brown:** I worked virtually at All Souls for six months, then returned to the office and have been there since. During my free time, I took a lot of online courses, watched films on the TV, and spent time catching up with friends and family on the telephone. Things that I had taken for granted previously are now fully appreciated.

Cynthia Brown back at work at All Souls

**Sarah Dowson:** Last March I took my last #6 subway home to Union Square from All Souls. Paul Lenner & I talked on the train, not realizing this would be our last ride from All Souls for a long time. In summer, I often enjoyed watching salsa, hustle & tango dancers at the Christopher St. pier, and loved the beautiful sunsets. Until July I helped close the Appalachian Mountain Club ...

*[Continued in Supplement.]*

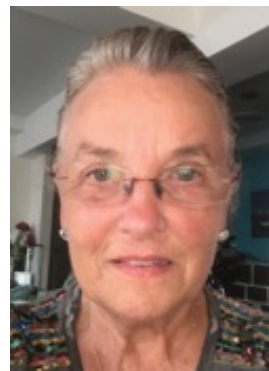
Sarah Dowson picking vegetables for dinner in the Appalachian Mountain Club's garden on Fire Island.



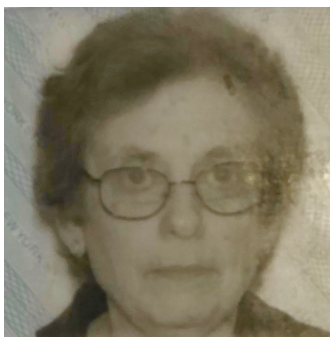
**Sandy Ekberg:** After a decade, Sandy returned to family history research and was amazed at how many more digitized documents are now available. She was able to go back as many as 10 generations along some family lines. Now she is working to break through some of the brick walls she encountered in forebears closer to the present.

Con't . . .

**Sandra Lotz Fisher:** She has been up to a lot considering this loooooonnnnnngggg time span. She hosts a monthly Zoom call with 15 women in her UPENN Class of '64. As president of the class she enjoys lots of calls and programs from Penn. She has resumed studying Norwegian with a conversation group and loves programs offered by the JCC ... *[Continued in Supplement.]*



**Linda Gendelman:** Now, during this great scourge they call the pandemic, I make the most of living in my small rural community by writing my memoirs, reading poetry, going on Sunday adventures to local spots in the Catskill-Hudson Valley and Zooming into courses. Lately, I have Zoomed in with my limited computer access, to Si Beagle short-story and creative-writing courses, ... *[Continued in Supplement.]*



**Laura Pedersen:** Glamour shot at Monday Night Hospitality (*Editor's note: These were the only words the usually prolific writer sent in with this photo. A regular volunteer at MNH during the pandemic, Laura is seen here ready to avoid both COVID and rain while handing out take-out dinners in the All Souls Garden.*)





## TENDING OUR GARDEN

### An update on the All Souls courtyard

By Linda Becker

I love gardening, which I've done all my life, including a stint as an Assistant Gardener in Central Park, and currently as a member of the Roosevelt Island Garden Club. Last fall I eagerly joined the new All Souls Garden Committee of volunteers, and we soon learned that the initial aim to beautify our courtyard garden and restore the Friendship and Memory Wall had to be divided into short-term and long-range steps. During the All Souls sanctuary and building restoration, engineers determined that the courtyard needed major infrastructure work. We expect that work to begin later this summer.

Our short-term project, to create a garden we can enjoy now, is led by Kari Elwell, landscape designer and president of Mingo Design. A solution to the anticipated disruption of summer construction was to focus on making a "container" garden. Early in April the large planters from the AIDS Garden were moved to the courtyard garden for the spring and summer and planted with cascading ivy and hundreds of daffodils. Seven names were added to the Memory Wall and earlier plaques were buffed.



Since The Chancel Flowers Fund was suspended because of the pandemic, the program now supports the garden\*\*, with dedications printed in the All Souls Garden News, a new online newsletter available on All Souls Connex, under "The League: Topics."

