

WORSHIP SERVICES

December Theme: STILLNESS

Sun., Dec 20, 10:30 a.m.

What a Wonder, the Winterland!

During this time of year there are several holidays or Holy Days that we celebrate. We invite you to this service with **Ministerial Intern Mathew Taylor and the Wheel of the Year Group** as we bring you a Winter Solstice filled with story and song. For the month of December, **Justin Fumia** offers a live musical Prelude. Special music by **Unfolding**.

Virtual Gatherings—Please visit www.uucr.org/zoom for details on how to participate in our online worship services, and for the schedule of our Faith Formation classes for children and youth.

Wed., Dec 23, 8:00 p.m.

BLUE Vespers Service

For many people and families, the holidays are a time of joy and connection. For many of us, the holidays are reminders of loss, disconnection and challenges. BLUE Vespers is a space for honoring the Holidays and not centering how we "should" be joyful and celebrate at this time. Bring your tears and sorrow, they are welcomed here. Just being together offers a balm to weary spirits. Led by **Rev. Dr. Rebekah A. Savage**.



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December 16, 2020

Quest

The Newsletter of the
Unitarian Universalist
Congregation of Rockville:
A Welcoming Congregation

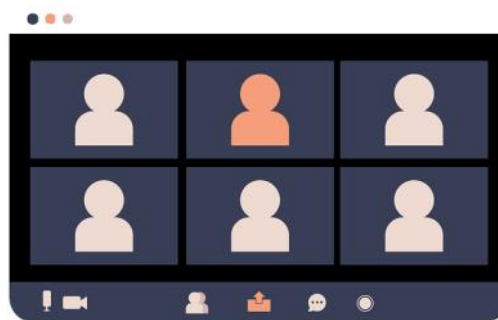
Lifelong Spiritual Discovery Beloved Community A Just World

Volume LXIV, Number 1
December 16, 2020

Editor & Publisher:
Adrian L. H. Graham

PROJECT PANDEMIC

by the Rev. Dr. Rebekah A. Savage



Dear Beloved UUCR Community,

Last February, our spiritual theme of the month was “Resilience.” By the time March 2020 rolled around, we were starting to understand that spiritual Resilience would become even more important as the news from across the world started to shutter businesses and schools, and people were encouraged or mandated to stay at home as the novel coronavirus swept from country to country. The last large event we held at UUCR was our annual Fellowship Dinner on Saturday, March 7. Rev. Dr. Linda Olson Peebles sang for us, and we had a rocking good time (with no hugs or handshakes, and ample hand sanitizer). The last in-person worship service we held at UUCR was March 8, and it was Canvass Sunday. Our theme for the 2019-2020 Canvass was “Brave Journey, Safe Harbor,” and hundreds of us gathered together to affirm our love, commitment, and generosity to UUCR with our time, talent, and resources.

Then, just a few short days later, we came to the right and hard decision to close the UUCR offices, send everyone home, and pivot to virtual worship. Our first virtual worship was on March 15, 2020, and to everyone’s delight and surprise, it was a smashing success! The staff and worship team came together with enough creativity and flexibility to create a worship that was engaging and meaningful.

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The remainder of this year’s *Quest* publication schedule is TBD, with one issue planned each for spring and summer 2021.

Email queries and possible submissions to quest@uucr.org.

Ongoing UUCR updates available at uucr.org/covid-19.

Quest

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(Worship Services continued from page 1)

Thursday, December 24, 4:30 p.m.

Christmas Eve Multigenerational Worship Service with Pageant

One of the most joyful celebrations of the winter holidays at UUCR is the annual pageant presented by **our children and youth**. This year will be no exception, as part of our 4:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Service! We are delighted to bring you a virtual pageant, re-telling the Christian story of Christmas. Traditional carols, special music from our choir, and **Rev. Rebekah's** message provide a fully multigenerational Christmas Eve worship experience!

Virtual Gatherings—Please visit www.uucr.org/zoom for details on how to participate in our online worship services, and for the schedule of our Faith Formation classes for children and youth.

