

the steeple

The Congregational Newsletter of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington
April 2021

From the Board of Trustees

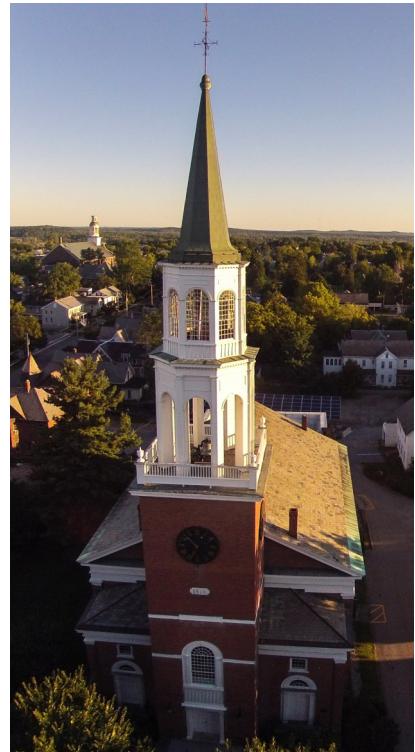
By Dan House, Board President



Springtime in Vermont. What a glorious time. It is also a busy time for the FUUSB Board of Trustees as we venture into our budget process. This year has been particularly exciting as we have learned a great deal over the last 12 months about what our congregation finds most important and valuable at the FUUSB.

Some of this discovery was intentional through our efforts to hear input from you, the congregation. Thank you to everyone who participated in our survey and discussion about our priorities as an intentional and loving community last fall. But much of that discovery was the result of the amazing creativity and effort of our staff and volunteers. We've been reminded again of the importance of community and caring for each other. We've learned new tricks for staying in touch, sharing our Sunday services, and sustaining our faith. And we've even found different ways to care for our Meeting House. With the knowledge gained, we look forward to a future where we not only return to the joy of physical togetherness in our Meeting House, but also to a new vision of bringing our mission to our congregants wherever they may be. We've seen the value of having professional ministerial assistance for our volunteer leaders who carry out the work of pastoral care, inclusive membership, and justice work.

The challenge for the board and the financial leadership of the FUUSB is to support our programming and services with a sound



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From the Board of Trustees

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budget that meets our needs as a community and is in line with our values. We embrace the value of providing our staff with fair wages and supporting all of our program areas with appropriate funding and staffing assistance.

(Perhaps not everyone has heard, but, yes, we will have a full-time ministerial intern next year.) We also value presenting a sustainable budget which uses our resources in the most efficacious way we can. So, with that in mind, we turned our efforts towards the always crucial stewardship campaign — this year emphasizing sustained commitments that continue from year to year. Many thanks to all who have confirmed your pledge, or even increased it!

Thank you to all who participated in the “Our Money, Our Mission” discussion on April 11. We will also hold our “Meet the Budget” Zoom meeting in early May (exact date to be determined) and ask you all to vote on the budget at the annual meeting on Sunday, June 6.

And as always, the board welcomes any questions or input you may have. You can always reach us at board@uusociety.org.





Minister's Monthly Update

If you missed Rev. Tricia's latest Minister's Monthly Update email, just visit uusociety.org and click on the Monthly Update link under the Stay Connected section.

Or visit our archive at uusociety.org/publication-archives.



Memorial Garden Easter Egg Hunt, April 4, 2021
Image credit: Erika Reif

Who Cares? We Do!

By Linda Graves, Pastoral Care Associates Team Co-Chair

Caring for each other is a central part of who we are at First UU Society; it is part of our mission and something many of us have been particularly conscious of during this pandemic time. Zoom meetings are helpful but they don't begin to provide the sense of comfort we receive when we share a nurturing one-on-one connection.

One of the ways we care for each other happens through the efforts of the Care Network (primarily addresses practical needs someone might have) and Pastoral Care Associates (primarily addresses emotional and spiritual needs). This year, the work of these two teams has been curtailed by more limited referrals while we are not seeing each other in person. Still, each month the leaders of these two teams meet with staff leadership to identify particular needs that some members might have, and how we might be of help. This group is called Member Care.

Of all the work I am drawn to do here at First UU, the act of providing nurturing care and making a genuine connection with another member of our beloved community is what feeds my spirit the most. During a particularly difficult time in my life, I was lucky enough to be the unwitting object of loving support from other members in the Society. The experience of that simple but most important act has inspired me to want to pass the care along, and to be a loving presence, as best I can, for others.

As a co-leader of the Pastoral Care Associates Team, I know there are many in our community who are in need, and I feel frustrated when we just don't know who might benefit from sharing these seeds of care.

So it is in this spirit that Member Care is rolling out a simple referral form which we hope will be an aid in sharing your concerns. You can view it [here](#). It requires your name, contact information and a brief explanation of your needs. You can also fill this out for someone else (with that person's consent). This form will be available on the website and also in the eNews. You may also leave a confidential message on the church phone at 862-5630, ext. 2000.

We hope these referral methods will help facilitate identifying congregants' needs and concerns. Even as we move forward to the time when we return to seeing each other regularly, this practice will likely continue to be an aid in deepening the circles of caring that make life in a beloved community so enriching.

