

the steeple

*The Congregational Newsletter of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington
December 2018*

From the Stewardship Team **Share Your First UU Story**

By Sandy Titchner

What's your story? We all have one about what brought us to the First UU Society. This is mine and I'm sure it's one that many of you in this UU congregation can relate to.

I grew up in the Methodist church attending Sunday school, participating in youth group, joining and getting married in the church. As my husband John and I moved up and down the East Coast for his job we moved our church membership with us. True to form, when we moved to Shelburne we joined the Shelburne United Methodist Church. We brought our kids up there and John sang in the choir while I taught Sunday school and served on various committees.

A period of disillusionment with Methodism led us to the Crystal Cathedral, the "television church" in California. We joined and even attended several member events in Garden Grove. I remember vividly our daughter asking us how that church would/could be available to support us if tragedy struck, and trying to come up with a satisfactory answer to her question.

It was just such an event that led me to the UU. John died and I couldn't bear to return to the Shelburne church without having him sitting up there in the choir loft. Tracy invited me to come to the UU with her family and we are now one of the regularly attending multigenerational families here. I initially attended the grief support group offered to get through the holiday season and eventually became a theme circle participant to meet and know

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From the Stewardship Team

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more people. I became a stewardship committee member for that same reason. Now I continue with that committee as a way to give back to this community that has come to mean so much to me.

As we enter this season of giving I realize that there are many ways to give and all are needed. Stewardship comes in many forms. We all need to do our part during this challenging time of transition. Share your stories, make a pledge and get to know your fellow congregants. All of these are the reasons we have a strong community. Help us keep it that way. And thank you for letting me share my story with you.

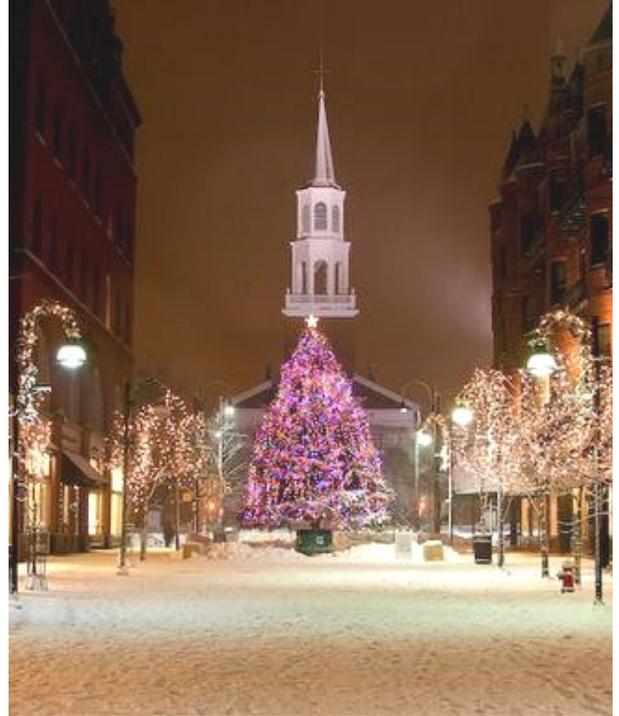


Image credit: Benjamin D. Bloom



Holiday Schedule for Worship Services



Please note the following schedule for our worship services during the holiday season.

We hope you will join us!

Sunday, December 23:
Services at 9 and 11 a.m.

Monday, December 24:
Christmas Eve services
at 4, 6, and 8 p.m.

Sunday, December 30:
One service at 11 a.m.

The Collective Work of Welcoming

By Rev. Andre Mol, Developmental Assistant Minister for Pastoral Care and Membership



On November 13, about 25 FUUSB members gathered in the Community Room in our meeting house basement for an annual orientation of Ushers and Welcome Ambassadors. These volunteers play a key role on Sunday mornings, welcoming members, friends, and newcomers to our services. They hand out orders of service, collect money for the offering plate, count our attendance for the morning, and help to connect with newcomers. While we spent some of our time at this orientation covering the technical aspects of these activities, most of our time was spent reflecting on what it means to truly welcome each other.