*(\*\*Editor's note: The Women's Alliance has made a \$100 contribution to The Garden Fund.)*

## FOCUS ON HISTORY

### The All Souls Historical Society's Year of Women

Women's history is 2021's year-long theme at The All Souls Historical Society, helmed by WA member Christina Bellamy, and the spring issue of the group's newsletter is a treasure trove of information about "Women Within Unitarianism." It includes profiles of four courageous Unitarian women from both inside and outside All Souls who held the Church's feet to the fire. Born between 1802 and 1901, these women spoke truth to power and fought for racial justice and other social issues.



Lydia Maria Child  
(Feb. 15, 1802-Oct. 20, 1885)



Frances Watkins Harper  
(Sept. 24, 1825-Feb. 22, 1910)



Fannie Barrier Williams  
(Feb. 12, 1875-March 4, 1944)



Margaret Moseley  
(May 30, 1905-Dec. 11, 1997)

To find out more about Fannie Barrier Williams, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Margaret Moseley, and Lydia Maria Child and to access The All Souls Historical Society Newsletter, go to [allsoulsnychistory.org](http://allsoulsnychistory.org).

## WOMEN'S ALLIANCE UPCOMING EVENTS (VIRTUAL)

**May 15, 2021, 3:00 p.m.**

### **Spring Event with Judy Samuelson and Galen Guengerich: Money vs. Morality**

Join us for a conversation with Judy Samuelson, a long-time member, Deacon and former President of the Congregation of All Souls, and the Founder and Executive Director of the Business & Society Program at the Aspen Institute; and Galen Guengerich, Senior Minister of All Souls Church. Judy's new book, [The Six New Rules of Business: Creating Real Value in a Changing World](#), argues that globally significant corporations are at the center of complex social and environmental problems — but also the solutions. Business, she argues, is neither moral nor immoral, and she makes the case that we will not make real headway on our most complex problems — from inequality to racism to climate change — without business at the table. Judy and Galen will tackle the points made in her new book, including the forces that are bending business in positive ways and why there is no turning back.



**May 19, 2021, 3:00-4:30 p.m.**

Membership Meeting presenter: **Olivia Brady**, Youth Engagement Coordinator for NYC Votes at the New York City Campaign Finance Board, They/Them.

### **Topic: How Ranked Choice Voting Works**

This presentation will cover frequently asked questions and share best practices for educating voters. Together, we can ensure voters get the information they need to cast their ballots with confidence and make their voices heard!



**June 16, 2021, 3:00 p.m.**

Membership Meeting presenter: **Lois Coleman**

### **Topic: Get to Know and Appreciate Connex**

Thanks to All Souls member Lois Coleman for creating a new “Group” on All Souls Connex for the Women’s Alliance. She will show us how to sign up on Connex and introduce us to the new Women’s Alliance Group. Since our Group is a private one, members have to “request access,” and we will post events, announcements, meeting agendas, meeting minutes, and more items.

Lois will answer your questions about Connex, for example:

- What are the differences between “Topics,” “Events,” “Interests,” “Groups,” and “Courses?”
- What are the benefits of Connex?
- How do you use it to connect with All Souls, find other members, explore Events, or connect with other groups?
- What is “Follow?”
- How can you find a recording if you miss a program?
- How do you find “Events” and “Interests?” Can you have more than one?
- How can you find other members?



## **AN AMERICAN IN PARIS**

### **Neuropsychologist Robin Moulds' Lessons From the Pandemic**

**By Mary Ann Van Osdol**

At the Women's Alliance March 17 meeting, neuropsychologist Robin Moulds, Ph.D, shared strategies about how to deal with stress during this pandemic era and optimize our body's responses to viral exposures. She spoke to us by Zoom from Paris, where she is working with Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) to help migrants traumatized by COVID.

Robin has studied COVID patients' profound anxiety and depression, sleep and eating disorders, worry about safety, and diminished sense of purpose and meaning. Studies show a relationship between COVID and brain function — “the result of the virus invading the brain stem” — and the body's response affecting our heart, smell and gastro-intestinal tracks. Long-term effects can include memory loss, feelings of being overwhelmed, fatigue, insomnia, brain fog and Chronic Fatigue.

