

the steeple

The Congregational Newsletter of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington

September 2018

From Our Interim Senior Minister Rev-eries

By Rev. Susan Milnor



The day my husband and I made the trek from the coast of Maine in July, where we had spent two weeks, it was the first time in many years that I had driven through a mountainous landscape. The Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina had been deeply important in my growing up, and now the landscape evoked deep, distant memories of “home.”

Any interim period is a time of change in the life of a congregation, change that can involve many feelings. The prospect of transition can look a struggle. We interim ministers understand that from the inside out because we experience so much change in our own lives. Over the years of ministry, both settled and interim, I’ve discovered that the sense of home we carry with us – being at home on this planet, with family, with people we meet and grow to love – is what makes it all possible and even, with grace, filled with discovery. So it is, I believe, for congregations: the sense of home that will still be there at the end keeps us strong.

I would ask of us all to begin this year, after losses and in the midst of change, by calling on our sense of being home together. While our dreams and imaginings depend on being part of the larger world, they also require us to appreciate and take nurturance from home. For so many, that includes this First UU Society of Burlington, which seeks, always, sometimes not perfectly, to be a Beloved Community.

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Image credit: Bob Furrer

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From Our Interim Senior Minister

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In that spirit, join us for ingathering on September 9, and bring, if you can, a sample of water from any place of your living, including your home tap. Our water ceremony won't be long. When you arrive before the service, add your water to the container at one of the stations that will be set up in the sanctuary, or ask a friend to do it for you if you prefer. During a brief time, those of us leading the service will join the waters symbolically with words of blessing from Andre Mol, our Developmental Assistant Minister.

After the service we turn outward in a short rededication ceremony of our Black Lives Matter banner. You will receive the instructions that morning, and we will allow more time for those who need it.

People talk about the vision it takes to move mountains. I find that the courage to find our way through them and become at home in them is more powerful. So may it be for us in this time together.

Blessings,

Rev. Susan Milnor

From the Transition Team

By Kathleen Bonilla

This time of year is a time of change for us all. Camping gear changes into school supplies; petunias change into the red leaves of the maple tree. But this year change will be more challenging for us folks at FUUSB. We are just beginning our two year process of moving from a settled minister to an interim minister and hopefully to a new settled minister. To assist us with this transition a Transition Team has been established. The members of this team are Stephen Rainville, Jill Allen, Cheryl Herrick, Barbara Heeter, Kathleen Bonilla and our interim minister, Rev. Susan Milnor. This team will be assisting Rev. Susan and the congregation in the process of getting to know one another and to provide guidance to both during this interim period.

To begin our new relationship with our interim minister, a Meet and Greet has been scheduled for Sunday, September 16 at 11:30 a.m. in the Sanctuary, following the 10 a.m. service. This will be an informal gathering in which we can begin to get to know Rev. Susan and her us.

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Subsequent to this event there will be smaller Transition Workshops for the congregation, with the assistance of the Transition Team and Rev. Susan to dig deeper into the transition process. The dates for those workshops will be announced as they are scheduled. We plan to schedule several of these workshops in order to accommodate people's schedules.

The purpose of the Transition Team is to assist the congregation with the transition. The Transition Team will not be part of the search for a new settled minister. This task will be designated to a Search Committee which will begin its work sometime next summer. In the interim if you have any questions regarding the transition please feel free to talk with one of the Transition Team members. They will do their best to answer your question, or if unable to, will point you in the direction of someone who can. Also, please try to attend one of the Transition Workshop meetings, dates and times TBD.

Change may happen in our lives, but Transition is what we choose to do with it.



Message From the Board of Trustees

It is with much anticipation that the Board of Trustees greets the coming year. We have welcomed three new board members (Stuart Graves and Melinda Lee as Trustees-At-Large beginning three year terms, and Leandre Waldo as Board Secretary beginning a two year term). We are also excited to have Reverend Susan with us for the next two years to partner with the board and the congregation as we walk our shared journey.

In the coming months we will be creating opportunities to meet and discuss the direction of our community with all interested congregants. As always, anyone may contact the board in person (look for our yellow name tags on Sunday mornings) or via email (board@uusociety.org). At our upcoming annual retreat, we'll be creating our calendar and goals for the year. Expect to hear details about formal listening sessions soon.

Thank you all for the trust and faith you have placed in us,

Your Board of Trustees



FUUSB Board of Trustees with Rev. Susan Milnor (image credit: Leandre Waldo)

Caring for Each Other

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



One of my favorite hymns simply states: “From you I receive, to you I give, together we share, and from this we live.” It reminds me of the importance of community and our ever-shifting role within it based on our particular life circumstances.

Sometimes we have the capacity to give and share within our community. At other times, we don’t have that capacity, and what we need is to receive.

As members of a Unitarian Universalist congregation, each of us has decided not to undertake our personal spiritual journeys alone. Instead, we are intentionally engaging in a community to journey together. This includes caring for each other. In fact, “caring for each other” is part of our written mission statement which we recite each Sunday when we dedicate our offering.

