

the steeple

The Congregational Newsletter of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington
January 2022

Radical Welcoming

By Sarah Russell & Martha Molpus, Radical Welcoming Team

What comes to mind when you hear “Radical Welcoming”? Radical as in out of the ordinary and Welcoming as in come as you are no matter who you are. This is not a new concept to FUUSB. It is one of our Developmental Goals that the Society has during our time with Rev. Tricia. All recent ministers have preached from the pulpit on Beloved Community and Radical Welcoming. Radical Welcoming ultimately involves the entire congregation.

In November 2020 the Caring and Belonging Coordinating Team was formed to support multiple teams in the work of community connections. While doing this work the theme of Radical Welcoming kept emerging. There were discussions about the concept that all are welcome at the table and what does this truly mean for the congregation.

At the same time the Racial Justice Team had established a goal of “dismantling white supremacy within ourselves and our Society and building a multicultural beloved community with an explicit goal shared by both our leadership and our congregation.” A subteam, calling itself the Congregational Transformation team, began meeting to work on this broad goal. While we as a congregation have done some work around Racial Justice, there is much to be done to become anti-racist, thus better able to become radically welcoming as individuals and congregants.

At a meeting in November 2021, members of the Caring and Belonging Coordinating Team and the Congregational Transformation team met. The group realized that we are involved in much of the same

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*Christmas Eve Pageant, December 24, 2021
Image credit: Erika Reif*

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Radical Welcoming

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efforts. By collaborating and forming a new team, we would become more effective. It was exciting to realize that we were collaborating across teams and identifying next steps together. That night we agreed to disband the Caring and Belonging Coordinating Team and the Congregational Transformation Team to form a new team. We call ourselves the Radical Welcoming Team.

Also at this meeting the new Radical Welcoming Team agreed that adoption of the [8th Principle](#) is an important effort to move toward Radical Welcoming. It is one important focus of our team for 2022, and already has a group working on it.

The Radical Welcoming Team invites anyone with an interest to join us in this work. What does Radical Welcoming look like? Will you join us in this very important work? Email us at radicalwelcoming@uusociety.org. Let us know what you are thinking, and stay tuned for what we are doing.

Contact Us!

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[FUUSB YouTube](#)

Emergence **by Claire Graham-Smith:** **The Story of FUUSB's New** **Sanctuary Banner Quilt**

[Click here](#) for the video!



*Christmas Eve Pageant, December 24, 2021
Image credit: Erika Reif*

Radical Welcome and the 8th Principle

By the 8th Principle Subgroup of the Radical Welcoming Team

Hopefully, you've heard of the [Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism](#), which serve as statements of the strongly-held values of our faith. Recently, you may have heard about a proposed 8th Principle, or perhaps this is the first time you've seen it mentioned.

The 8th Principle states:

"We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions."

Paula Cole Jones and Bruce Pollack-Johnson developed the 8th Principle because it is so easy for white people to ignore issues of systemic racism and white supremacy.

"UU support of the Movement for Black Lives has been encouraging; the best way for us to truly support racial justice in a significant way is to purge ourselves and our institutions of the culture and exclusive practices of whiteness and white supremacy." (8thprincipleuu.org/why-now)

The Black Lives of UU (BLUU) organizing collective is urging all UUs to advocate for the adoption of the 8th Principle as a statement of our commitment to anti-racism and eliminating white supremacy culture.

The Radical Welcoming Team believes that adopting the 8th Principle is a tangible, well-defined, and active first step to help our congregation to become radically welcoming.

Currently there are 127 out of ~900 congregations that have adopted the 8th Principle and the UUA is studying the principle to determine whether to adopt it fully. We hope that the FUUSB will be another congregation to adopt the 8th Principle to show our commitment to become a radically welcoming community.

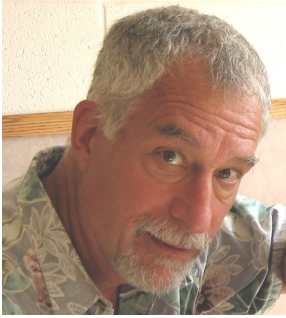
The Radical Welcoming Team will hold six **8th Principle info sessions** in January and February for people to come and learn about the 8th Principle and to share their questions and comments with others in our congregation. Stay tuned to the eNews and [FUUSB website](#) for details. In preparation for these gatherings, we welcome all to review the information on the 8th Principle website of the UUA at 8thprincipleuu.org.

The members of the 8th Principle Subgroup of the Radical Welcoming Team are: Geoff Duke, Zoe Hart, Martha Molpus, Peggy Owen Sands, Charlie Rathbone, and Rowan Van Ness.