Thursday, December 24, 8:30 p.m.

The Liberation Theology Story of Christmas

A child is born and brings a message of revolution to the world. With each child comes the call again to co-create our world anew. How would Jesus be born in our world today? Come and let us join together for this special Christmas Eve service at 8:30 p.m. with carols, special music, and a little Liberation Theology to light our journey ahead. A **Joint UU Choir** and **MUUSICA** will be featured. Led by **Rev. Rebekah A. Savage**.

Virtual Gatherings—see above.

Sunday, December 27, 10:30 a.m.

PJ's & Poetry

At this annual UUCR tradition, we gather together for a very informal, casual service to share a love of poetry. Make your pancakes ahead of time, put on your coziest pajamas and slippers, and grab your favorite poem to share (on camera live, or shared in the chat, or read by **Rev. Rebekah**). All ages welcome; bonus points if you bring props to go with your poem! **Justin Furnia** on piano.

Virtual Gatherings—see above.



SHARING THE MINISTRY

(Project Pandemic continued from page 1)

Since March, we have now hosted forty Sunday morning virtual worship services. We are making it work! We have welcomed amazing guests to our pulpit, including: Rev. Russ Savage, Rev. Christin Green, Matt Meyer, Rev. Kimberley Debus, Tyler Coles, and Laura Solomon.

Blessed with ample lay leadership at UUCR, Jim Blue, Brian Haugen, Mark Stiles, and Laura Shay led virtual worship for us as well. Worship has become a lifeline for our congregation, as we continue to welcome guests and even potential members from around the country. With the insights and creativity of the Worship Arts Committee and worship team, we thought through how to continue to make worship even more meaningful. In April, we added Ringing the Bell in remembrance of the people who have died of COVID-19 in the United States and around the world. It is a grim task I take on each week to update the numbers, as they quickly escalate. The grief around us is palpable, as we are each working so hard to hold it all together. By the summer, we realized that



the staff was working overtime and then some to make the magic happen. Adding virtual worship each Sunday to already full plates begged for another resource, and so with the Board's blessing and approval, in October we welcomed Erin Dowridge-Rodney as our new Technology & Communications Assistant, and she's done an incredible job supporting our virtual worship team!

Worship is one pillar in our community, and another is the Pastoral Care Committee. They have navigated holding our congregation together even while physically distanced, lovingly keeping in touch with people with phone calls and emails, sending thoughtful cards, and dropping off meals and groceries. When a loved one of a congregant has died, the Pastoral Care Committee has created "grief bags," which they deliver to those in mourning. Our families in mourning have found these grief bags to be tremendously meaningful and heartfelt. I received one when my mother died in August at Casey House, after a yearlong battle with pancreatic cancer. I was comforted by the grief bag, and the dozens of loving cards I received from so many of you. I taped each and every one to the back of my office door and wall so I can look at them each time I come to the office. It takes my breath away to be held in such love. Our congregation is only as strong as our care for each other, and you and the Pastoral Care Committee have shone your hearts with such grace and care.

We have had many big changes in the staff as well. We bid farewell to our beloved Administrator, Donna Taylor, in March and welcomed JeKaren Olaoya, who has risen to the occasion of a new position in a pandemic with grace and tenacity. We bid farewell with deep gratitude to the Rev. Dr. Linda Olson Peebles, who served as the Interim Senior Minister as UUCR underwent a process of discernment as to who the next called minister would be to serve this thriving congregation. Through deliberate care and stewardship, a Search Committee was assembled and charged with discerning what UUCR was seeking in their next called minister, and by the Spring of 2020, they invited me to be the Internal Candidate. After my own discernment, beholding all of who and what UUCR is and could be, I said yes.

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FAITH FORMATION

Reflections on Family Faith Formation

by Carla Miller, Director of Religious Education

Tousled heads and small smiles pop up in the squares—eating cereal, holding a favorite stuffy, or introducing us to a real pet. The children are present, as present as ever. Caring and dedicated teachers, too? Yes! Greeting them with a smile, listening closely as they check-in, sharing, songs, and silly animal videos.



