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Minister's Column

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Interim Senior Minister
April 13, 2017

The national association of Unitarian Universalist Congregations - the UUA - is going through a lot of change in these past two weeks. In addition to the resignation of the UUA President, Rev. Peter Morales, other resignations of UUA leadership include the UUA's Chief Operating Officer, Rev. Harlan Limpert, and its Director of Congregational Life, Rev. Scott Tayler. Scott's resignation is especially hard news here at our church. He was the Co-Minister here with Rev. Kaaren Anderson from 2004 until 2013. In the short time before the next UUA President is elected, **three widely-respected Unitarian Universalists** have been appointed to lead our national association.

When the hiring of a new staff member was announced by the UUA several weeks ago, there was a strong reaction from many Unitarian Universalists. The UUA has not been meeting its goals for racial and ethnic diversity among its higher-level staff, and hasn't been for many years. Our congregations have also fallen short of their aspirations for this diversity. The UUA Board of Trustees has called on itself and on our congregations to immediately begin working toward our social justice goals of serving a much wider diversity of needs.

Our church had just begun some of the very early steps toward these goals when becoming part of the **Rochester Alliance of Communities Transforming Society (Roc/ACTS)**. Our Social Justice Council, with the support of Rev. Carlos Martinez, has been participating in a program of "Sacred Conversations," which are meetings between some members of our church and some members of Baber African Methodist Episcopal Church here in Rochester (you can [read here a WXXI news report on Sacred Conversations](#)). These Sacred Conversations are first steps toward our goal of a Rochester and a world that reflects our **2nd principle of justice, equity, and compassion** for all people – without discrimination because of race or ethnicity.

I believe the only enduring way to reach the goals of all seven of our other principles is by building deep relationships between ourselves as a people of our church, of Rochester, of the U.S., and of the world. This may not seem like a controversial statement for me to make. This week, however, what I've just written is controversial among my ministerial colleagues in the U.S. Some of my UU colleagues believe that every congregation should immediately begin an as-yet unplanned, UUA-sponsored program of education.

I see in you, as a people here at our church, a strong desire to work for racial and ethnic justice; I long to do it, too. But I don't believe this work can, as the UUA Board expects, begin so precipitously, so lacking in any planning, and so bereft of any relationship building. Respectful and enduring relationships are essential in the spiritual practice of Unitarian Universalism. And they will be essential to our serving these needs that are both our own and are greater than our own.

You can read the extensive writing and reporting on what's happening with our [UUA at the national level here](#). I will be speaking about these recent events with our Social Justice Council at the next Social Justice Council potluck on **Sunday, April 30 at 5:30pm** (all are welcome to attend). I will also offer, in my May 6 and 7 sermons, thoughts about what it means to be together as Unitarian Universalists as we seek to serve these greater needs in the years ahead.

I'm grateful to be here with you in this interim time as we continue working for these needs that are both ours and greater than our own. See you in church.

Fondly,
Rev. Joel