P.S. If you, like me, have a heart for this kind of caring work, please contact Linda Graves, graveslmj@gmail.com. We are actively looking for team members!



From the Racial Justice Team

By Peggy Owen Sands, RJT Co-Chair

The Racial Justice Team's (RJT) small, yet committed, group is working to create educational opportunities for our FUUSB community and ways we can support Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) in the broader community. For example, you can explore many books, movies and documentaries to learn about racism and white privilege and supremacy via the Racial Justice Resources webpage: uusociety.org/racial-justice-resources

Our goal to support a local BIPOC-led group generated our newest initiative — partnering with the Vermont Racial Justice Alliance (VT-RJA). To accomplish this most effectively, we have joined the multi-congregational work of Vermont Interfaith Action (VIA), which is leading this charge. VIA is focusing its work on components of the VT-RJA's Phoenix R.I.S.E. agenda. See the details here: vtracialjusticealliance.org/2020/06/operation-phoenix

There are groups working on two of the Phoenix R.I.S.E. initiatives at this time: one group is looking at economic empowerment and the other group is working on public safety. The VIA process involves 1) selecting an issue, 2) researching and possibly refining the issue, 3) identifying and talking to people who can impact the issue, and 4) working up to an action in which people make a commitment to action on the issue and members of our congregations bear witness. The process often leads to real change in the community. For people interested

in working on racial justice within the Burlington community, these groups may be right for you.

There are multiple ways to get involved in justice work at the FUUSB. Please consider joining in this work. The next RJT meeting will be May 4th at 5 p.m. If interested in joining one of these work groups or other justice work, please contact the RJT at racialjustice@uusociety.org.



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

Healthy Congregation Team Seeking New Members

By Nancy Hellen, HCT Co-Chair

The Healthy Congregation Team (HCT) offers training and practice sessions to help community members learn communication skills of deep listening and reflective listening. We also facilitate these communication methods in the form of deep listening circles and reflective listening practice. How might these skills support our congregation as we transition to a time where in-person gatherings are more possible? How can these methods support our FUUSB mission: To inspire spiritual growth, to care for each other and our community, to seek truth, and to act for justice.

These are conversations the HCT is exploring at our monthly meetings. We learn together and consider our role in supporting the greater FUUSB community. Our current focus is on actions which support connections and the transition to the return of in-person gatherings.

We are seeking others to join our team, either now or in the fall. If you are interested or have questions, please reach out to Nancy Hellen at nbhellen@gmail.com. I would love to hear from you.

["All That We Share Is Sacred"](#) by Rev. Andrée Mol
As we gather together,
May we remember
When you share with me what is most important to
you,
That is where listening begins.
When I show you that I hear you,
When I say your life matters,
That is where compassion begins.
When I open the door to greet you,

That is where hospitality begins.

*When I venture out to bring you to shelter,
That is where love begins.*

*When I risk my comfort to ease your suffering,
When I act against hatred, violence, and injustice,
That is where courage begins.*

*When we experience the full presence of each other,
Because of our shared humanity,
Because of our differences,
That is where holy gratitude begins.*

*May this space be a table
that is not complete
until all are welcome.*

*May this table be a space of beauty
where together
we create a series of miracles, and
where all that we share is sacred.*

May it be so.

*This blessing was written in honor of two Unitarians,
Martha and Waitstill Sharp, who during World War II
dared to risk their own comfort in order to help save the
lives of those in desperate need.*



*Memorial Garden Easter Egg Hunt, April 4, 2021
Image credit: Margo Whitcomb*

UUA General Assembly - Register Now!

By Christina Fulton, Director of Operations & Finance



The annual gathering of the UUA member congregations, [General Assembly](#) or better known as GA, will be happening **June 23-27, 2021**.

This event will once again be totally online this year, which means it's easier than ever to participate. Those of us who attended last year's online GA found it to be one of the best GA's ever! The registration fee is minimal, there are no travel expenses, and you can easily pick and choose which workshops and events you want to attend.

[Registration](#) - Registration is only \$200. The UUA website has some financial aid opportunities, and FUUSB also has some scholarships available for members who wish to participate. If you would like a FUUSB scholarship to pay for your registration fee, please email xina@uusociety.org for more information.

[Delegates](#) - Each congregation receives a number of delegates based on their certified membership number. Delegates are the official voting representatives for our congregation and are able to vote at all business meetings at GA. If you are interested in becoming a delegate for FUUSB at this GA, please email Christina at xina@uusociety.org.

[Programs](#) - In addition to Business Meetings, GA offers a ton of great programming, including Workshops, Worship Services, Lectures, and Children & Youth programs. Please take a

look at all that GA has to offer.

This year's GA Theme is: [Circle Round for Justice, Healing, Courage](#). It promises to be a wonderful time to gather with other UUs across the nation. We hope that you will consider registering for this inspiring annual event.

Please reach out to Rev. Tricia, Christina, or Erika if you'd like to know more about General Assembly.



Memorial Garden Easter Egg Hunt, April 4, 2021
Image credit: Erika Reif



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VISIT US ONLINE!

UUSOCIETY.ORG



*Pianist Sam Whitesell, Great Stuffie Meeting House Adventure,
March 2021*



*Memorial Garden Easter Egg Hunt, April 4, 2021
Image credits: Erika Reif & Margo Whitcomb*