Does it sound too cliché to say that we in Family Faith Formation have grown through sharing this very hard experience? Yet we have. There is a deeper need for community, and with it a deeper connection. We have grown in awareness of our need for each other, and of the children's needs, for social and spiritual support. There is love in our midst as we gather around our children like a virtual group hug.

RE has been there, consistently, with classes and Chalice Chapels to share their thoughts and feelings about these experiences and strategies for coping. We gather hope and strength from these conversations, and from just having fun. Even some newcomers have joined us, and stayed. I have received more notes of gratitude from parents and families than ever before.

Parties and celebrations are still good fun—even on Zoom! Our Middle School Youth did a terrific job leading the crafts and games at the Halloween Party. Our winter holiday party included our favorites: graham cracker houses and candy cane reindeer.

Much remains the same... and yet—*oh, boy!*—have we changed!

In class:

- We adopted the RE resources from *Soul Matters*, following our congregational themes.
- We are very intentionally adding much-needed humor and laughter to our time with the kids.
- We are leading with a more explicitly anti-racist, anti-oppressive voice in our classes. This is another vital area of growth inspired by painful events, and one which we passionately want to expand, and to do well, consciously. More on that, and an invitation to get involved, in the next issue of *Quest!*

In family ministry:

- Home deliveries of craft materials and small surprises.
- Greater emphasis on family ministry:
 - Activity, book, and movie recommendations.
 - Parent support group.
 - A parent discussion group on *Raising White Kids* by Dr. Jennifer Harvey
 - Plans for a Small Group Ministry for Parents...*more on that in the next issue, too!*

(continued on page 5)



FAITH FORMATION

(Reflections continued from page 5)

And there are losses:

Not everyone is present on Zoom, of course. Attendance in RE is at about 2/3 its normal rate at this time of year. On both ends of the age spectrum, Pre-K and High School Youth are very small groups. We miss a few “zoomed-out” friends; their families need to take a break from screen time on weekends, understandably. Do consider popping in some time to say hi to your friends!

- We have had to cancel Our Whole Lives human sexuality classes.
- We are searching for ways to more effectively engage our Middle School Youth; they are a great group, and we want to serve them well.
- We miss the children on the playground; their parents chatting in small groups and pairs; the real-life, casual, conversations.



And yet amidst the losses, we have connection, community, caring, hope, and moments of joy! What have I learned from this experience of RE in a pandemic? Maybe it’s only what I have always known, and now know even more fully: that what we do here together in Faith Formation *matters* in the lives of our children and of us all!

Blessings,

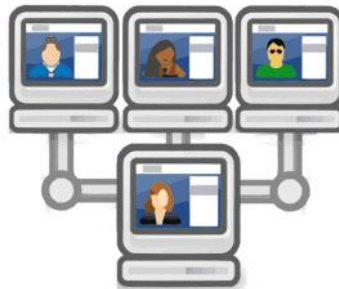
Carla

Some words from a teacher:

Teaching the 4th/5th grade has definitely uplifted me during difficult times. Yes, Zoom RE is a challenge, but I also feel like our time together is important and makes a difference, comforting us with the sense of community that is so lacking in our lives right now. Sometimes we are serious, but we often laugh together and wonder at nature and the beauty around us. We share sorrows, but also tell jokes and funny stories, and it makes me remember my own childhood and reminds me of my kids. It has been an honor and a privilege to be their teacher, and I have learned so much from the RE curriculum, and from them. I am definitely a better "Zoomer" thanks to them! Thank you to UUCR for giving me such a wonderful opportunity!

I'm struck by the contrast between what UUCR is doing vs. some other churches... I read in the Post today that the local Catholic Archdiocese (and some others across the country) is suing to stop the government from forbidding attendance limits on live gatherings. I am grateful for the many people at UUCR that work so hard to make it possible for us all to participate in our church community. And do it SAFELY!

