

the steeple

The Congregational Newsletter of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington
November 2020

From the FUUSB Board of Trustees

By Dan House, Board President

Happy Autumn from the FUUSB board. This fall has been a busy and exciting time for the First UU Society. The board wishes to extend our very heartfelt thanks to all the people working so hard to find ways to keep our congregation vibrant and active during these unprecedented times. And if you haven't seen the new ramp up to the side entrance of the Meeting House, it's amazing (thank you, Chip Patullo and many others).

I'm pleased to report on a couple of board initiatives. First, our **Autumn Auction and Wreath Sale** is in full swing. Please see the article elsewhere in the Steeple for details on how to bid on an array of donations. Bidding will stay open until the weekend of November 21.

Also, the board is focusing on gathering input from the congregation about how we prioritize the work and funding that goes towards our various ministries (i.e. Justice, Caring, Service, Stewardship, Spiritual Growth). We have circulated a survey for the congregation asking for input. The information gathered through that survey will help inform the board's decisions and priorities going forward. This information will be especially important as we seek out a ministerial intern for next year.

On **Tuesday, December 1 at 6 p.m.**, the board will be holding a Zoom meeting to listen to the congregation about these priorities. The information from the survey will be shared as a starting point for conversation. Please mark your calendar and we look forward to seeing you then.



*David Foster and Chip Patullo
Image credit: David McFeeters*

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FUUSB's Autumn Together Auction

By Nina Harrington



Let the bidding begin!

FUUSB's only fundraiser of the year, the **Autumn Together Auction**, needs your

participation in order to meet its goals: to offer opportunities for members to make connections and to raise budgeted funds that support the valuable work of our Society.

Between November 7-21, we are asking you to register on the auction website and make a bid on one or more of the many items available. Bid on a canoe trip, an Indian dinner for two, a Kindle Fire, family board games, fall garden cleanup, works of art, and so much more! There are services, gatherings, gift certificates, gift baskets, collectibles, catered meals, specialty food items and many other tempting offerings! Also included this year is the **Holiday Wreath Sale** with decorated and undecorated wreaths available for a set price. We are so grateful that members have donated items and services that allow us to connect with each other without risking exposure to the coronavirus.

The auction website is auctria.com/auction/FUUSBtogether. Please visit it today and **start bidding!** We are excited to be using new software that allows donations, bidding and payment to be accomplished all online and is very easy to use.

If you have questions about how to register or bid, please email the auction committee at autumnauction@uusociety.org. Thank you so much for supporting this event that is so critical to the successful operation of our Society.



Minister's Monthly Update

Each month, Rev. Tricia shares a Minister's Monthly Update with the congregation. If you missed the latest issue, visit our homepage at uusociety.org and click on the Monthly Update link under the Stay Connected section.

For all issues of the Update, visit uusociety.org/publication-archives.



Interactive Storytelling children's event, September 2020

From the Racial Justice Team

By Zoe Hart

Our Racial Justice Team, following in the trail broken by the Anti-Racism Action Committee, has done good work these past six years. We have done a lot to educate ourselves and our congregation about racism and white supremacy. I am proud to have been a part of that work. And I am deeply aware of the need to do more. In these times we're in, I feel more than ever a hunger to do more and to have us all - our team and our Society - together do more. I am excited about this year's [Racial Justice Team goals](#) because I feel they hold out the hope of taking our work to another level - further and deeper than we've gone before.

One of our goals is to have our First UU Society make a formal commitment to dismantling white supremacy in our Society and actively working toward becoming a more radically inclusive, anti-racist, beloved community. This is a big goal and one we are still in the process of defining. What does making such a commitment look like? How do we get there? And what does the work of following through on that commitment look like? We will be reaching out to many people across our Society to join us and help answer those questions.

Within this long-term goal, one practical short-term goal is to have all white people involved in the leadership and operation of our Society participate in some form of anti-racism training *this year*. Further, we want to support as many First UU white members and friends as possible to participate in some form of anti-racism training. In support of that goal, we are offering three different forms of training:

- Self-led *Me & White Supremacy* reading and discussion groups
- **REWIRE**, an eight-month program to begin this winter
- **Beloved Conversations**, a three-month program to begin in the spring

All three of these programs offer ways for each of us to explore how the racism and white supremacy of the culture we live in affects the ways we think and behave. Only by looking at and understanding our own internalized white supremacy can we begin to change it. We will be offering all programs on a sliding scale so that everyone can participate and choose the program that will work best for them without regard to cost. Please visit our [Racial Justice Resources](#) web page for more information about these offerings.