She explained some of the protocols that France has developed for repairing these effects, such as higher doses of Vitamin D3 and other vitamins, probiotics, herbs, plants and berries.

We need to safeguard our own mental health during the pandemic, she said, even if we have not contracted COVID — to feel safe, calm, self-efficacious, socially connected and hopeful. “It is important to discern between normal angst and declining mental health. [We need to] focus on today, [and] be honest with ourselves about our vulnerabilities.” Self-compassion leads to compassion for others, she reminded us. Working for a cause helps, as does handwriting in a journal for 15 minutes a day.

Robin has treated trauma patients in war zones, disaster sites, and post-genocidal areas of Bosnia, Palestine and Kashmir. In working with Doctors Without Borders, she trained psychologists in South India, Pakistan, Palestine and Dubai.

Professor Emeritus at Brandeis University in Boston and Punjab University in Lahore, Pakistan, she received the "Humanitarian of the Year" award with colleagues in Ramallah, Palestine. In 2020 she was awarded the Lady of the Earth Foundation Award of Excellence in Psychology. Robin is a member of All Souls and was taught Sunday School by Mary-Ella Holst.





## (DON'T) STOP THE PRESSES!

### Sheryl McCarthy on the Future of Journalism

By Alynne Wesson



Veteran print journalist Sheryl McCarthy discussed the state of American journalism with members of the Women's Alliance on April 21, and the news, to no one's surprise, isn't so good. McCarthy, who reported for the *New York Daily News* and wrote a column for *Newsday*, bemoaned the loss of newsroom jobs and offered a concise overview of the move from print to digital journalism. She also reflected on how the loss of newspapers around the country threatens democracy, arguing that good newspapers make for informed citizens, who, in turn, made wiser decisions about their communities and their leaders.

McCarthy, a former journalism professor at Queens College, came armed with some alarming statistics. Between 2008, the year of the Great Recession, and 2018, newsroom jobs at American newspapers fell by almost 25 percent, from 114,000 to 86,000, a loss of nearly 30,000 jobs. Paid circulation of U.S. daily newspapers has plummeted. And in New York City, where there were 15 daily newspapers a century ago, there are only four today. Her old employer, the *Daily News*, once had a Sunday circulation of a million papers; today that number has dropped to around 200,000, and she noted that the paper sold its flagship building on East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street.

Even as print newspapers have endured a long decline with the advent of the Internet, and the birth of digital journalism, McCarthy held out some hope for American journalism. She pointed to some excellent reporting being done by digital outlets like BuzzFeed and, in the new landscape of journalism, she praised some partnerships between news organizations and nonprofit groups, like *The Guardian*, a British concern, and, locally, *Gothamist*. McCarthy particularly noted the evolution of *The New York Times*, as it has covered the coronavirus pandemic, the storming of the Capitol and the country's racial reckoning with a mix of old-fashioned reporting and new-fangled data-driven graphics, computer-assisted reporting and the growing use of videos. These days, she noted, young journalists need to know how to write, but also how to handle video equipment and tell stories in a visual way.

McCarthy, who started her career at the *Boston Globe* and the *Baltimore Evening Sun* and currently has an interview show on CUNY TV, picked out one bright spot for print journalism: Donald Trump. The former president, she quipped, was good for newspapers and their websites. In fact, both the *Times* and *The Washington Post* have seen their circulation soar since the 2016 election. In the industry, it's called the Trump Bump.

