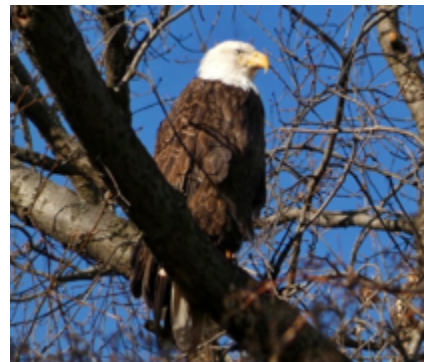




THE ALLIANCE ALERT **January-February 2021**

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



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Mary Geissman

When I became a UU and joined All Souls in 2007, I never dreamed that I would end up as President of the Women's Alliance. I was stunned when Lynn Gioiella asked if I would be interested in being nominated for VP with the expectation that after two years I would become

President. Although I was a member of the WA, attended meetings, participated in some of the cultural outings, and volunteered at the Annual Sale, my main focus at All Souls was with the Peace and Justice Task Force and UUs for Justice in the Middle East. I first turned to Betty McCollum for advice on whether I would be able to do the job. She was an invaluable advisor and friend until her tragic death this past spring.

I consider my tenure as President to be one of the honors and privileges of my life. The WA plays a very important role in the life of All Souls and has a long history beginning in 1890. As I got to know the Officers and other active members, I developed a deep respect for their dedication and leadership.

As many of you know, the Women's Alliance is a unique organization within All Souls, with a membership of a wonderful, dedicated group of amazing women. I have been privileged to work with them during my tenure and have formed many friendships. Sandy Ekberg as President before me led the development of a strategic plan for the WA, updated the Handbook, started Special Interest Groups (SIGs), and improved our communications. She continues to be an advisor and friend. Betty McCollum was my mentor and advisor and Lynn Gioiella shared her wise counsel. I miss the special friendship and caring of both of them.

I want to thank the current Officers and Board Members for their service and especially their friendship. During this time of the virus, I miss our in-person Board Meetings, with lunch afterwards at Due, and, our other in-person meetings and social gatherings. Many thanks to Karen Steele, Chris Goodwin, Alix Hall, Heli Blum, Barbara Reed, Mary Ann Van Osdol, Joyce Elderfield, Anne Bradley, Rita Frank, and especially to Christina Black and Peggy Montgomery for their work on the *Alliance Alert*. Mary-Ella Holst deserves special thanks for overseeing our investments and then recruiting a qualified successor. And to the amazing Maureen Marwick – I give special thanks for being a friend and for your continuing service to the Alliance.

This is my last President's message. In February I will have completed two terms, or four years, as President of the Women's Alliance, and prior to that two years as Vice-president. Although I will no longer be President, and will happily hand that role over to Chris in February, I plan to continue to be actively involved with the Alliance, so I will see you at meetings and events.

**The Annual Angie Henry Utt Lecture
Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Saturday, January 23, 1:30 p.m.**

US Senator Kirsten Gillibrand will give the **Annual Angie Henry Utt Lecture on Women in American Culture**, entitled this year **"Women in Politics: Progress and Struggles."** She will speak about getting more women elected to Congress, where we stand, what we can do going forward, and how **Vice President Kamala Harris'** election may effect the election of women.



JANUARY 13TH MEETING TO INCLUDE SPECIAL PROGRAM

The January 13th WA meeting (a week early because of the Inauguration) will include a business meeting from 3:00 to 3:30 followed by this special program co-sponsored by the *Anti-Racism/Social Justice Alliance* at All Souls.

Learning From Memorials to Slavery and The Holocaust

Memorials and their symbolic power have been much in the news lately. How have they become transformative? Why are they significant? Why do they arouse such strong emotions? What can we learn from their construction or destruction? Honest history, equitable education and personal commitments to antiracism are only some important lessons. In this presentation, *The Montgomery Four* hopes to spark discussion and encourage commitment to addressing these critical issues that grow more urgent daily.

- **Linda Rousseau MS** is an activist for prison reform, a Unitarian at All Souls in NYC, and a direct descendant of the Rousseau family, who owned slaves on a plantation in Hispaniola.
- **Adine Usher EdD** is an Educational Specialist for People with Disabilities, a Unitarian at Community in White Plains NY and an African American activist.
- **Tosia Neiger-McCormick MS LMHC** is a Mental Health Counselor and educator, a human rights activist and a member of the only family known to escape intact from the Krakow Ghetto during the Holocaust.
- **Robert Dottin, PhD** is a Professor of Biology (Genetics), a History Maker, a Unitarian at All Souls in NYC, and a Black activist with Caribbean roots.