Why I Support the Adoption of the 8th Principle

By Charles Rathbone, Racial Justice Team



Every time the news media report another shooting, every time I learn of another shooting by scanning my go-to internet news sites, my body goes through a physical reaction. I carry

with me awful feelings for a few days after learning of the event. I can't really move my mind away from thinking about the event. I tear up when I see or hear the families talk about their loved ones and the senselessness of the killings.

My family is a biracial family. I have two children and five grandchildren who could be called "people of color," "Black," or African American. When these events happen I fear for them. These events, these murders mean something personal to me. I feel this part of my family is at risk just walking out the door and going about their daily business. I fear for their mental states, I wonder for the older ones what just walking down the street must be like for them. What can I do to protect them, to ease their concerns about safety, to help them know there are others who care and want things to be not as they are? White people can do something about this situation. If you ignore these things happening in other places, your silence shows support for the police who have fired in error or shot to kill. "Silence is violence" — That's what one of our vigil signs declares. I take these shootings personally and that's one reason why

I support the adoption of the [8th Principle](#) by this Society.

A second reason is that black UU congregations across the UUA are asking for support in their initiatives to confront and limit this current manifestation of white supremacy and Black oppression. By supporting the adoption of the 8th Principle at the First UU Society of Burlington, we are doing something, we are demonstrating our support for our Black congregations to make things better, and we are putting policy behind an action. Do we need more reading groups and more workshops when people are getting murdered? Perhaps, but more importantly, we need to take this next step to confront the racist actions that continue to divide our congregations, our Association, and our community and country.



Solstice Light Festival, December 21, 2021
Image credit: Erika Reif

By Hope Baker-Carr, Board President



As a first-time president of the Board of Trustees in the first months of service, one of the questions I go back to frequently is: What is the role of the Board at FUUSB?

I have a pretty good idea at this point, but regularly go back to the foundational documents of our Society, the [Bylaws](#) and the [Board Policy Book](#), to make sure I'm not missing something. I also found that in trying to understand the Board's role, one needs to have a good understanding of our Society's governance structure. Here are the highlights. *(Note: Much of my text uses wording drawn precisely from these sources.)*

As the Bylaws state, the membership has the ultimate authority in all matters pertaining to the operation of the Society; it is exercised at formal congregational business meetings in which they elect officers, members of the Board, and members of the Nominating and Endowment committees. The members also call the Senior Minister, amend the Bylaws and approve the annual budget.

The Board of Trustees, acting on behalf of the congregation, serves as the overall governing body of the Society. The Board is responsible only to the membership and is charged with providing strategic leadership in achieving the Society's purpose, as well as the authority to oversee the finances, business, property, programs, and affairs of the Society.

The Senior Minister reports to the Board of Trustees and is charged with coordinating the implementation of the Society's ends in order to advance the mission and purpose of the Society. The Board Policy Book states that the Senior Minister is responsible for the entire operational side of the organization. All authority and accountability of staff is the authority and accountability of the Senior Minister. The Board's only connection to the operational organization is through the Senior Minister.

The Policy Book describes a number of the responsibilities of the Board including these highlights:

- Focus on governing by policy.
- Develop, adopt, monitor and revise written policies to guide the Society and operation of the Board.
- Establish, regularly review, monitor, and revise as needed FUUSB's [mission statement, values, ends](#), and [congregational covenant](#).
- Engage in ongoing meaningful conversations with members of the Society to continually focus the work of the Board on the well-being of our congregation, our mission and our vision for the future, not on administrative detail.

I hope this is helpful!



The Healthy Congregation Team & Deep Listening Circles

By Brian Haas & the Healthy Congregation Team

About Us: [The Healthy Congregation Team](#) offers trainings and practice sessions to help you learn conflict resolution and healthy communication skills. We also facilitate conflict resolution sessions when requested. We help you communicate and be heard when challenging issues arise in your team or within our congregation. We meet every month on the fourth Tuesday at 7 p.m. Current members are Nancy Hellen, Marty Garrett, Sal Millichamp, Noah Patullo, and Brian Haas. Also Rev. Tricia and/or Rowan Van Ness have been regular attendees and much appreciated.

You Are Invited: Our meetings are always open to visitors and you are especially welcome if you are interested in joining our team. To connect, you can reach out to any of our current members or go to: uusociety.org/becoming-a-member/getting-connected. There you will find a document titled: [Groups That Serve Our Mission](#).

Sharing Leadership: Our team has recently adopted a way of sharing leadership duties among all members. Nancy Helen developed a spreadsheet grid to show which member is responsible for Facilitator, Notetaker, and Readings with these duties rotating each meeting. In this way all members are empowered to take leadership roles throughout the year.

