



Minister's Monthly Update

November - December 2020

*Let there be a season when holiness is heard,
and the splendor of living is revealed.
Stunned to stillness by beauty
we remember who we are and why we are here.*
- Rebecca Parker

I am writing this on Thanksgiving weekend, in a house still echoing with stories and a refrigerator full of leftovers from the smallest Thanksgiving gathering we've ever had. We learned some things. It turns out we don't know how to make green bean casserole for three people. On the other hand, roasting half a turkey might be easier than a roasting a whole one. And leftover pie is not a problem!

We have all now entered a most unusual holiday season, in this most unusual year... and most of us, most of the time, are managing. It helps when we pay attention to life as it really is – good, and not-good-at-all. As one wise storyteller said on VPR last week, holiday celebrations are never meant just for gratefulness and joy – sorrow and loss are always with us, too. **It works best to make space at the table for both gratitude and grief.**

Like many of you, I am very grateful for family and friends, even if we mostly see one another on Zoom these days. I'm grateful for new traditions and the creative people who imagine them. I am grateful indeed for the brave and loving FUUSB members whose deep commitment to this congregation shows up in the many ways we are finding to **be** First UU – the variety and beauty of online worship, welcoming newcomers in every way except in-person, and forging deeper connections among the people of this ever-changing Society.

Like many of you, I am sometimes overcome with grief for all that has been lost – in our own lives and our communities, in our country and the world. Sometimes the gratitude we feel for full bellies and warm houses moves us to help neighbors and strangers who are hungry, scared, and not safe. And that is good. Helping others is one of the best ways to honor our own grief.

There will be many opportunities at FUUSB to experience and to share our gratitude and grief this season – as a congregation, and as part of this larger community of Burlington and Chittenden County. Here are just a few:

Tuesday December 1 [on Zoom], 6 – 8 pm: **A conversation with Board members about FUUSB's financial and spiritual priorities.** This is an important topic every year, and especially now. For more information and the link to join, go to [FUUSB Priorities Discussion With the Board - First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington \(uusociety.org\)](#)

Friday December 4 [online] 11:59 pm: **Auction and Wreath Sale bidding ends!** There's still time to check out dozens of wonderful items and services, reserve your wreath, or make a donation: auctria.com/auction/FUUSBtogether

Tuesday December 8 [live, on Zoom] 5 pm: **Service of Loss and Remembrance** Every year the Care Network invites all who have lost someone to attend this lovely service, marking the grief of loss and the power of remembrance. This year, when all of us have lost family, friends or acquaintances, all of us are invited. Watch the eNews for the link.

Sunday December 20 [on the Meeting House oval] 4:30 – 7 pm: **Solstice Light Garden** To mark the Winter Solstice, and the return of the light, we will have a candlelit display through the early evening. Watch for info on how you can make a solstice light!

Thursday December 24 [online] 4 pm, and later... **Christmas Eve** We may not be physically together, but the sanctuary will nevertheless be the setting for a lovely Christmas Eve service both traditional and completely new. Get your candles ready!

Throughout December, we will focus on living our UU values by helping people and families in Burlington. The annual **Socially Responsible Santa fund** has been expanded this year – instead of asking for financial gifts on just one Sunday in December, we will collect funds for the entire month, and share the offering from all four Sundays, for this special fund that gives financial help directly to families and individuals who need it.

The **Christmas Eve offering** will benefit the **Discretionary Fund** (emergency assistance throughout the year to help individuals and families) and **JUMP**.

[Helping Our Community - First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington \(uusociety.org\)](#)



Finally, I want to share some very good news. We have contracted with **Rev. David Ruffin** to serve as a consulting minister at FUUSB (part-time) from December 2020 through May 2021. Some of you already know David from his guest preaching or his leadership of the under-the-canopy Vespers services this past August and September. As Consulting Minister, David will work closely with lay leaders and staff to strengthen and re-imagine the congregation's **Caring & Belonging Ministry** programs, including an experiment in online Vespers services. You'll be hearing more soon. I'm excited and grateful – to David, and to all of you whose generous stewardship of this Society is making this possible.

Many blessings to all, in this season of darkness and light!

Rev. Tricia