The Women's Alliance - supporting values of friendship, equality and justice

“SURE WE CAN”

A HAVEN FOR CANNERS

By Mary Ann Van Osdol

We pass them dragging huge plastic bags of cans and bottles, rummaging through sidewalk piles of garbage, mostly men, but often older women, sometimes children. They are the canners, eking out less than a living, often the only work they can find.

They are mostly immigrants who don't speak English, “relegated to the lowest status ... with no other options,” says Ryan Castalia, Executive Director of **Sure We Can**, New York's only nonprofit and homeless-friendly can and bottle redemption center. Ryan spoke at the Zoom November Membership meeting. Introduced by Heli Blum, co-chair of the Program Committee, he titled his topic ***Redemption, the Circular Economy and Social Sustainability***.

Based in East Williamsburg, Sure We Can is “an oasis where they are not shunned and stigmatized,” he said. Last year they collected 10 million cans and bottles for 5 cents each— averaged \$1,000 for the year — and reduced city street litter by 70%. “It is often dangerous, hard, mostly night work.” They were often cheated and local grocers can't take many cans. “In 1983 when the bottle act was passed in New York, 5 cents was a fair price. It isn't now. “Michigan returns 10 cents and the return rate is 90%,” he said.

Sure We Can (SWC) was founded ten years ago. After canners are paid and the cans sorted, SWC schedules pickups with distributors, not manufacturers like Pepsi. SWC earns .035 cents a can or bottle, its only income other than grants and donations. The organization has grown to be a community hub. They compost for their own and community vegetable gardens. SWC has advocated and helped pass sustainability laws, started an art program, and involved local schools, winning several awards and publicity. They try to network with other community organizations to help us teach skill development and English.

SWC is not just a redemption center,” but part of a sustainability industry that “affects all of us on a biological, personal, and now social level,” Ryan says. “We are networking with Carecycle in New Jersey to create partnerships with ‘green’ companies.”

Currently, Sure We Can faces eviction from its lot that the owner wants to sell. They are seeking funding from the city to buy the land, but Ryan admits, “We don't have the votes to affect politics, or the influence to get investments.”

Surewecan.org has an informative website and is on Facebook, Linkedin and Wikipedia.

FRIENDS OF THE UPPER EAST SIDE HISTORIC DISTRICTS

By Mary Ann Van Osdol

At our December 16 meeting and holiday party, Rachel Levy, Executive Director of the Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, spoke about the many ways this not-for-profit organization, founded in 1982, works to preserve our many architectural gems, our neighborhood's legacy and livability. "We are the eyes and ears of the neighborhood," she said proudly.

The Upper East Side has seven specific historic districts and over 131 individual landmarks. On the East side of Central Park, the Landmarks Preservation Committee (LPC) has designated whole blocks of homes and buildings for architectural protection. Although most are along Madison and Park from 59th to 99th, many individual buildings are further east and the organization "is working on protecting more she added. The historic buildings range from elegant mansions to turn-of-the-century French flats, apartments built for the growing middle class, and to bakeries, breweries and churches. (But not All Souls.) The organization's purview extends to East 110th.

The designations are "not just about architectural value but also cultural value," Rachel explained. The organization's recent study of the Yorkville neighborhood, home to waves of immigrants in the 19th and early 20 century resulted in a book, *Shaped by Immigrants: A History of Yorkville*, and a video that can be seen on their website, friends-ues.org. The book also is available on Amazon.

Friends, as the organization is known, set a precedent for the whole country when federal courts decided that a landmark designation was not a hardship...and the Supreme Court declined to hear the case. This made it possible for landmarks to be designated and protected. More recently Friends persuaded City Council to stop "supertalls" from not counting empty mechanical floors put in the middle of buildings so they could add more floors with luxury apartments on top. And they are in the midst of a fight against what Rachel calls "bookend behemoths" in the neighborhood — a huge building at each end of a block. They do research, testify before various city committees and often are involved in persuading the LPC to designate unique historical buildings as landmarks to protect them against developers and defacement.

The organization also is proud of its fight to protect mid-street blocks of homes against developers. "It's smart urban planning and common sense."

MEMBER PROFILE: ALYNNE WESSON

By Christine Goodwin

A new member of the Women's Alliance, Alynne Wesson has been named co-editor of the Women's Alliance bi-monthly **Alert**. She brings her many years of experience, beginning as a dance critic in Richmond, Virginia, and expanding her articles to social issues such as lead poisoning and City Council affairs. Alynne has written many articles and done copy editing for local publications in both Virginia and New York City.



