

the steeple

*The Congregational Newsletter of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington
February 2021*

From the Caring & Belonging Coordinating Team Who Cares?

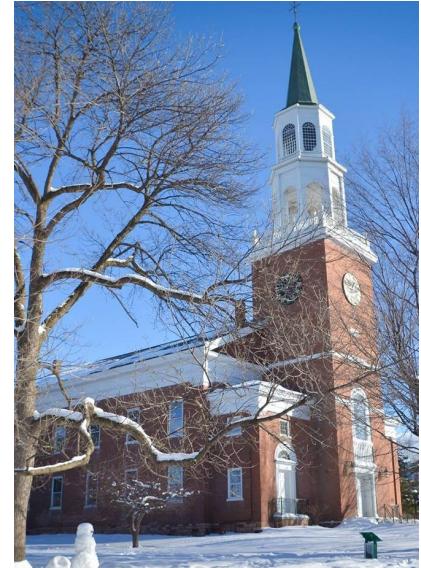
What do we each long for, that calls us into community? What does it mean to belong and what does it look and feel like to care and be cared for at FUUSB? How is this caring and belonging shared during a pandemic?! And how has the pandemic been “teaching” us about how we can live into the caring and belonging we envision, when the pandemic ends?

Early this fall, teams in the Caring and Belonging ministry area – our Care Network Team, Healthy Congregation Team, Membership Team, Pastoral Care Associates, Chalice and Theme Circles coordinators, and Faith Development staff – came together under the canopy in the Memorial Garden with Rev. David Ruffin to ask such questions. Listening and sharing deeply, experiencing renewal in our reconnection, we discovered new hope for deepening and creatively reimagining Caring and Belonging at FUUSB, even amidst these challenging times.

When, after rich reflection and sharing, we asked ourselves what’s at the heart of our visioning, three clear takeaways emerged. They felt true then and have continued to guide us since.

- We want to support a web of one-on-one connections. We want to support personal relationships of caring and belonging.
- We want to help everyone, who would welcome it, to find a meaningful small group connection to experience the gifts of community in this more intimate way.
- We want to invite the community to join in exploring connection with one another as a sacred practice – a form of prayer.

As you know, we enlisted Rev. Dave to work with us on realizing our vision and, together, established a Caring and Belonging Coordinating



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From the Caring & Belonging Coordinating Team

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Team as home base for our shared work.

Feeling ourselves called to action as well as reflection, in December we dove into the Community Blessings initiative, making phone calls to most of the FUUSB community as one way to live into the Web of Connection we envisioned. We see the possibilities with small groups as being endless (which is exciting). But we initially want to make sure that existing Circles in our community, where deeper connection and reflection are beautifully supported, are accessible to all. The Healthy Congregation Team offered three Listening Circles around our personal experiences of national events last month, for example. And our amazing monthly small group programs of Theme and Chalice Circles both have ways to get involved right now! (For information about Winter/Spring Theme Circles, email Rodney Lowe at Rodney_Lowe@yahoo.com. For Chalice Circles, email Hope Baker-Carr at hopebakercarr@gmail.com).

But more than anything we want to invite you to join us in this reimagining of how we can show up more with and for one another, to become an even more connected, caring, and inclusive community. We'll be asking for your input on ways we can imagine, but don't wait for us to reach out to you. We're here and we're listening. And... we care!

*Martha Molpus (mmolpus@sover.net) and
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Caring & Belonging Coordinating Team Co-Leads*

*Rev. David Ruffin (daveruffin@gmail.com),
Consulting Minister*



Caring & Belonging Coordinating Team: (top, L-R) Martha Molpus, Sarah Russell, Suzy Haas; (middle) Hope Baker-Carr, Rodney Lowe, Nancy Hellen; (bottom) Rev. David Ruffin, Susan Warner-Mills, Linda Graves. Not pictured: Lynn Douglas.



Minister's Monthly Update

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

Or visit uusociety.org/publication-archives.

