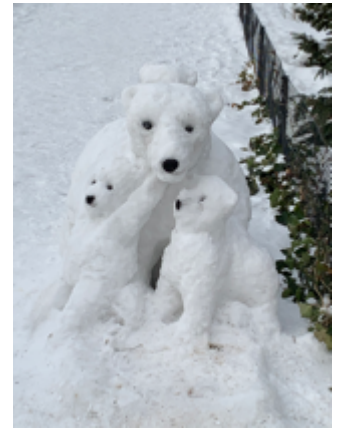




## **THE ALLIANCE ALERT**

### **March-April 2021**

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



### **MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

**By Christine Goodwin**

As this is my first "Message from the President," I want to begin by thanking Mary Geissman for her wonderful leadership over the past four years. Mary has maintained her cheerful attitude despite disruptions due to the construction at All Souls and now the challenge of leading the Women's Alliance during a pandemic. It has been a very eventful time, with many Alliance events: The All Souls Bicentennial, the celebration of Galen Guengerich's "25th" anniversary, tributes to David Robb, and for the past year, managing to keep WA going remotely. I am grateful that Mary will continue to be involved with the Executive Board as the Chair of the Communications Committee.

I also want to thank the Women's Alliance Executive Board: Alix-Marie Hall, Barbara Reed, Anne Bradley, Joyce Elderfield, Mary Ann Van Osdol, Rita Frank, Karen Steele, Sandra Ekberg, Heli Blum, and Alynne Wesson. They have kept things humming along with monthly speakers and (weather permitting) group outings, as well as the less visible activities like keeping the checkbook balanced, monitoring the investment account, sending condolence cards, and keeping up the Membership list. Thanks also to the various Committees doing work behind the scenes. Special thanks to Christina Black, Alynne Wesson, and Peggy Montgomery and many contributors who continue to produce our bi-monthly *Alliance Alert*.

Congratulations to our Assistant Treasurer Anne Bradley, who was so helpful in arranging for Senator Kirsten Gillibrand to give the WA's Annual Angie Utt Lecture this year. Her workload at All Souls will now increase as she was recently elected to a three-year term on the AS Board of Trustees.

The Women's Alliance has adjusted to a "new normal" with Zoom presentations. While we certainly miss the social connections of being together in person, Zoom has some advantages, allowing members to join in from far away or stay home in bad weather. One key to getting back to in-person events is vaccinations. I hope that our members have been able to schedule them. If not, please reach out to us and we will try to connect you with an appointment.

As I write, I'm watching the snow swirl outside, but this is the March-April *Alert*, so spring will be here soon, and we look forward to continuing plans for speakers for our monthly meetings, a Spring Event, and local outings as the weather improves.

We will soon be sending out a Member Survey to gather information on what our members are interested in for speakers, events, outings, etc. Please take a few minutes to think about what is important for you and let us know your ideas. We look forward to everyone's participation, which is what makes WA strong.

## SENATOR KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND ADDRESSES ISSUES AT LIVELY ANGIE UTT LECTURE

By Mary Ann Van Osdol

WA President Mary Geissman welcomed the many All Souls Zoom listeners to the January 23 meeting. She noted that the Angie Henry Utt Women in American Culture Lecture Series was established in 2001 to honor Angie Utt, an esteemed member of The Women's Alliance. Heli Blum, Program Chair, introduced Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. To begin her lecture, the Senator recognized her "dear friend Anne Bradley, who invited me."

Senator Gillibrand gave the Angie Utt Lecture just three days after she had attended the 2021 US Inauguration. "I was scared, frightened, concerned that there would be more attacks ... but we wanted to show people who want to harm our democracy what strength looks like. The Inauguration couldn't have been a better statement of who we are as a country and what our democracy is made of. I was very moved by the speeches. I thought the President gave an extraordinarily good speech and I loved that he focused on how the American story is one of light not darkness, of love not hate."

About the attack on the Capitol, she began, "On January 6, we were in the Senate Chamber to count the electoral votes. We had listened to speeches from both sides. All of a sudden, staff rushed in and removed Vice-President Pence. A few minutes later, Capitol Police stood up front and announced 'The Capitol has been breached and we're starting lockdown protocols.' They were yelling 'Lock down upstairs, lock down the press gallery!'