-Barbara Weis



CONGREGATION WORKS

A Note from the Office

by JeKaren Olaoya, Congregation Administrator



When I began my six-week training for Congregational Administrator, I learned all the ins and outs of being a facilities manager, an event coordinator, a logistics manager, and many other duties for live, in-person space. The last day of my training was also the last day that the church campus would be open. We expected this to be a couple of weeks then back to normal. We were all able to quickly pivot to virtual church—and I quickly had to learn my job all over again in a remote, virtual format.

One of the first things we did was to institute a check-in process for anyone who needed to be on campus. This allowed us to have a system for contact tracing so that if an individual was sick in the building we could notify anyone who would have been in contact with them or any surfaces they may have touched.

After two months we realized that this process of reopening to full capacity would take longer than we anticipated, and with the guidance of Rev. Dr. Linda Olson Peebles formed a Reopening Planning Team with an Expert sub-committee to help us comb through data and make recommendations to the Board for policies and procedures needed to keep the congregation and its staff safe. Meeting each month, the Team looked at trends in the community and surrounding counties, at other local churches, and used this information to build an initial report of recommendations. These were published in September, recommending that the building remain closed. The report was updated and revised in November with the latest data; with an increase in the number of cases in Montgomery County, the Team recommended that we remain closed to worship services as well as small groups both inside and outside.

A big project that we took on in the Fall was re-keying our doors and installing lockboxes on each of the buildings. This process allowed us to have virtual control of building access for the purposes of contact tracing, cleaning schedules, and social distancing procedures. This new process saves money on keys and provides an extra layer of security—only people who should be in the space are able to be there with authorization.

It's hard to believe that in the past ten months so much has happened. So many hard things; but also so much love, compassion, care, and resilience. 2021 is fast approaching. It may not be what we expect, as 2020 was not, but from the words of Sally Rogers, "love will guide us through the hard night." ♥

In Love and Service,

JeKaren



SHARING THE MINISTRY

Congregational Engagement in a Pandemic

by Adrian Graham, Director of Communications & Membership

What. A. Year.

Who knew last spring that when I shared the April 1 issue of *Quest* with you, that it would be eight-and-a-half months before you received the next issue? With all the new demands on staff time that were brought about by moving our entire congregational operations online, it became too much of a challenge to continue producing things in the same way we did prior to the pandemic, as though there hadn't been an incredibly traumatic change to how we exist in the world. And so this congregation has become very adept at being flexible, trying on new ways of being together and connecting with one another in our efforts to maintain a sense of community and to support one another. In addition to missing out on a regular, monthly newsletter, we've made several changes along the way to what had been the *UUCR E-Weekly*, our email newsletter, which is now delivered in two parts – one midweek which announces activities for each upcoming Sunday, and one each weekend that is full of announcements sharing the wonderful work that UUCR is doing, and opportunities this congregation offers. We've centralized information on our website in a handful of places so that folks know where to look to remain connected. And we learn, every week, new ways to make the most use of Zoom as a platform that offers us a container in which to keep UUCR alive and thriving. What a year, indeed!



Though we made the decision to close our campus to gatherings back in March, we have remained a congregation that is distant only in the physical sense; in some ways, we have learned to be even more spiritually and socially close to one another. You are making calls to one another, making deliveries to others, and finding innovative ways to keep in touch. We've had a handful of opportunities for "drive-through" interaction on campus for special services like Flower Communion and Water Communion, and most recently for the several different collections that were taken up for the holiday season. We have experimented with having additional opportunities to connect regularly online, and some of them have stuck: Monday Music Meditations, Midweek Vespers, Emerson's Sunset Café, UUCR the Vote, and Dinners for Eight are all examples of activities that either came about due to the pandemic or found new life in virtual space. We even had a successful online auction, creating many more chances to connect throughout the church year. You are a committed and dedicated people.