From the Finance Team

By Kameron McConnell, Treasurer



Hello there! Kameron here, your Treasurer and spokesperson for the Finance Team. We're 50% of the way through our fiscal year and I'm pleased to report that we're doing 10% better than we had budgeted for Contribution Income at this point in the year.

Contribution Income is comprised of:

1. Non-Pledge Gifts
2. Pledge Income
3. Share the Plate

Non-pledge gifts are way up. We budgeted \$5,000 for the year, and we've received \$12,500. That's 400% more than where we thought we'd have right now! Leadership put a call out for one-time gifts (separate from your pledge) that would help replace lost pledge income due to the pandemic. We called it the Angel Fund. Many of you responded, and continue to respond – hallelujah!

Pledge income is right on track. A smidge better than on track, in fact. There was a big push in December to advance your pledge payments. Many thanks to those who were able and responded. To those who haven't made payments toward their 2020-2021 pledge, the Finance Team will be reaching out – we hope to know your plans and if circumstances warrant, assist you in updating your pledge in Realm. Will pledge income continue to come in? The question remains.

Share the Plate income is down 25% versus where we thought we'd be this time of year. It's to be

expected, perhaps. Congregating in the Meeting House to pass the basket doesn't translate well to the virtual communing we've been doing. If you want to virtually pass the basket each week, contact Christina Fulton (xina@uusociety.org) to learn more about automating a Share the Plate payment in Realm.

To be ahead on Contribution Income in a year steeped in uncertainty tells me expressions of community and generosity have been at record levels. You, the good people doing the good work of this congregation, have been actively supporting one another with your time, talents and treasure. I'm grateful to be part of such a community.

Click here for the first "Two Minutes With Your Treasurer" video: youtu.be/oPd42CxHvDM, a new series to help keep you up to date on how the Society is doing financially.



FUUSB Solstice Light Garden, December 20, 2020

Ministerial Intern Starting Fall 2021

On behalf of our congregation's ministerial internship committee, I am incredibly pleased to announce that we have successfully completed our search for a ministerial intern. Rowan Van Ness (she/her) will begin serving our congregation as a ministerial intern in the fall of 2021.

You may remember our committee's request to share the internship job posting from the eNews announcement in early December. Since then, the internship committee's and congregation's work to recruit a strong candidate pool was rewarded with eight very highly qualified candidates. After a thorough interview process and careful deliberations, we were thrilled to offer the position to Rowan, and we are even more thrilled that she has accepted our offer.

Rowan brings experience and energy to support our congregation's social justice work: "I believe that we have the power and capacity to create change in our world when we come together, and that our religious tradition calls us to take action." Rowan is also excited about supporting our congregation's pastoral care. "This is the heart of my call to pursue ordained ministry—to accompany people through life's challenges and create sacred spaces for healing to occur." Rowan is finishing her Master of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School this spring, before continuing her ministerial learning as FUUSB's intern.

The internship committee comprises Amelia Schlossberg, Louis deRosset, Zoe Hart, Rodney Lowe, and Rev. Tricia Hart. We hope you will stay tuned for more information about Rowan, and for upcoming opportunities to welcome this

minister-in-formation to our community. In the meantime, feel free to reach out with any questions.

*Amelia Schlossberg (they/them)
Chair, Ministerial Internship Committee*



(top, L-R) Zoe Hart, Rowan Van Ness, Rodney Lowe;
(bottom) Louis deRosset, Amelia Schlossberg, Rev. Tricia Hart



Join us for online worship!

Sunday Worship at 10 a.m.
uusociety.org/worship-and-music/
[online-sunday-worship](http://uusociety.org/online-sunday-worship)
 or visit us on [YouTube](#)!

Wednesday Vespers at 6 p.m.
zoom.us/j/91243888402

Meeting House Projects

By Tom Hyde, Property Team

Our facilities staff and Property Team have made good use of this time when the Meeting House is not being used. Here are some of the projects they have undertaken.

Security cameras were installed, mostly outside, but also in the front and side vestibules. The outside ones have already been useful to identify and report graffiti-vandals and an automobile break-in.