Remembering our own experiences entering the First UU meeting house for the first time, we shared a variety of experiences. Some of us knew nothing about Unitarian Universalism and were perhaps anxious about entering an unfamiliar religious setting, while others were experienced UUs ready to plug into a new congregation. Regardless of our individual circumstances, we realized that many of us were going through a life transition of some sort -- becoming a parent, moving to a new town, navigating a divorce, or coping with the loss of a loved one -- just to name a few examples. What many of us sought was a spiritual home where we could find some form of acceptance and connection. These needs did not stop after our first visit -- or even after signing the membership book. They are deep needs which we hope will continuously be met by our ongoing relationship with this congregation.

When we consider this, welcoming becomes something much bigger than the tasks of our Ushers and Welcome Ambassadors. Welcoming involves the collective work of us all. And it begins, as we discovered in our discussion during the orientation, with setting aside a whole variety of assumptions we can make about those we meet in our congregation. The diversity of relationships in our congregation includes a beautiful spectrum that spans across gender, sexual orientation, family configurations, race, religious background, education, class, abilities, health, and political affiliation. Welcoming this diversity means we can't assume that those we meet here are just like us. It means seeking to know and appreciate those we meet at a level that goes beyond our similarities.

There is a comfort in greeting those we know on Sundays at our meeting house, and our community is strengthened when we broaden the network of those we know. So even if you are not an Usher or a Welcome Ambassador, take the time during service (or in coffee hour or other congregational gatherings) to find people you don't already know. Wear a nametag that includes your pronouns. Ask them their name and their pronouns. Share with each other what brings each of you here to FUUSB. Not only will you meet someone new, who may become a familiar face on Sunday mornings, you will also help to deepen the way that we welcome each other.



Family Ministry at FUUSB

By Andrea Spencer-Linzie, Developmental Director of Family Ministry



More and more UU congregations are exploring the Family Ministry model for faith formation. The FUUSB Family Ministry Team has been implementing various opportunities to create connections and relationships across generations, in families as well as throughout the congregation. FUUSB already utilizes monthly themes from Soul Matters that are used in worship, theme circles, and faith formation classes for children, youth and families.

We have multigenerational worship services throughout the year, including the vibrant telling of the “Stone Soup” story in November. We utilize Spirit Play to develop the imagination and spiritual practice of our younger children. Under the leadership of our new Youth Ministry Coordinator, Mary Loomis, and the Youth Advisors, the youth are exploring a broad range of programs, social justice themes, spiritual formation, and fun.

The Family Ministry Team provides a “Family Chapel” experience once each month so that children may participate as leaders in the Chapel rituals with their parents in an intimate environment. Parents and children can continue the conversation about the story or theme at home. The Family Chapel utilizes the same theme that is used in the Sanctuary, and take-home story handouts are provided on the Family Ministry Bulletin Board in the Community Room. The stories can be used to explore the theme at home.

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The Family Ministry Team has also planned special projects for the last Sunday of the month where

children, youth and adults may participate together. Our first event was learning about prayer beads and their use around the world. Children, youth and adults made prayer beads for their own use, and the youth were a huge help in working with the children to make the prayer beads. On another Sunday, children, youth and adults created holiday cards that were sent to members for whom it is difficult to get to the Society.

In the coming months we’ll be doing some service projects, making holiday sweets, and when the weather turns a bit warmer, some trips for apple picking, a nature walk and other outings.

We want your feedback and ideas. Please let us know your comments. Based on information received, we’ll schedule some time for groups for in-person conversations about the future of Family Ministry.

Our hope is that people and groups across the congregation and generations will engage together for social justice, community service, faith formation, and fun throughout the year. The Family Ministry Team is developing ideas, but we can’t do it alone. If you’re interested, we would welcome more members for the Family Ministry Team.

For any comments please contact Andrea Spencer-Linzie, Developmental Director of Family Ministry at andrea@uusociety.org.



From the Racial Justice Team

Unitarian Universalist History, Race, and the Promise and Practice of Our Faith

By Zoe Hart, Justice and Outreach Lay Lead

Unitarian Universalists are proud of the principles that we hold dear, but many of us have begun to learn that our UU history is inseparable from the history of this country, a history steeped in racism and white supremacy, a history that flies in the face of our principles. In the words of the Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed, “We do not stand above the social attitudes of our times, as we are prone to believe, but instead flounder about in their midst with everyone else.” In our UU history, people of color were welcomed into seminary, but told there were no congregations that they might serve. Black ministers of primarily black UU congregations struggled to get recognition and support from the American Unitarian Association (precursor to the UUA).