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Important Links for Keeping Engaged

by Adrian Graham, Director of Communications & Membership

- ◆ www.uucr.org—Our website! When in doubt, start with our homepage (or, see *Contact Us!* below).
- ◆ www.uucr.org/covid-19—Archive of "All-UUCR" messages sent during the COVID-19 pandemic. Includes a link to the page where our four most recent *UUCR E-News** and *Sunday at UUCR** emails are posted as well. (**UUCR E-Weekly* is on hiatus.)
- ◆ www.uucr.org/zoom—Information and links to any of our regularly occurring virtual gatherings, which for the time being are being hosted by the Zoom videoconferencing platform.
- ◆ www.uucr.org/building-access—Information for those few folks who will need access to our buildings during the pandemic.
- ◆ www.uucr.org/contact-us—*Contact Us!* Staff contact info and links to UUCR Social Media accounts.
- ◆ For questions about our congregational engagement tool, Realm, please email realm@uucr.org.

SHARING THE MINISTRY

Spotlight On...Music & Arts

by Sarah Jebian, Director of Music

I remember the last in-person staff meeting we held in early March when the decision was made to close our campus. We thought it would be for a few weeks or maybe a month or two at most. Now here I am, producing nearly two albums worth of virtual music for the December holidays and March feels like it was a decade ago.

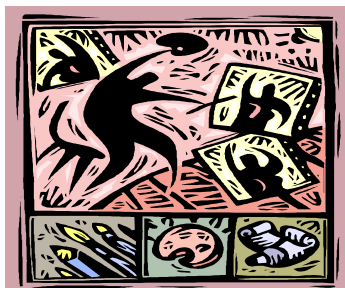
When we moved the Music & Arts ministry online, my initial goal was simply to record hymns with Justin each week for use in worship and to use pre-recorded music with beautiful visuals until we could be together again. As it became clear that we might not be together again for 6 months, 9 months, a year or more, my one goal became many: 1) to learn how to do basic audio engineering and to refine my video engineering skills; 2) to engage as many UUCR singers and musicians as possible in virtual music-making as often as possible; 3) to use this as an opportunity to bring in out-of-state talent we could never afford to feature otherwise; 4) to find creative ways to engage the wider community outside of UUCR; 5) to remain flexible and be willing to change plans on a dime as needed; 6) to use the wide variety of ready-made options available on the internet to bring in multicultural voices and feature music we might not otherwise have been able to feature; 7) to maintain high standards of excellence while leaving room to be #PerfectlyImperfect; 8) sleep occasionally.



I continue to be blown away by the bravery and willingness of our UUCR musicians and singers to lean into the discomfort of learning how to do this virtual music business. It is no small thing to do what we've done. The choir has produced three major virtual choir recordings; our two new chamber choirs have produced one virtual recording each; Bonfire of the Mannakeys and Wildberry Jam have both produced near-monthly offerings (!); our chamber musicians have been producing material like crazy; and a host of other musicians (pianists, singers, guitarists, handpan, flute, to name a few) have given me enough material for several months of worship services. When I have time to stop and think about it, I'm moved to tears by the 'can-do' spirit of our music community. I'm in awe.

We've learned a lot together over the past few months. 1) Recording isn't as scary as it seems at first. 2) We will never love the sound of our raw, untouched solo voices but are continually amazed at how great we sound when we put it all together. 3) We have a love-hate relationship with click tracks which help us all to stay together in tempo and make editing the audio a lot easier but limit our creativity and artistry because we're locked into a certain tempo. 4) There are a lot of great resources on YouTube...and some not so great resources, too. It's a rabbit hole. 5) For some of us, the community aspect is more important than the music. Connection, not perfection. 6) It takes soooooo muuuuuuch lonnnnnnger to produce music virtually than it does in person. 7) Church is not a building. Community can be more expansive than we ever imagined.

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SHARING THE MINISTRY

(Music & Arts continued from page 8)

A surprising and delightful blessing has been the opportunity to get to know other UU communities through our choral program. Our choir has graciously adopted singers from all over the country who wanted to keep singing but for whatever reason were unable to do so at their own congregations. It has been so much fun to feel like we truly are part of a bigger UU family. You'll get to see and hear some of these singers in our next large virtual choir piece debuting on Christmas Eve—50 singers representing five congregations in five different states! Amazing!