For years, there has been water leaking into the east Community Room classrooms from the east stairwell that leads to the driveway loop. David McFeeters and George Ibala dug a deep trench in front of the outside door, and Charlie Delaney, who is a skilled mason, built a wall to block the underground flow of water. Charlie is now re-mortaring the foundation from the inside to finish the waterproofing.

A new ramp was built by the Property Team and friends. Chip Patullo designed, applied for zoning and building permits, and was the lead carpenter. The old, rotting ramp was completely removed. Revised building codes required higher



Charlie Delaney



Rails and a larger turnaround. Due to COVID-19, materials were hard to get. Some temporary materials were used and will be replaced in late spring. Over 400 volunteer hours were contributed, saving the Society around \$24,000.

Bob Furrer is repainting the pews in the Sanctuary. This is a huge job, which would have cost \$25,000 for an outside contractor. And frankly, Bob is doing a much better job than a contractor would.

It is time to re-point the mortar between many of the Meeting House bricks. This is about a \$32,000 job. Also, the bottoms of the south-facing outside doors, west of the main front door, have deteriorated. Bob applied for a Historic Preservation grant for these projects, which was recently approved. The grant will cover half the repair costs.

John Lincoln and David have been replacing burned-out exit and emergency lights with energy-efficient LEDs.

During a severe rainstorm back in November, David checked the attic above the Sanctuary and noticed two leaks dripping through the slate roof. In December, a contractor replaced 130 slates.

David is always looking for ways to make the building more energy-efficient, so when it came time to replace the furnaces in the white house (27 Clarke Street) and the brick house at 34 Elmwood Avenue, he consulted with the Property Team about replacing them with high-efficiency heat pumps that have a gas backup for the coldest days. These cost \$25,000, but he discovered that rebates from Burlington Electric and Vermont Gas would pay \$16,000, so the Society will only pay \$9,000. Win-win! They were installed last week.

Faith Development Through Stories

By Margo Whitcomb, Faith Development Assistant

These times have challenged the Faith Development team to seek innovative ways to reach families at home and to offer perspective to children. As well, seasonal celebrations and bearing witness to the passing of fall into the darkness of winter called out to be marked by rituals. We leaned into a virtual version of *huddling around the fire*, sharing stories of renewal, magic, and wonder.

Ursula K. Le Guin writes, “The story is one of the basic tools invented by the human mind for the purpose of understanding. There have been great societies that did not use the wheel, but there have been no societies that did not tell stories.”

And so, we told stories...

We embraced this ancient ritual with a broad sweep and a contemporary emphasis on BIPOC authors. These stories resonated with many folk who asked to know the names of the stories. We have compiled highlights here and we hope you will utilize your local library or purchase your own copies and warm yourselves by your own “hearth” while you read and imagine.

- ◆ ***When Spring Comes*** by Kevin Henkes, illus. by Laura Dronzek, Greenwillow Books - A beautiful book for introducing the seasons.
- ◆ ***Harold Loves His Woolly Hat*** by Vern Kousky, Schwartz & Wade Books - A story that celebrates selflessness and the joy of helping others.
- ◆ ***The Day You Begin*** by Jacqueline Woodson, illus. by Rafael López, Penguin Readers - There will be times when you walk into a room and no one there is quite like you.
- ◆ ***Come With Me*** by Holly M. McGhee, illus. by Pascal LeMaître, Penguin Random House - Delivering a powerful message that what we do matters.



