



## Minister's Monthly Update

June 20, 2020

Communication in a congregation of 500+ people is challenging in the best of times. During a pandemic, when we all need to take care of each other by staying physically apart, communication becomes even more complicated, and much more important. In times of stress and uncertainty, accurate information is essential to everyone's peace of mind, and helps all of us know what to do.

So -- starting now, I will send out an update every month about what's happening at FUUSB, with notes from other core staff as appropriate. My goal is not to tell you what's on the calendar: the eNews will still be published (almost) every week this summer, with up-to-date information on events and programs; and Christina will keep sending "The Links" on Saturdays to make sure you can access various online opportunities.

This Monthly Update is a little different. I will look a bit farther ahead and let you know not only what's coming up, but also some of the questions we're wondering about as we strive to keep the congregation active and connected, even without gathering in the Meeting House. I hope you find it helpful. If you have questions, feel free to be in touch ([revtricia@uusociety.org](mailto:revtricia@uusociety.org), 802-862-5630 x2400). I'm not in the Meeting House very regularly, but the new phone system sends me an email whenever I get a voicemail at the office.

Here's what we know today -

### **When will First UU "open up"?**

The quick answer is: no one knows. *We're committed to waiting until worship in the Meeting House is once again safe for everyone who wants to be there.* There are too many unknowns right now to predict when that will be. The UUA has advised all congregations to plan for another year of online worship, so that's what we're doing.

Though we're not gathering on Sundays, this congregation is definitely open!

- **Zoom meetings** happen every day, for committees and teams and classes and small groups. (If you'd like us to schedule a meeting for your group, contact Christina, Mary, Erika or me for help.)
- High school and middle school **youth are gathering** once and even twice a week; exciting plans for collaboration with other UU youth around the state are in the works.

- When you are in the neighborhood, check out the outside **Story Paths** that Erika and Margo have begun posting, for families and community members to enjoy. And there's always the labyrinth.
- The staff has just finalized a **protocol for small groups that want to meet in person on the Meeting House grounds**, safely. (Watch for information about how to schedule such a gathering or contact Mary Williams.)

### **Justice work**

Yesterday morning I went down my street to Williston Central School, to be there as administrators and students – and a few hundred citizens – watched a Black Lives Matter flag be drawn up the flagpole. It was Juneteenth – a 155-year-old celebration of liberation that too many people in our country are just learning about. These are important times for all of us. Pandemic or not, your congregation is committed to being a community of justice, learning, and solidarity with Black people and all those marginalized in our community, and our world.

It is an honor for me to work with the Racial Justice Team as they plan ways for members, friends and community members to stay informed and get engaged in these days of protesting our society's racism, and believing in the possibility of radical change. Among other things, Zoe Hart and a growing team of FUUSB members are organizing a **Free Lunch! on July 4th** on the Meeting House grounds; the very next day, Sunday July 5th, we will have a **re-dedication of this congregation's commitment to Black Lives Matter** after Racial Justice Team members help me to lead worship. There will be more information about all of this in the eNews in coming weeks. I hope many of you will find good ways to be involved.

### **Sunday Worship**

This Sunday I'm very grateful to my husband, Rev. Peter Newport, and Doug Facey for their reflections on Father's Day. Orlando Grant will add to the celebration with another beautiful song, though for copyright reasons it will be part of Coffee Hour rather than in the service itself. Come to Zoom Coffee Hour at 11 am!

We're learning every week how to make our video worship services better, and there's probably more that we haven't even imagined. Working with James Stewart, Sam Whitesell, and the team of Worship Associates is a constant pleasure. Several services this summer will feature guest preachers, as usual! (See below for a note about First UU's Summer Break in July, and suggestions for checking out other UU services on July 19 & 26.)

While we know that not everyone can or wants to "gather" in a virtual community, the feedback we've received so far has been very positive. Lots of FUUSB members and friends are watching, and so are many others – in the last month there were more than 2000 views of videos on the Society's YouTube Channel (for a total of 31,239 minutes watched)! Regardless of when we resume in-person worship, it's hard to imagine that we won't also have a continuing online Sunday presence.

### **Special Notes for the next few weeks:**

**UUA General Assembly 2020** is happening – online – June 24-28. More than a dozen FUUSB staff and members will attend, virtually – just a few of the more than 4000 UU's

already registered! (Christina, Erika and I will be mostly unavailable this coming week, as we participate in our Professional Association meetings and GA. Other staff will be working.)

It's still possible to register for GA if you want to participate in the many programs planned. (<https://www.uua.org/ga/off-site/registrant>)

Plus - anyone can participate in the Public Witness event at GA this year: Call [100,000 Voters: Phone Bank with UU the Vote](https://www.uua.org/ga/off-site/registrant) in partnership with Reclaim Our Vote. Sign up to play a role in helping voters know their options, get to the polls, and participate in democracy. Let's UU the Vote at GA and beyond!

No matter what, I hope you will watch the very special GA Sunday worship service on June 28. The lead minister for that service is Montpelier's own Rev. Joan Javier-Duval! You can watch it at 10 am next Sunday at: <https://www.uua.org/ga/off-site/2020/sunday-worship>

**Wednesday noon Zoom-In Lunch with the Minister is taking a break** starting this week through the end of July. I'll be back in August, and hope to see many of you then!

**A final IMPORTANT NOTE:**

**First UU's Summer Break (July 15-29):** For the last three months, your FUUSB staff has been working almost non-stop to keep the congregation running in these extraordinary times. Because we love our staff (and because everybody needs a break this summer) we've decided to close the congregation for two weeks. On the last two Sundays in July, instead of a recorded FUUSB service, we are encouraging all of you to take a virtual "tour" of online services from UU congregations around the country. We'll put together a list of suggested congregations – watch for it in my July Update.

We all appreciate your support and understanding – thank you for hanging in during these unprecedented times.

So many blessings to all of you!

*Rev. Tricia,*  
Developmental Senior Minister

Below is a picture of my study at home, where I'm spending most of my days...