Another wonderful blessing has been the tremendously successful *Race & #RealTalk* program hosted by UUCR and created/facilitated by members of HALO Quartet, including our own Niambi Powell. During its first quarter, the program has brought together 80 people across the country in deep discussion about how racism keeps us apart. The group varies in age, experience, race, and musical ability, but we're all there, having hard conversations and making beautiful music together. It is truly magical and life-changing work. You can still be part of it! [Register](#) for the second, third or fourth quarter and [check out the Race & #RealTalk concert](#) from December 12 on YouTube!

And yet another joy for me personally has been the opportunity to teach our UUCR singers and friends from various other UU communities more about my passion: the human vocal instrument. Since we really can't 'rehearse' online, I chose to focus on teaching during our Thursday night rehearsals. Each week has been richly rewarding for me as a teacher and I've been delighted with the *aha!* moments I've witnessed as people learn about and experiment with their own voices. I believe that we will all come away from this year stronger and better than ever. Everyone is welcome to attend these workshops (which will start up again in January) whether you are a choir member or not. Who knows, it just might inspire you to join the choir!

It hasn't all been a joyful ride though. It's been a steep and difficult learning curve for all of us, myself included. Some dedicated choir members found that it was just too painful and hard to try to be part of the virtual projects and they needed to step back from the choir. Many of us lost family members this year and have helped each other carry that grief. I discovered that my dreams are bigger than the hours in the day and that I needed to ask for help and simplify many, many things in order to survive. (I am not good at either of those things. Thank you Universe for this opportunity to grow.) We have all, at some point over the last few months, felt deep grief, profound frustration, bone-deep exhaustion, sky-high stress levels, and true despair. It's all true. It's all real. So many things are hard right now, but we're finding our way through.

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SHARING THE MINISTRY

(*Congregational Engagement* continued from page 7)

In this time that we've been unable to come together in Rockville, some of our members have moved far away but have chosen to continue participating in our services and activities and have maintained their membership. Many of you who are reading this in 2020 have become invested in UUCR, though you live hundreds or even thousands of miles away. We are mindful of those in our congregation who don't have easy access to the technology required for the things we are doing, hence the increase in phone calls, deliveries, etc. mentioned above; this issue of *Quest*, which is being printed and mailed to those for whom we don't have email addresses on record, also serves as a written, archivable record of our experiences this year – something that is not captured by ephemeral email. Some of the benefits we've embraced because of virtual community: easier access for newcomers and guests from all over; greater accessibility for those without transportation, or who are ill, or who otherwise found participating in person to be a challenge; we were recently able to include closed captioning for our services – a welcome change for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in our community; and much, much more. So far, I have offered two New2UU classes of several sessions each – one each in the summer and the fall – and in September we restarted our monthly Newcomer Chat on the second Sunday following worship, all on Zoom, which has proven to be an excellent format for these conversations. By the time the next issue of *Quest* reaches you, we will have scheduled and announced our Spring 2021 New2UU class; stay tuned! We are doing great ministry, together.



As I write this, UUCR has not set a date for when we will return to gathering in person for worship and other congregational activities. Likely, we have several more months of virtual time ahead of us. And already, we know that we cannot “return to normal” and go back to doing things exactly the way we did them before we ever heard of COVID-19. I am heartened by our commitment to build on what we've created these last nine months – I am heartened by our commitment to creating the Beloved Community by living it into existence as we grow into the future. And before I sign off, I want to extend an extra special thank-you to Sean Hickey, Larissa Johnson, Bill Newhouse, Nancy Klag, Antonio Carrillo, and Mike Holmes for answering the call on so many occasions to help behind the scenes with tech for our virtual services. Most of you have no idea how much work goes into creating the experiences that we share on Sunday mornings (and at other times), but these folks have been backstage and know what happens behind the curtains! We couldn't have sustained it all quite as well without their help. What a year it has been, indeed!