- ◆ ***The Ugly Vegetables*** by Grace Lin, Charlesbridge Publ. - Celebrating differences as a Chinese American girl grows her own unique garden.
- ◆ ***We Are Water Protectors*** by Carole Lindstrom, illus. by Michaela Goade, Macmillan - A bold and lyrical rallying cry to safeguard the Earth's water.
- ◆ ***Equality's Call*** by Deborah Diesen, illus. by Magdalena Mora, Simon & Schuster - A powerful picture book on voting rights.
- ◆ ***Maybe Something Beautiful*** by F. Isabel Campoy & Theresa Howell, illus. by Rafael López, HMH Books - A muralist transforms Mira's grey neighborhood.
- ◆ ***The King Who Banned the Dark*** by Emily Haworth-Booth, Sterling Children's Books - A magical modern family tale about conquering your fears.
- ◆ ***Oskar and the Eight Blessings*** by Tanya & Richard Simon, illus. by Mark Siegel, Roaring Brook Press - ...even in the bad times, people can be good. You have to look for the blessings...
- ◆ ***Love Is Powerful*** by Heather Dean Brewer, illus. by LeUyen Pham, Candlewick - An empowering story for the youngest of activists.
- ◆ ***Pies from Nowhere: How Georgia Gilmore Sustained the Montgomery Bus Boycott*** by Dee Romito & Laura Freeman, Little Bee Books - Looking into the life of a hidden hero of the civil rights movement.

Immigration Justice Team Update

By Jill Stevens



The mission of our FUUSB Immigration Justice Team (IJT) is to create awareness of the injustices borne by immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. With that in mind, the IJT seeks to facilitate actions that will alleviate these injustices for as many people as possible.

Through our team and our association with other city activist groups, we have been able to free Israel, a Mexican man who was in ICE custody in Louisiana, and help a Syrian family escape from ISIS to resettle in France. Currently, we are asking the FUUSB community to send cards and letters of support to Steven Tendo, 37, a Ugandan pastor in ICE custody in Texas who faces deportation and immediate death if he is returned to Uganda. For very specific information about how to do this, consult IJT chair Bernie Carver at bernie.carver@gmail.com or an IJT member.

Closer to home, a young mother and her daughter have been able to resettle in Burlington with the support of Chittenden Asylum Seekers Assistance Network (CASAN). We are grateful to the members of our congregation who have raised funds and sent countless postcards in direct support of the individuals who are the focus of our projects.

Having a new administration in Washington bodes well for immigration issues. But the damage has been done so our work is far from finished. If you would like to join us, we meet on Zoom from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. on the third Monday of every month. Our team email address will soon

be immigrationjustice@uusociety.org, or get in touch with Bernie Carver at bernie.carver@gmail.com.

For more information about current IJT projects, visit the new Immigration Justice Resources page at uusociety.org/immigration-justice-resources.



FUUSB Justice Resources

Justice Teams

uusociety.org/justice-and-outreach

Climate Justice Resources

uusociety.org/climate-justice-resources

Racial Justice Resources

uusociety.org/racial-justice-resources

Immigration Justice Resources

uusociety.org/immigration-justice-resources



Christmas Breakfast Notes

It has been over 25 years since a group of FUUSB women talked over dinner about the lack of meals being served in Burlington on Christmas Day. At that time there were almost no places for folks who relied on the Food Shelf, etc. to have a warm meal, let alone a friendly welcome, on Christmas Day. From that casual start, to a somewhat rocky first year (a big learning experience), to years and years of hearty breakfasts, welcoming conversations, carol singing, and friendships made, we have felt, in the words of one longtime volunteer, "This IS my Christmas!"

And then COVID! How to carry on the spirit of our special breakfast without being able to meet? A call to COTS gave us ideas for a breakfast delivery, plus warm gifts for the folks who would be staying there this winter.

And you stepped up! Many folks who make Christmas Breakfast a priority, and many new to this, bought dozens of pairs of socks, over 30 blankets, made muffins and strata, and delivered it all on Christmas morning. It was a slick, no-contact exchange of your generosity and good will. The feedback is good: Tim, coordinator of COTS' single-adult shelters, said, "A lot of smiles on people's faces. They felt cared for."

We thank you all for your caring and fervently hope to see you all December 25th for pancakes, strata, coffee, and great conversation. Be safe and well.

Blessed be,

Lynn Douglas and Lisa Lax



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The next issue of *The Steeple* will be published in April. The deadline to submit articles is **March 29**.

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



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