In 1993, Alynne and husband Rob Goldblum moved to New York City, and she worked for the Jewish Week Media Group as well as taking on free-lancing assignments. Alynne's family has ties to both Unitarianism and Universalism. As a mixed couple, both Alynne and Rob found comfort at All Souls, and joined in 2001. Alynne says it felt like coming home. Soon she and Rob became active members, both teaching in the Religious Education program, which now continues with remote sessions.

Their daughter Nora received the inaugural Deacons Youth Award in 2015 for her many years of work with Monday Night Hospitality, beginning when she was 6 years old, setting tables, then baking, and eventually helping in the kitchen. Nora inspired her fellow students to help, as well as her parents. Even Hurricane Sandy could not keep Nora away from Monday Night Hospitality, where she was one of the few volunteers able to help out that night.

We welcome Alynne to the Women's Alliance and are very grateful that she has joined the **Alert** team.

THE MIGHTY NETWORK

By Barbara Reed

The Mighty Network (MN) is an online community for members and friends of All Souls. The Women's Alliance Executive Board encourages all WA members to connect with the MN, whether or not they are members of All Souls Church. To join, go to the All Souls website: <https://www.allsouls-nyc.org>, click where it says "[Click here to join All Souls Connex - our Mighty Network](#)" and then follow the prompts. For subsequent visits to the MN you can go to the website: <https://connex.allsouls-nyc.org/feed>, where you may need to "Sign In" at the upper right side of the page. Note that in the left-hand menu the category "Topics" includes Women's Alliance as one of many categories.

For now the WA presence on the network is focused on distributing announcements of our meetings. Future possibilities for increased participation may involve establishing the WA as a "Group," another category in the menu. Before we establish the Women's Alliance as a formal Mighty Network Group, however, we want more WA members to join the MN. Currently about one-third of our members have already done so. For those who need assistance in joining the MN, Lois Coleman has volunteered to provide individual help. Contact Lois.Coleman@gmail.com with your questions.

WOMEN'S ALLIANCE CHARITABLE GIVING

By Rita Frank

The Finance Committee met in November to determine which charities and organizations would receive donations, using the WA's updated Charitable Giving Policy. Because investments have done well and the need is greater as a result of COVID-19, the WA is contributing \$5,000 more than usual.

All Souls Related

- All Souls Annual Giving
- Special donation for a pew plaque in memory of Betty McCollum
- All Souls Capital Campaign
- Heart and Soul Charitable Fund
- Musica Viva

UUA Related

- UU Association - Stewardship and Development Fund (for UUA grants and projects)
- UU Service Committee (advancing human rights and social justice around the world)
- UU Women's Federation - Equity and Justice and Margaret Fuller grants programs
- UU Office at the UN - Every Child is Our Child project in Ghana (HIV/AIDS)

Broader Community

- Center for Reproductive Rights
- New York Common Pantry
- Common Cause Education Fund (non-partisan civic education)

JANUARY AND FEBRUARY CALENDAR

Wednesday, January 13, 3:00 p.m.– 5:00 p.m.

Business Meeting followed by program on Monuments – see article on p. 2

Saturday, January 23, 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Annual Angie Henry Utt Lecture

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand – see box on p. 2

Wednesday, February 17, 3:00 p.m.- 4:30 p.m.

Annual Meeting: Induction of new Officers, Induction to Clara Barton Sisterhood

Annual Reports: Officers, Board Members, approval of 2021 budget, plans for the future

Outings will resume in the Spring. Please send your ideas for future field trips to Alix-Marie Hall at AMHAdvisory@yahoo.com with specific, actionable information.

Women's Reading Group, Second Tuesday of each month, 7:00-8:30 p.m., currently on Zoom.

January 12: *The Dutch House* by Ann Patchett

February 9: *Lost Children Archive* by Valeria Luiselli

March 9: *A Woman of No Importance* by Sonia Purnell

April 13: *A Long Petal of the Sea*, by Isabelle Allende

May 11: *In Our Prime*, by Susan Douglas

June 8: *Dept of Speculation*, by Jenny Ofill

Contact: Christina Black, christina.black50@gmail.com

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.

Alliance Alert Staff

WA Communications Chair: ***Sandra Ekberg***

Alliance Alert Editor: ***Mary Geissman (Interim)***

Co-Editor: ***Alynne Wesson***

Copy Editor: ***Peggy Montgomery***

Staff Writers: ***Mary Ann Van Osdol, Christine Goodwin, Rita Frank, Barbara Reed***

Managing Editor, Production: ***Christina Black***