"It was scary, frightening. My mother called, and I said I was OK. Then they rushed us out the back door of the Chamber, down the stairs, through the tunnels under the Capitol to a committee room with no windows. We sat there for four hours. Eventually we were allowed to go back to the Chamber and we voted — until about 1:00 in the morning . It was an exhausting day."

"We saw the pictures of what was happening — Confederate flags, racist banners ... destroying the offices —their extraordinary disrespect. These people set out to do us harm. There were those who wanted to take prisoners. They had ties. They intended to destroy the Capitol, to destroy people's confidence in Democracy."

'We have their faces,' we were told. 'They will be arrested. We will have justice. We take this very seriously. This is not a small matter.' "I think the first step is that we have to do justice. It's really important that we focus on the truth, on compassion. There will be an impeachment trial. It is simple —incitement to insurrection. We have the evidence. We know the facts. It will be a short trial and I know we can do it well."

The Senator told us that she is this year's Chair of the weekly Prayer Breakfast. "Each Senator says why their faith is important to them. The Scripture defines for us what it means to walk in the light. It's really quite direct. We should come together and heal the nation, clothe and feed those in need."

Senator Gillibrand also gave extensive and detailed answers to questions from our audience. Her responses covered a domestic terrorism law, statehood for the District of Columbia, getting rid of the filibuster, cleaning up the US water system, climate change, eliminating institutional racism, promoting manufacturing in upstate New York and economic solutions that help all Americans.



## MEMBER PROFILE: SUMI KUBOTA

By Alynne Wesson



It was the scent of coffee, widely considered a Unitarian sacrament, that first drew Sumi Kubota to America from Japan. Coffee was not a staple in Japan, but an uncle who had emigrated to the United States sent her family coffee beans, and she remembers the magical aroma as her mother prepared the morning brew. Now that she is in America, at All Souls Church, she can have all the coffee she wants, and the magic that she gleans has more to do with a sense of volunteerism she had not known in Japan. For almost 20 years, she has worked alongside George Collins and the Monday Night Hospitality team, which serves free dinners to more than 300 guests per week.

Before COVID, Sumi artfully transformed the altar flowers from All Souls' Sunday morning services into dozens of arrangements for the dinner tables at MNH. During COVID, she sorts the many donations that come to the MNH kitchen and also prepares all 40 vegan meals. She tends the All Souls garden with Bill Bechman, has worked with Pamela Patton to help bring a wheelchair-bound church member to Sunday service from her nursing home, and has served as an interpreter for Japanese couples who have come to All Souls to be married by the Rev. Dick Leonard. Lucky members of the All Souls and MNH communities have received unexpected gifts of her personalized craft projects.

In her volunteer work beyond All Souls, Sumi works with gardeners in Central Park every week ("I like green.") and has recently spent many hours shoveling snow there, in the area around the Alice in Wonderland sculpture. During COVID, she also volunteers at the Japanese American Association of New York, coordinating the delivery of bento boxes to homebound seniors. Spurred in part by the volunteerism she had become familiar with here, she flew back to Tokyo in 2011, immediately after the earthquake and tsunami that killed 15,000 in northern Japan. Public transportation to the region had been shut down, but Sumi was able to score a spot in a car headed there, and encountered horrific disaster, with defense forces still searching and digging for bodies. She worked in various capacities with victims and with cleanup, and along with the tragedy she found revelation.

"From this experience," she says, "I discovered a very important, delightful new phenomenon in Japan. The volunteer effort was well organized and the volunteer worker was protected by injury insurance! I was very impressed and delighted that so many young people came from all over Japan! "The custom of 'volunteer' was new. Of course, we do help with our small communities, yet the idea of 'volunteer' was new to Japan. We learned this idea from the United States and from Europe, mainly. I learned the idea of 'volunteer' from All Souls' Monday Night Hospitality that I had been with for almost 20 years. For that I have to thank this country and our church."

Sumi came to the Women's Alliance at All Souls after an invitation from Betty McCollum, who also volunteered at Monday Night Hospitality and who died last year from COVID. "She was always busy to help people," Sumi says, still obviously pained by Betty's death. She says she is so impressed with the programming and the women at Women's Alliance, citing, in particular, the Angie Utt Lecture Con't . . .