It is essential as we continue our anti-racism work that we ground that work in the real experience and needs of people directly impacted by racism and white supremacy. To this end, as we pursue our other goals, we will be working to find ways to invite our First UU BIPOC members and friends to provide input for our work without asking them to bear the burden of leading us or teaching us. And we are taking real steps to build more meaningful partnerships with one or more local BIPOC-led organizations.

I believe these goals hold out the possibility of taking our Society's commitment to racial justice to another level. The realization of that possibility will depend on what we together make of these goals. If you'd like to join us in any part of this work or if you just have questions or suggestions, please contact us at racialjustice@uusociety.org. We look forward to working with you all as we strive to bring our vision of beloved community closer to reality.

By Gene Bergman, Co-Lay Lead, Justice & Outreach Ministries

I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways; I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience. And from what I see I am sure it bends towards justice.

- Theodore Parker (1853)

This was written four years before *Dred Scott* showed that our system, built on the enslavement of 4 million Africans, would not change on its own. Decades of abolitionist struggle, civil war, and reconstruction were needed. The FUUSB – Minister Joshua Young, the congregation, those who went to fight, and families left behind – were embroiled in this struggle.

But even Civil War, constitutional amendments, and Reconstruction were not enough; a 100-year backlash founded in white supremacy interrupted the bend to justice. Only another struggle and great civil unrest could create what Rev. Dr. William Barber II calls the Second Reconstruction, followed by 50 more years of white backlash. Now once again a critical mass sees injustice and rises to change it. The arc is long indeed, but it does bend to justice.

What do we see now? That wealth built by all is not equitably shared and, as the Statement of

Conscience passed at the 2017 UUA General Assembly says, this “is a direct consequence of the decisions of those people who own and control the nation’s and world’s corporations and resources and their allies in government.”

That, as the recently-passed Burlington City Council reparations resolution states, systemic racism is at the heart of our economy, adversely impacting BIPOC people, most strikingly Black Americans, across all systems, illustrated by:

- Black family median wealth 1/13th of a White family
- Burlington African Americans disproportionately impacted by poverty at an estimated 32.5% rate
- 26% of Chittenden County’s Black residents in poverty compared to 10.6% of Whites; 8.1% of Blacks unemployed compared with 4.3% of Whites
- Burlington Blacks own 4% of homes although people of color comprise 18% of the population
- Black potential home applicants are 4.5 times more likely than White applicants to be denied a home loan (83.3% to 18.2%)

Still, as Sam Cooke sang in 1963, “it’s been a long time coming but I know a change is gonna come.” Dr. King saw the change as he marched up the mountain with sanitation workers in Memphis, a Promised Land of community and solidarity, not chaos. We see the change in massive demonstrations across the nation to end white supremacy, to defund the police and invest in our communities, to bring justice to the families of George Floyd and Breanna Taylor and the countless more murdered, brutalized, oppressed, and exploited by



Silent Vigil for Racial Justice, June 2020

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Bending the Arc

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the enduring legacy of slavery. We see it in our own congregation's weekly vigils, education events, and other acts of solidarity.

We've seen glimpses of the Promised Land in the First Reconstruction, where, as Rev. Dr. Barber writes in the *Third Reconstruction*, "interracial alliances in every Southern state arose to advance public education, protect the right to vote, and curb corporate power by reaching across the color line," passing some of the most progressive educational and labor laws in our history.

Bending the long arc towards justice requires us all. But bend it we can, pushing and pulling towards a promised land where all people's worth and dignity are upheld because Black Lives Matter. This future is not yet written, but it is possible if we honor our ancestors, our UU principles, FUUSB values, and continue to bend the arc. Long indeed but maybe in our time.



Racial Justice Team walking tour: African American History at Lakeview Cemetery, October 2020



Interactive Storytelling children's event, September 2020



FUUSB Justice Resources

Justice Teams

uusociety.org/justice-and-outreach

Racial Justice Resources

uusociety.org/racial-justice-resources

Climate Justice Resources

uusociety.org/climate-justice-resources



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VISIT US ONLINE!

[UUSOCIETY.ORG](http://uusociety.org)

Join us for online worship!

Sundays at 10 a.m.

[uusociety.org/worship-and-music/
online-sunday-worship](http://uusociety.org/worship-and-music/online-sunday-worship)

or visit us on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com)!

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

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



Family Chapel activity, October 2020