Bright blessings to all this holiday season,

Adrian

New Members Who Have Joined Since March 1, 2020



Jennifer Ambrose
Ken Ambrose
Donnamae Clancy
Patrice Davis
Annette Emery
Joshuah Emery
Raymond Gonzales
Julianne Kapner
Laura Lucs
Mia Morris

We Celebrate Children Born to Members Since March 1, 2020

Peregrine Emery
son of Annette & Joshua Emery



We Remember Members & Friends Who Have Died Since March 1, 2020

Henry Bain
Charlie Eisenhower
André Enceneat
John Furlani
Dorothy Millon Ladd
Alonzo Smith
Celia Young



SHARING THE MINISTRY

Pastoral Care Team*:

Sharon Fitzpatrick
Jane Klag
Jill Asman
Emily Untermeyer
Kent Hancock
Marianne Miller
Marie Reed
Karla Timmons
Margie Henry
Sue Thomas
Terrie Barr
Marilyn Briant
Sue McCall

UUCR Ministerial Search Committee*:

Fran Lowe
Cynthia Shires-Thurston
James Blue
Karen Pittleman
Mark Stiles
Michael Mignano
Nancy Spencer



Board of Trustees*:

Elsa Powel Strong
Mary Carvajal
Betsy Wilder
Glenn Griffin
Brian Haugen
Larissa Johnson
Kendall Watson
Don Helton

Racial Justice Working Group*:

Betsy Wilder
Fran Lowe
Julie Robinson
Nancy Spencer
Ethel Gilbert
Helen Oketch

**membership of groups mentioned in "Project Pandemic" by Rev. Rebekah.*

(Music & Arts continued from page 9)

As I think about the future of UUCR and the Music & Arts program, what is crystal clear to me is that we can never go back to before. Our roots have now extended from coast to coast, not only relationship-building through music but also new out-of-state members at UUCR that we'll want to include in the life of our congregation in rich and meaningful ways. That means that as I look ahead to next fall (crossing fingers and toes that we'll be able to be in person again), I'm looking for ways that the Music & Arts program can be a hybrid of in-person and online activities. I don't know what that looks like yet, but you can be sure that some of the online initiatives I started this year (Monday Music Meditation and 1st Fridays @ UUCR concert series come to mind) will likely continue on in some form.

No one knows what the next year will look like as vaccines become available and life returns to some kind of 'normal' (what is normal?). But what I am absolutely sure of is that UUCR is brave and can meet any challenge put before us. What this year has shown me is that we have love and passion on our side. We care about this community and will move mountains to help it thrive (surviving is thriving). And we can make a joyful noise no matter where we are—let heaven and nature sing!

With loving and endless gratitude,

Sarah



December 16, 2020

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SHARING THE MINISTRY

(Project Pandemic continued from page 3)

In March and April of 2020, the Search Committee set up twenty or so Candidating meetings, where committees, leaders, parent groups, and youth were invited to a conversation with me. They asked good, thoughtful questions about my leadership, vision, and what I bring to the table as we *practice courageous love* together. So many of the meetings were, well, I can only say it this way: love fests. Our meetings were mutually affirming, expansive, and hopeful. I think we all needed a big dose of hope to help carry us on as we were approaching month three of the pandemic. Then on May 3, UUCR came together in the most gracious and beautiful way to vote to call me as your next settled minister. And I cried to say YES, again. We cried and cheered—and rose to the moment with as much heart as that big day called for. On August 1, I began serving UUCR as your next settled minister, and I am continually humbled and thrilled to be here with you. And the gifts keep on coming. In September, we welcomed two part-time Ministerial Interns, Mathew Taylor and Kirk Freeman, who will be with us for two whole wonderful years as they learn and grow into their ministerial authority and identities. Mathew and Kirk have already contributed so much to our worship and ministries here at UUCR, and I am super grateful to serve alongside the “Wonder Twins.”