Deep Listening Circles: Our recent work includes developing and refining a guideline document to be used in forming and conducting Deep Listening Circles (DLC). These DLCs are

especially helpful to allow people with differing points of view to discuss the chosen topic in a constructive way. The current guidelines have been developed in concert with the Racial Justice Team, using an example topic of “what to do about the ongoing attacks/damage to the Black Lives Matter banners.”

Future DLC: It is our intention to organize a DLC soon; contact us if you or your team would be interested in joining.



Christmas Eve Pageant, December 24, 2021
Image credit: Erika Reif

Restorative Circles: An Opportunity to Learn & Practice

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By Stuart Graves, Restorative Circles Team

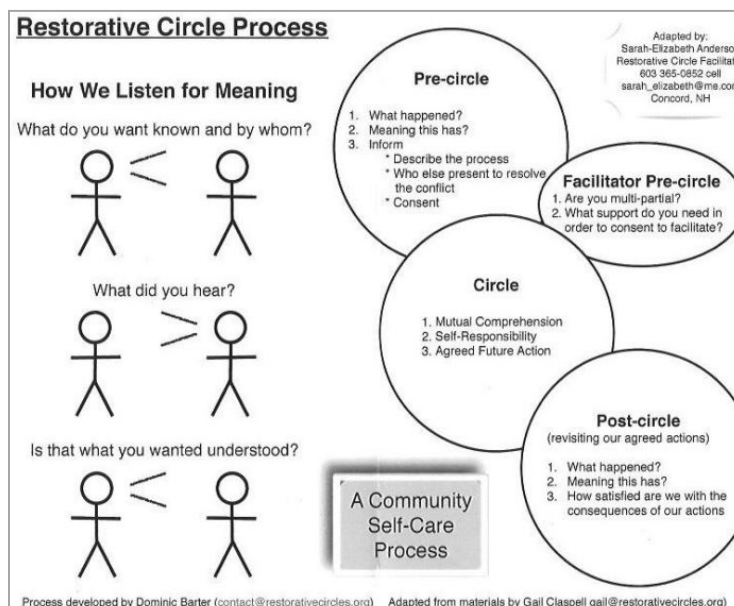
“Creating a Listening Community: Restorative Circles Practice and Facilitation” is the title of a training workshop of six sessions being offered via Zoom by Sarah-Elizabeth Anderson from March 15-April 20 on Wednesdays from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. ET. The Healthy Congregation Team (HCT) will cover registration fees, which are \$222 to \$77 per person on a sliding scale.

There has been an active Restorative Circles (RC) team here at FUUSB since 2017 when it was established by the HCT through its financial support of interested members. Since that time members have met monthly or more frequently to practice and hone their skills. The team has considered itself ready to respond to any call for a circle from the congregation since 2019. Currently there are six active members and one semi-retired member. We are looking to continue to grow in numbers and skills, and this is an opportunity for someone to receive training and join us. There can never be too many! To quote Sarah-Elizabeth’s brochure:

“Come experience listening, being heard and feeling the empathy you have deepening. Create the capacity within yourself to hold space for difficult conversations with members of our community. Let us bring change to the world one moment at a time!”

Restorative circles may be considered a community self-healing or self-care process. From that perspective they do not depend upon courts, or contracts, or “human resource” departments, or “leaders.” They depend upon a self-defined community (in our case via covenants, membership, and friends) utilizing as a

central mechanism reflective listening, and a sequential structure of questions to develop mutual understanding, self-responsibility, and agreed upon future actions.



If you would like to learn more there is some information in [Realm](#) and on the [FUUSB web-site](#), but [this link](#) takes one to a 2016 UUA workshop. And [this link](#) will take you to a 2020 UUA workshop by Sarah-Elizabeth. And finally [this link](#) will take you to a slide show re: RCs.

The current members of the RC team are:

John Byer - johnmbyer@outlook.com
Marty Garrett - womeninmidlife@gmail.com
Nancy Hellen - nbhellen@gmail.com
Sally Millichamp - millichampsally@gmail.com
Sarah Forbes - sarahforbesdesign@comcast.net
Stuart Graves - StuMcL@mac.com
Susan Warner-Mills - swm7431@gmail.com

Contact anyone for more info or how to register for the workshop, and Nancy Hellen re: financial support from the HCT.