Within our congregation, there are a number of tangible ways we experience this caring. We share our joys and sorrows during each Sunday service. Our team of caring volunteers regularly visit members who are temporarily in the hospital or who can no longer travel to our meeting house. Those volunteers deliver meals, help out with errands, or send cards to express sympathy and hopes for healing. Some of them knit prayer shawls which we deliver to members when they are sick or to the newborn babies in our community.

Caring also involves attending to our spirit. Our ministerial staff often sits with members who have been hospitalized, experienced a death in the family, are wrestling with a spiritual crisis, or are facing

any number of life challenges. Even when members have a strong support network outside the congregation, this pastoral support -- attending to the tender spots in our spirit -- remains a vital offering from our spiritual community.

In other congregations our size -- with over 500 members and friends -- this work is typically supported by a group of trained lay volunteers supervised by the ministerial staff. This fall I’ll be gathering a new group of volunteers, training, and supervising them in this work. Then, as a congregation, we will officially commission them as Pastoral Care Associates. This act of both creating and commissioning this group strengthens our ability to meet our mission as a congregation. It also provides important continuity for spiritual support throughout our ministerial transition period and beyond.

My heart is warmed as I consider the ways we care for each other -- giving and receiving to meet the needs of our community. Together we care, together we share, and from this we live.

Note: If you think you may need spiritual support for anything that touches a tender spot in your spirit please call our Spiritual Support Line at 802-870-0447. This will connect you with Andre, Rev. Susan, or one of our trained caring volunteers.



Family Ministry at FUUSB

By Andrea Spencer-Linzie, Developmental Director of Family Ministry



You may have heard the phrase “Family Ministry” used around the congregation at times, and, you may have scratched your head wondering what it really means.

In the greater context of the Unitarian Universalist denomination, using the term “Family Ministry” operates on several levels. It helps us think in a “we” mentality more often. The “we” of the congregation, the “we” of a worship community, the “we” of faithful concerned members of the greater community around us, the “we” that welcomes newcomers, the “we” of making lifelong friends who support one another, the “we” that cares about our UU Society and how we work together, play together, support one another, and move forward together.

The Family Ministry Team has learned from other congregations about how Family Ministry is alive in their communities. Some congregations have radically restructured their worship space to welcome children with all their particular energy in full worship services. Some congregations have changed their “Religious Education” into a community program that welcomes other children throughout the year, and in sunny California they are often outside.

The Family Ministry Team is looking to provide more resources to support family members to learn, discover, serve, and worship together at home as well as at FUUSB. So, once a month we will be providing a time for parents to worship with their children in the Community Room to explore the theme of the month together.



Our classes will look much the same with curriculum and teachers. And, we’re adding some things. We’ll also have at least one Sunday a month where children, youth, parents, visitors, and other adults can gather together to do a service project in between services, between 10-11 a.m. with their families and friends. Most months will also have some programming where families and others will participate in an outdoor exploration, or learn various ways to worship, pray, meditate. We hope to be able to host some game nights or poetry slams where all ages can participate and have fun.

It’s great to be part of the FUUSB “we.” Join us whenever you feel moved. And look out for an updated “coffee hour” downstairs in the Community Room. Come on down to meet new people, have good conversations, and some tasty treats. See you there soon.

As this is a developmental year in “Family Ministry” here at FUUSB, help us experiment; join us in widening our FUUSB “we.”

Vermont Interfaith Action and Social Justice

By Debbie Ingram, VIA Executive Director

At our recent Statewide Convention, Vermont Interfaith Action (VIA) celebrated its past accomplishments and made plans for the future. FUUSB continues to be a big part of VIA's work.

VIA was founded in 2004 by a group of clergy looking for a way to address social justice issues systematically and not just put a band-aid on immediate needs. Since then, VIA has grown into a vibrant coalition of 53 member and affiliated congregations throughout the state who employ a grassroots, faith-based community organizing model to select issues and effect change around those issues. Individual congregations – Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, UU, Buddhist, or Muslim – form their own local organizing committees or send representatives to organizing committees that focus on a particular issue.



Zoe Hart (image credit: Debbie Ingram)

Individuals from FUUSB's Economic Justice Team have participated in VIA's Movement Toward a Moral Economy campaign, which has sought a \$15 an hour minimum wage and paid family leave. Rev. Mara and Andre Mol have been a strong presence in VIA's Clergy Caucus, promoting solidarity with Muslims, uprooting of racism, and just, humane immigration policies.

At VIA's Statewide Convention, several FUUSB members were in attendance, and the 60 people present used a democratic process to choose VIA's statewide focus for the next 12 months: economic justice, specifically concentrated on livable wages and working conditions for Vermonters. VIA looks forward to continuing to work with all people of faith to advance social justice.



Rabbi Jan Salzman and Gene Bergman (image credit: Debbie Ingram)



*Fall Worship
Service Schedule*

On Sunday, **September 30**,
we will begin our regular
two service schedule.

Join us for worship at
9 and 11 a.m. on Sundays!



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

The next issue of *The Steeple*
will be published in December.
The deadline to submit articles
is **November 26**.

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



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