In the early 60s, UU ministers and lay people supported Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Washington, D.C. and in Selma, Alabama. And in 1967, during the black empowerment movement, the Black UU Caucus (BUUC) was formed and, in response to their demands, the UUA formed the Black Affairs Council (BAC) and committed \$1 million in funding to BAC over four years. But within two years,

amid conflicts around black separatism vs. integration and facing a budget deficit, the UUA reneged on that commitment, reducing the funding and extending the time over which it would be provided. In response BAC disaffiliated from the UUA in order to raise money on its own and many black UUs left Unitarian Universalism.

Revelations of racism in UUA hiring practices in recent years make it clear that we as Unitarian Universalists still have much work to do. As we look to dismantle white supremacy in our world, we must also look inward and dismantle white supremacy within our own systems and institutions. In October 2016 the UUA Board of Trustees made a bold \$5.3 million commitment to fund Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU) to support ministry to black-identified Unitarian Universalists. \$1 million of that pledge is being raised from UU congregations in the Promise and Practice of Our Faith campaign. Two generous longtime UUs, Julie and Brad Bradburd, have pledged \$1 million in funds to match the donation of any congregations that raise \$10 per member. Our First UU Society of Burlington has pledged to raise \$4,700 to qualify for that matching fund. In the coming months you’ll hear more from our Racial Justice Team as we organize to meet this pledge and play our part in ending a history of broken promises to black UUs.

For more information about the Promise and Practice of Our Faith campaign, see <https://www.uua.org/giving/areas-support/funds/promise-and-practice>. For more information about the history of the UUA during the black empowerment movement, see this UU World article: <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/the-uua-meets-black-power>.



Electoral Justice Initiative at FUUSB

By Jud Lawrie

At the heart of social justice is a well-functioning democracy. Yet our democracy is showing many signs of no longer being up to the task. More and more, it is being run for the benefit of the rich and powerful. Many are now thinking of our democracy as an autocracy, a plutocracy. There is increased need and urgency for “electoral justice,” for making our democracy once again a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. To reclaim our democracy from the “1%,” from Wall Street, from the political and economic “elite.” And to address the many social inequities and the environmental damages caused by unbridled capitalism.

UUA has recently said:

One of the fundamental principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association is the use of the democratic process. As an expression of our faith, many Unitarian Universalist congregations engage in voter registration, election reform, and protecting voting rights and democracy.

Electoral justice has an essential connection to the effectiveness and equity of our democracy and our form of government. In addition, electoral justice has important intersections with and influence on racial justice, economic justice and climate justice,



Image credit: ©2011 Michael Fleshman, December 10 march for voting rights (www.flickr.com/photos/fleshmanpix/6732076277)

three of the most important social justice issues of our time.

For these reasons, we are proposing an electoral justice initiative at First UU. The primary purpose of this initiative is to address key issues of electoral justice in our community, our state, and our country. Our social justice problems are in large part caused by or allowed by the people we elect. In turn, the people we elect are in large part selected, elected, and controlled by the monied interests. So, if we are to make significant progress against the various social injustices, we have to regain control of the electoral process! Our democracy is at risk!

Following are the kinds of electoral issues that might be addressed:

- Voter suppression
- Voter education, engagement, protection, and registration
- Redistricting/gerrymandering
- Election reform
- Legal challenges
- Legislative proposals

Wherever possible, it will be our intention to collaborate with and/or support other organizations that share our interests and values. For example:

- UUA
- Poor Peoples Campaign
- Movement for Black Lives/Electoral Justice Project
- ACLU
- Vermont Interfaith Action
- Other faith communities
- Peace and Justice Center
- Rights and Democracy
- SPLC (Southern Poverty Law Center)

If you're interested in learning more or getting involved, please contact Jud Lawrie at jud@lawrie.com.



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**Interested in writing an
article for *The Steeple*?**

The next issue of *The Steeple*
will be published in March.
The deadline to submit articles
is **February 25**.

*If you would like to write an
article or have questions,
please email mary@uusociety.org.*