Growing Community

By Bill Barbot, FUUSB parent & Faith Development volunteer

We escaped suburban Washington, DC at an unlikely time. I use the word “escape” because for my wife Erin, our two young daughters, and me, Vermont promised a life closer to nature, to community, and to one another, free from the endless microaggressions of the big city. We couldn’t imagine raising Collins (7) and Frances (3) in a place that had grown so figuratively and literally ugly over the 50-odd years I spent growing up there.

The “unlikely time” to land in Vermont was in the early months of the pandemic. We left our home and my extended family in July, 2020, moving into a house we had literally never seen in person, on a forested, dead-end road of only a dozen-odd houses, in a town, Williston, we had never even visited.

We immediately found bliss in nature and family togetherness in the woods, but with tranquility came isolation. Our neighbors are helpful and welcoming, but coming from the suburbs where our house was literally within 100 feet of about a dozen others, the bustle of community was notably absent. We knew we needed to put in some work to find our people.

We had never found a faith community with sticking power in DC. In an area that offered literally everything, we always felt wanting: this church was too far away, that one, too political; this one, no families with young kids, that one, too old fashioned. Sunday morning became a break from our daily arguments with



traffic and hustling two small kids out the door, so we kept mostly to ourselves.

FUUSB became the home we were looking for once we found our way to it last year. Since then, we’ve been stunned by how hard the staff works to make community happen in spite of the forces of a pandemic allied against it. We’ve been in-person to Sunday services, Wednesday evening vespers, special events like the Hanukkah celebration, and countless kids-and-family-focused events, driven with focus and fun by Erika and Margo. Our kids clamor to go to literally any event at the Society as they build their own community.

The weirdness of “knowing” people more by their masks than their names persists, but if nothing else, the past two years of pandemic has taught us patience. Community doesn’t happen overnight at the best of times, and during the COVID era, it grows more like an oak than wheatgrass: slow to start, but built to last.

Join a Theme Circle or a Chalice Circle!

By Rodney Lowe & Gail Beck, Sharing Circle Coordinators, & Rowan Van Ness, Ministerial Intern

In a large congregation like ours, one of the best ways to get to know others and feel a sense of belonging is to join a small group.

Registration is presently underway for our next season of Theme Circles! Groups will begin meeting at specific times during the third week of January through June to explore our monthly themes. Participation in a Theme Circle is a wonderful way to make new friends, connect with old friends, and foster meaningful connections in our large congregation. After receiving and studying the monthly edition of *The Path*, participants choose a question or two to incorporate into their daily lives and then ultimately share that experience (or other thoughts or inspirations) when the group meets. Groups will meet via Zoom until COVID regulations allow us to meet in the Meeting House, and after that, it is up to each group to determine what works for them. [Register here!](#)

If you have any questions, email themecircles@uusociety.org or call Rodney Lowe at (781) 460-3644.

Join a Chalice Circle! Chalice Circles provide an opportunity for spiritual growth over time. Groups are ongoing, so participants sign up once and can stay in the group for as long as they'd like. Groups typically meet once or twice a month for two hours, at the Meeting House, in member homes, and/or on Zoom. Each group functions a little differently; the leader may choose a topic, a monthly theme might be used, there might be no topic, participants might sug-

gest a topic, or the group may have a special interest that is pursued. Some groups rotate leadership, while others have a consistent facilitator.

As members embark on a shared journey, they find meaning, hope, courage, and a sense of belonging. In practicing deep listening, members "minister" to each other. Chalice Circles with current openings include: **Eckhart Tolle, Mindful Mondays, Wise Together, Drop-in Chalice Circle, Seekers, LGBTQIA+, and Exploring Paganism**. For more information and meeting times, check our current [Chalice Circles list](#).

For questions or to sign up for Chalice Circles, please email chalicecircles@uusociety.org.

Find more information about Sharing Circles on the FUUSB website at uusociety.org/sharing-circles.



*Solstice Light Festival, December 21, 2021
Image credit: Erika Reif*

From the Climate Justice Team

A Vermont UU Climate Network

By Jud Lawrie, Climate Justice Team Chair

One of the goals adopted by the [Climate Justice Team](#) at First UU is to “network and connect with other faith communities.” Toward this end, we are in the process of developing a Vermont UU Climate Network. So far, we have one or two representatives from each of 13 different UU congregations throughout Vermont as members of a Google Group.

The intention of this group is to allow us to share information about what we are each doing regarding the climate crisis—projects and activities, successes, lessons learned, etc. It’s also intended to be a convenient place to share relevant information about the climate crisis such as books, articles, and videos.

Our hope is that we can multiply our influence in addressing the climate crisis by sometimes acting collectively, e.g., lobbying in Montpelier for favorable climate legislation. In particular, the Climate Action Plan developed by the VT Climate Council that will soon be undergoing deliberation in the legislature.