Con't . . .

with Senator Gillibrand, and Linda Rousseau's work with MNH and against racism. Always self-effacing, Sumi says she is dazzled by the professional lives of the Women's Alliance members she has met. "As a Samurai daughter," she says, she had not been prepared for a career while growing up in the suburbs of Nagasaki in the late 1940s, '50s and '60s. She was well-schooled, rather, in tea ceremony, horseback riding, martial arts, calligraphy, haiku (which she still practices) and brush painting, her favorite subject.

Art has been important throughout her life. When she came to the United States 40 years ago, she studied at the Art Students League and Sotheby's and became an art consultant with city and independent organizations and the Clinton White House, and at one time operated her own gallery in Soho. Now retired, Sumi continues to pursue art and her passion for volunteerism in America, and, she reminds everyone, "it all started with the coffee."



Sumi in Shichigahama, Japan, in the aftermath of the Great Earthquake and Tsunami of 2011



## IN MEMORY OF MARCELLA MONTARULI

By Terry Manzella

I am deeply saddened to learn of the loss of Marcella Montaruli. She was a spirited and active member of The Elders Group as well as the Women's Alliance. It will not be the same without her.

Marcella enjoyed a long career as a registered nurse. She loved interacting with and helping her patients. Whether fluffing a pillow or assisting in complicated medical procedures, she got a great deal of satisfaction from making a difference in others' lives. After her retirement, she continued doing volunteer work at Mary Manning Walsh Nursing Home. She liked to pitch in and help — whatever the task or wherever she was needed.

She spoke a great deal about her deep grief over the loss of her husband, Vincent, three long years ago; it felt like a day to her. They had a wonderful relationship, and she missed him deeply. She often described what a great life they had traveling together, visiting friends, eating great food and drinking good wine. He was the cook in the family! Vincent was her second husband, and a great deal older than Marcella. He spoke several languages, was engaging and also people-oriented. His love and presence were not only supportive and sustaining for her; he seemed to be a one-man entertainment center, intelligent, interesting, humorous and amusing. He made Marcella's life a joy. In this, we can be grateful.

Marcella loved to be around people, and I feared our present isolation would be very difficult for her. She told me her activities at All Souls kept her going. All Souls provided her many happy moments and the feeling of being helpful and productive. I know our Elders Group and many others in our church will grieve her loss. We remember her fondly.

## IN MEMORY OF JACQUELINE VALLUZZO

By Susan Hoehn

Anyone who knew Women's Alliance member Jacquie Valluzzo, who died in February, can attest to her extraordinarily positive outlook on life. In her early days she was an active skier, hiker, traveler and partier.

In recent years she was beset with multiple maladies that never lessened her cheerful attitude nor stopped her from leading a productive and happy life. She continued working as much as she could and then mentored others to take her place. The past several years she travelled the streets of the city in her scooter, needed a wheelchair inside and eventually constant oxygen. She NEVER complained and continued traveling and planning for the future.

"When the doors would open each Sunday," says All Souls usher Maureen Marwick, "and Jacquie would appear in her electric wheelchair-chariot, she would swing in a circle, come to a screeching stop and announce she was ready for the service or the meeting to begin. ... [She] always had a pithy comment about what was said. She was very intelligent and a blithe spirit — indomitable."

Jacquie first saw the light of day in Battle Creek, Michigan, 80 years ago and moved to New York City after college to become a social worker. She earned her Ph.D from the Columbia School of Social Work, but in 1984 decided her future lay in real estate. Her determination and hard work resulted in a highly successful sales career.



She was the favorite aunt of her nieces, nephews and their children. (Three brothers provided a large contingent.) They loved coming to New York to be spoiled by Jacquie. Jacquie found it easy to make friends wherever she went. A charmer with pluck and a lot of determination to achieve her goals, Jacquie will be missed by all who knew and loved her.

## THE CLARA BARTON SISTERHOOD WELCOMES MARY ANN VAN OSDOL

By Christine Goodwin

The Women's Alliance of the Unitarian Church of All Souls, Inc. was pleased to nominate Mary Ann Van Osdol for membership in the Clara Barton Sisterhood of the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation, which honors women over 80 for their contributions to their congregations and communities. Only 14 women throughout the country were enrolled in the Sisterhood in 2019, the last year for which we have figures, and at the February WA meeting, the Rev. Audette Fulbright said she was delighted to present "this incredibly important award" to Mary Ann.