## WOMEN'S ALLIANCE UPCOMING OUTINGS

**Thursday, May 13, 10:30 a.m.**

### **A Walk Through Historic Yorkville**

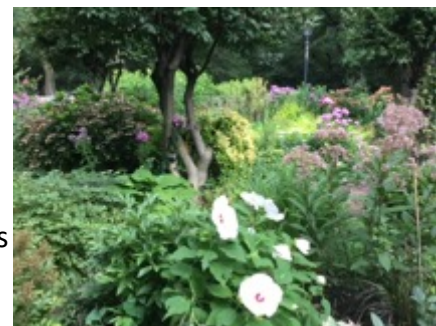


Start at St. Monica's Church (St. Elizabeth of Hungary/St. Stephen of Hungary), 413 E. 79th St. (between York and First Avenues), and look for signs of the immigrant groups that settled in Yorkville. The walk includes churches and other buildings reflecting this neighborhood's character in the 19th century and will end in the garden of the Church of the Holy Trinity (316 E. 88th St., between First and Second avenues), with lunch at the neighboring Café d'Alsace for those interested. WA Board Member Joyce Elderfield planned and organized this walk as a follow-on to the recent monthly meeting on UES historic preservation. Those who would like to participate in the walk or join us for lunch are asked to RSVP to Alix-Marie Hall at [AMHadvisory@yahoo.com](mailto:AMHadvisory@yahoo.com) or 917-621-5495.

**Tuesday, June 8, 11:15 a.m.**

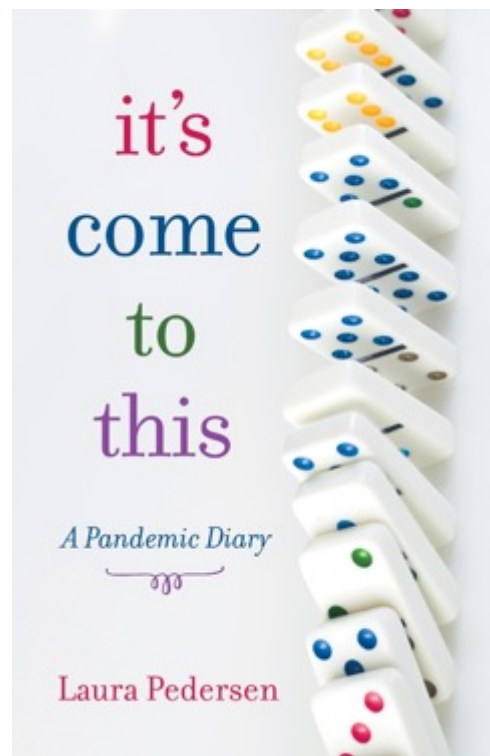
### **A Guided Visit to the 91st Street Community Garden in Riverside Park**

The two gardens we will visit are lush, with a variety of blossoms and color, and Hudson River views are lovely. Speakers/tour guides: Donna Jeffrey and Julie Wallin of The Garden People. Meet between the Rectangle and the Octagon, middle level of Riverside Park, between West 90th and West 91st streets. SIGN-UPS REQUIRED: We must limit pre-registration to 20, with 10 visiting each garden at a time. NOTE: As usual, we will all be masked and socially-distanced. WA member Nora Brossard, a board member of Garden People, has planned and organized this event. Following the tours we will walk to the Joan of Arc Memorial (Riverside Drive & West 93rd Street), a bronze equestrian sculpture of the 15th-century French patriot and martyr. Considered one of the finest works of art in the NYC Parks collection, it was created by Anna Vaughn Hyatt Huntington, one of New York's most prominent early 20th-century sculptors. DIRECTIONS: From the park's 91st Street entrance off Riverside Drive, follow the winding path down past the Hippo playground. Or enter at 83rd Street and walk north on the Promenade to the 91st Street Community Garden. Lunch nearby (TBD) for those interested. If you would like to participate in the garden tours and join us for social time at lunch, RSVP Alix-Marie Hall at [AMHadvisory@yahoo.com](mailto:AMHadvisory@yahoo.com).



**Funny pages:**

Leave it to best-selling author, former *New York Times* columnist and WA member Laura Pedersen to find enough pandemic humor to fill a blessedly diverting new book. “It’s Come to This” is a quick read at 204 pages with wide margins, breezy and insightful at the same time, and all proceeds go to All Souls’ feeding Programs: Monday Night Hospitality and Friday Soup Kitchen.



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The Women's Alliance (WA) is a membership organization. If you are interested in learning more about WA and its various programs and events, please email [WomensAlliance@AllSoulsnycorg](mailto:WomensAlliance@AllSoulsnycorg).

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