Toward the same end, we are developing a closer relationship with [Vermont Interfaith Power and Light](#) (VTIPL), a group of individuals and congregations around the state. VTIPL seeks to empower members of faith and spiritual communities to advocate for our Earth and future generations. It helps people take action in their houses of worship, homes, and workplaces to conserve energy, use it efficiently, and increase the use of renewable energy.

You may also be interested in knowing that the UUA is quite active in the climate crisis arena through its Ministry for Earth and Create Climate Justice efforts. As stated on its website: *“As Unitarian Universalists, we are called to respond to the ongoing climate crisis with concerted action grounded in compassion, reverence for life, and solidarity in and with frontline communities. Together, we can support the numerous growing branches of the ministry (UU BIPOC Caucus on Climate Justice, UU Young Adults for Climate Justice, Strengthening Local Climate Commitments, and Create Climate Justice).”* (uumfe.org/about)

If you are interested in getting involved with the Climate Justice Team or want to know more about it, contact Jud Lawrie at jud@lawrie.com.



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

From the Racial Justice Team

By Pam Laser

As we enter this new year, the FUUSB [Racial Justice Team](#) is excited to continue its work towards dismantling racism and white supremacy within the congregation and our broader community. We have lots of opportunities for you to join us in this effort, from book discussion groups to learning about the proposed 8th Principle to connecting with community organizations. Wherever you are in your personal journey and however much or little time you have to contribute, there is a place for you in this work.



Efforts within our congregation:

- Participate in and/or help organize a book group discussing [Me and White Supremacy](#) or other titles focused on racial justice.
- Support our congregation's work toward adopting the [8th Principle of Unitarian Universalism](#).
- Participate in Vermont and Burlington tours and field trips related to Black history.

Working with our greater community:

- Participate in [Vermont Interfaith Action's](#) Racial Justice work on public safety or economic opportunities and home ownership challenges for BIPOC.

- Explore the education and resistance in Vermont to Critical Race Theory.
- Support a Black-owned basketball camp through support of a scholarship program.

If you are interested in learning more about any of these efforts, please email the Racial Justice Team at racialjustice@uusociety.org.

Finally, to learn more about racial justice topics, find a list of books and movies to explore at our [Resources page](#) on the FUUSB website.

We hope that you will consider joining us in this important work. Every person has something they can offer. Every contribution is important and welcome. Please contact us with any questions about how to get involved.



Christmas Eve Pageant, December 24, 2021
Image credit: Erika Reif

From the Immigration Justice Team With Gratitude!

By Jan Steinbauer, CASAN Board Chair

Several [Immigration Justice Team](#) (IJT) members are involved with the Chittenden Asylum Seekers Assistance Network (CASAN). This past March and September, FUUSB shared our Sunday offerings with the organization. The IJT would like to share this message of gratitude from the CASAN board.

- Carolyn Smiles, IJT and CASAN member

The Chittenden Asylum Seekers Assistance Network board would like to express our sincere appreciation to your community for your generous support in 2021. We – and the people you are helping – are truly thankful.

Looking back, here are highlights of the work you helped make possible:

The mom in our first household is doing great at her job and is nearly financially self-sufficient. Her daughter is doing well in school, and her donated car is a real asset.

Another mom is very happy with the college program she entered to gain skills for a higher paying job. She receives CASAN's support through advising and advocacy: she, along with many others, is experiencing delays in our government's system, so her work authorization renewal is many months overdue, and she could lose her job.

The mom in a third family passed her written drivers test, received her employment authorization, and recently found childcare for her two preschoolers while engaged in a job search! She is elated and proud of herself – and she is eager to work to support her family, and get her

license and a used car so she can transport them.

Our families are eligible to apply for Vermont's Emergency Rental Assistance Program, and their rent will be paid until fall. This is a game-changer for them, and for CASAN since this frees up monies that had gone to pay their rent for other things...

...Such as assisting a new household that arrived in our community. A local family is providing housing for them, and this enabled us to engage an asylum lawyer for them – essential if their case is to have a chance at success. They and their baby are happily settled, and they are getting used to snow and their first winter in Vermont.

In addition, two households received our welcome and short-term support as they were in transition to sponsorship by other groups. CASAN provided important things such as lodging, food, clothing, computers, phones, and transportation, including to ICE appointments at the border. We are glad to have played an important role in their lives when needed.

And, CASAN received our 501c3, with all donations now tax deductible.

Thank you for being part of our network, so that we can continue to assist our current families, and be ready to help more people in the year ahead. Learn more at casanvermont.org.