Mary Ann came to All Souls services for over 30 years before becoming a member. Despite saying, "I'm not a joiner," she volunteered at All Souls' Friday Soup Kitchen for more than 15 years. Mary Ann joined the Women's Alliance about five years ago and is currently serving as our Recording Con't . . .

Con't . . .



Secretary. She also contributes to our bi-monthly publication, *The Alert*, and is an enthusiastic participant in Women's Alliance activities.

After graduating from Indiana University in 1955, Mary Ann broke new ground as the only female reporter at the *Cincinnati Times-Star*. She worked at other publications until 1968, when she and her family moved to Tuxedo, NY, where she managed communications for several insurance firms in New York City before joining the brokerage firm Marsh & McClennan. Before retiring in 2004, Mary Ann was a vice president at Marsh & McClennan, with headquarters in the towers of the World Trade Center. On 9/11, she watched the towers fall, killing over 350 Marsh & McClennan friends and co-workers.

Since retiring, Mary Ann has done pro bono work for the NAACP, The Harlem Commonwealth Council, Bronx-Lebanon Hospital and the Apollo Theater. Until recently, she was communications consultant for DeWitt Stern, a broker to Broadway and theaters across the US. "That was a great gig. I got to see a lot of plays for free."

A running enthusiast, Mary Ann has run more than 100 races, plus 13 marathons, five in NYC and one in Stockholm. At 87, she has now retired from running, but still goes for long walks.

## THE WOMEN'S ALLIANCE 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

By Heli R-F. Blum, Program Committee Co-Chair

This was a most unusual year! As we were getting ready to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Women's Suffrage since the passing of the 19th Amendment on August 26, 1920, with programs focusing on women's roles in culture, governance and activism, everything came to a halt due to COVID. All Souls Church suspended all in-person gatherings on March 11, and soon after, our whole city went into lockdown. Our March monthly meeting was cancelled. But as time passed and it became clear that the pandemic was going to take months, not weeks, to run its course, we looked to technology to help us pivot and continue in a new way. We moved our meetings and presentations onto Zoom, and we anticipate we will continue to provide virtual access to presentations and events in some way, even when we are able to gather in person.

- We began our monthly presentations in January with **Liza Abraham**, Voter Protection Director of New York Democrats, who updated us on the "State of Voting Rights 2020."
- And then in April we began anew, online, with author **Judy Wosk**, who presented *From Rosie the Riveter to Rosie the Robot: Picturing Women and Machines*, highlighting how women have overcome stereotypes and shown their mettle by mastering machines.

Con't . . .

Con't . . .

- A lifelong UU and a litigator at The Center for Reproductive Rights, **Kirby Tyrrell** provided a lot of the latest news about “Reproductive Rights in the United States in 2020.” **Gale Brewer**, Manhattan Borough President, talked about “Women in Politics, in Celebration of 100 years of Women's Suffrage.”
- Author and distinguished book critic **Dan Cryer** shared his search to learn about his mother, whom he lost at an early age, in his book *Forgetting My Mother: A Blues from the Heartland*. Author **Angela Himsel** shared her journey from an apocalyptic Christian cult to her socially liberal life as practicing Jew on the Upper West Side, with a talk about her book, *A River Could Be a Tree*.
- In “A Journalist Tells Her Story,” **Sheryl McCarthy** shared her journey from segregated Alabama to her life as a New York City journalism professor and talk show host. **Dr. Jaana Rehnström**, MD, MPH, Founder and President of the Kota Alliance, talked to us about “Impactful Activism: Collaboration for Gender Equity?” highlighting the Kota Alliance’s advocacy of women’s empowerment and the power of collaboration.
- **Ryan Castalia**, Executive Director of Sure We Can, gave the presentation “Redemption, the Circular Economy and Social Sustainability,” about how recycling and actions towards a responsible circular economy incorporating values of social and material sustainability are paving the way forward for our climate and society in crisis.
- With her presentation on “Shaped by Immigrants: A History of Yorkville, Then and Now,” **Rachel Levy**, Executive Director of Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, enlightened us on the work Friends does to preserve and support our livable, vibrant neighborhoods.