With so much good, we also faced the undeniable reality that we are called to so much more in terms of dismantling systems of oppression within ourselves, our congregation, and our world. With the horrific deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and hundreds more, the people were taking to the streets to demand change. Black Lives Matter and other justice organizations were calling for defunding the police, halting construction of new jails, decriminalizing sex work, removing police from schools, exonerating protestors, and abolishing cash bail in Maryland. On June 5, dozens of beloveds from UUCR gathered on campus and walked together for a demonstration in downtown Rockville at the Courthouse on a sweltering hot day. Thousands gathered in Rockville, and we quickly were separated—but we were able to catch glimpses of each other from across the crowds. The speakers were inspiring, the chanting was deafening, the spirit was palpable; it was time to live into our 8th Principle: *“We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”* With programs like Coming to the Table, Race and #RealTalk, Beloved Conversations, Jubilee, book discussions, and so many more hosted by our own Racial Justice Working Group and others, UUCR members and friends engaged deeply in this work. And our work continues. Dismantling systems of oppression begins with each one of us to build the world we seek.

We need one another to grow. We need one another to learn...to be challenged and called into deeper connection and conversations. We need one another to become who we are called to be in the world. We are called to love, and to be loved. Accepted and welcomed as we are, and we are men, women, non-binary, trans, queer, bisexual, gay, and lesbian. We are Black, Asian, Latino, Indigenous, and white. We are multiracial and in multiracial relationships and families. We are *Ubuntu*: I am because we are.



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SHARING THE MINISTRY

(Project Pandemic continued from page 12)

This is what I have learned and appreciated more deeply since the onset of the pandemic has rocked our lives to the core. Connection matters, community matters, Black Lives Matter, actively dismantling oppression matters, radical love and hospitality matters, and you and I matter. And that there is so much love here at UUCR. Since October, with the help of my Emissaries Margie and Marianne, we have taken on a project for one-on-one's with everyone at UUCR. I have been blessed to connect with dozens of UUCR members and friends for up to an hour each, and it has been magnificent to get to know you better and more deeply.

Our spiritual theme for 2020-2021 is "Love. Serve. Grow." and I can witness this happening all across our congregation (and even more I know I'm not even aware of!). The pandemic may have cracked the foundation of our lives, but it hasn't cracked our spirit. We are hurting, confused, anxious, and sad a lot of the time. And we are resilient, loving, filled with grace and #PerfectlyImperfect.

For me personally, the pandemic has broken my heart and filled it with even more love. I describe myself as an agnostic theist, meaning I believe in the God of my understanding, and since I am human, I hold that truth with loose fingers because my understanding is finite against an infinite universe and power so much greater than myself. I note that one of my personal prophets, adrienne maree brown, encourages us to remember, "what you pay attention to, grows." So I pay attention to this moment, how I am showing up and caring for myself, in order to love and serve you better and more deeply.

Beloved UUCR family, I am so grateful for you and how we have journeyed together through this surreal, heartbreaking, and challenging time. Thank you for reading this, thank you for your love and care. More Pandemic reflection to follow in the Spring 2021 issue of *Quest*!

Until we are together again and I can hug you in person, my love and warm embrace are with you this day.

With heart,

Rev. Rebekah

Thinking of You

by Jane Klag, Pastoral Care Team Cochair

The Pastoral Care Team has been very engaged throughout all the time that UUCR has not been meeting in person. The Team has been trying to keep folks connected with UUCR and just generally checking on people. We developed a telephone tree, and calls have been made regularly since March 2020. Many cards have been sent for events both happy and sad.

Since we have not been able to have Memorial Services, we have tried to be attentive to our grieving congregants. We have given Grief Bags which contain readings and suggestions for at-home ritual; hopefully they have brought comfort at this difficult time.

For Thanksgiving, we tried to substitute the dinner that was usually held at UUCR by having some meals delivered. This was done congregant-to-congregant—there were some special connections made and the meals were well received.

For the December holidays, we will be similarly delivering some cookies. In addition, we sent fabric books to the two children most recently born to UUCR congregants.



Quest

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville
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Unitarian Universalist Principles

As a member congregation of the Unitarian Universalist Association, we covenant to affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

In addition to these Seven Principles, the members of UUCR voted to support the UUA in moving toward incorporating a proposed Eighth Principle that may be as stated below:

- Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.

Our Mission and Vision

The mission and vision of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville is to
Practice Courageous Love.

Our Values

Lifelong Spiritual Discovery ~ Beloved Community ~ A Just World