**Finally, special events included:**

- Our Annual Angie Henry Utt Lecture on Women in American Culture featured **Johanna Newman**, writer, historian and award-winning journalist, who presented on her book *And Yet They Persisted: How American Women Won the Right to Vote*.
- Held after our December presentation, our **Members Holiday Party** was a virtual gathering where members could mingle freely between breakout rooms, which gave us a chance to chat in small groups and the ability to switch between groups. It was as close to a party feeling as possible during this virtual existence.

## 2021 WOMEN'S ALLIANCE OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The **Executive Board** consists of all WA officers plus chairs of all standing committees.

### Officers

President: Chris Goodwin (first term, first year)

Vice-President: Alix-Marie Hall, (appointed to fill Chris Goodwin's second term)

Recording Secretary: Mary Ann Van Osdol (first term, second year)

Corresponding Secretary: Joyce Elderfield (second term, first year)

Treasurer: Karen Steele (second term, first year)

Assistant Treasurer: Vacant (due to Anne Bradley becoming a member of the All Souls Board of Trustees)

### Standing Committees

Finance Committee: Chair vacant; Alix-Marie Hall, Peggy Montgomery, members, seeking one additional member. Chris Goodwin (*ex officio*) and Karen Steele (*ex officio*)

Investment Committee: Chair vacant; Rita Frank, Alix-Marie Hall, members, seeking one additional member. Chris Goodwin (*ex officio*) and Karen Steele (*ex officio*)

Membership Committee: Barbara Reed, Chair; Linda Becker and Anne Brewer, members.

Program Committee: Heli R-F. Blum, Co-Chair for luncheons and Alix-Marie Hall, Co-Chair for outings. Shellie Bailkin, Maureen Marwick and Rita Frank, members. Seeking new members.

Communications Committee: Mary Geissman, Chair; Alynne Wesson, editor of *The Alliance Alert*. Peggy Montgomery and Christina Black, members.

### Other Leadership Positions

Nominating Committee: Sandra Ekberg, Chair; Maureen Marwick, Marilyn Mehr and Peggy Montgomery, members. (2019)

Coordinators of Special Events:

Angie Utt Lecture: Heli R-F. Blum (2021)

Spring Event: Heli R-F. Blum (2021)

Fall Welcome Back Party: Joyce Elderfield (2019)

Members' Holiday Party: Alix-Marie Hall (2019)

Special Interest Groups Coordinators:

Bridge Group—June Castle, Cinema Club—Maureen Marwick, Concerts—Mary Geissman, Play Readings—Maureen Marwick, Women's Reading Group—Christina Black.

Board Members Emerita: Mary-Ella Holst, Maureen Marwick, and in memoriam: Betty McCollum

## WOMEN'S ALLIANCE UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS SPRING 2021

**March 17, 2021, 3-4:30 p.m.**

Presenter: **Robin Moulds**, Ph.D., Neuropsychologist, Professor and Research Fellow.

**Topic: Lessons from the Pandemic in Paris, France**

Robin Moulds will share strategies for optimizing our immunological and neurologic responses and reducing traumatic stress in the Pandemic era based on comparative trials and research in both the European Union and the Middle East. Beyond standard COVID safety protocols, we will discuss how both COVID sufferers and those who have not had the virus can optimize our body's responses to any level of viral exposure we may encounter. We will also discuss innovative strategies to address the impact of Pandemic era traumatic stress that has affected all of us in this unprecedented time.



**April 21, 2021, 3-4:30 p.m.**



Presenter: **Sheryl McCarthy** Talk show host, former frequent lecturer of journalism at Queens College, long time journalist and author.

**Topic: The Future of Journalism**

Are newspapers dead? If so, how will we get our news in the future, and what will that news coverage look like? Ms. McCarthy, with her years of experience in journalism, will ponder the questions of where journalism is heading.

**Outings will resume in the Spring.** Please send your ideas for future field trips to Alix-Marie Hall at [AMHAdvisory@yahoo.com](mailto: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.

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](mailto:christina.black50@gmail.com)

## Manhattan Images from Our Snowy February



Photos courtesy of Christina Black – Front page header and above

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).

### ***Alliance Alert Staff***

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