

the steeple

The Congregational Newsletter of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington
March 2019

From Our Interim Senior Minister Rev-eries

By Rev. Susan Milnor



We have just come through a rather intense, rapid process of deciding to begin a Developmental Ministry in August of 2019. As your Interim Senior Minister, I believe this path affords you the best opportunity to build foundations you need and to create the best environment possible for ministries – your own and those of professionals – in the future. But let me

say a little more about that.

I don't see this as a time during which you will focus all your attention internally or hang back or forget your mission. Not at all. Nurturing the spiritual growth of children, youth, and adults and working in the larger world to bring about justice and healing for us all remain, and will always remain, the most important purpose of a religious community, along with observing and ritualizing the passages of life.

Developmental ministry means you will be intentional about the goals on which you focus here with an end point in mind. The goals for this community, found on the website, involve issues and challenges that have kept emerging in this congregation's evolution. The time is now to be bold enough to say, *"We are going to address these even as we live our values as Unitarian Universalists in this wider community and this world."*

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Rev-eries

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On a personal note, every day I am sad that I won't be with you, but I also feel warm thinking about you getting off the mark soon. I don't know yet what I will do; I will wait for the Universe to reveal that to me. What I do know is that every day I work with you in the months ahead will be a day I carry with me. Let us do good work. Let us not be afraid of connecting in the time we have. Let us celebrate.

Blessings,

Rev. Susan



2019 UUA General Assembly!

GA is in Spokane, Washington
June 19-23.

Think you might be interested?
Check it out on the UUA website:

www.uua.org/ga



UUA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Stewardship 2019-2020: Now Is the Time!

By Gene Bergman, Stewardship Team

I've been coming to the First UU for a long time. When I needed a community that was multigenerational, friendly, and caring, this Society was here. When I needed a spiritual home based on principles and values that speak to my heart and my head, and that respects and can coexist with my Judaism, this Society was, and is, here. When I've needed to respond to and resist the politics of the times, this Society and our seven UU principles have been there. My wife, Wendy Coe, grew up as a UU, we were married here, our kids had RE and OWL here, one son was married here by Rev. Mara, with Sam playing the piano.

Not everyone has or wants to have this kind of relationship with this Society. But all of us come and then keep connected because it gives us something deep. It feeds us, enlightens us, and warms us. We learn things, about worlds, physical and metaphysical, that we cannot learn on our own—because we learn them in a community of seekers.

*Come, come, whoever you are,
Wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving,
Ours is no caravan of despair.
Come, yet again come.*

Ah, where else can a Jewish boy regularly sing Rumi in worship but in a UU Society?

I am so grateful for this. For the chance to stand in public witness for Love & Justice with my UU brothers and sisters on Wednesdays, to Call on our Representatives to Build a Moral Economy as a UU with my co-religious comrades of Vermont Interfaith Action, to regularly Stand Against White Supremacy and Misogyny with all of you. To sing and worship with you all, a chorus of seekers.

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Stewardship 2019-2010: Now Is the Time!

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Wendy and I try to express our gratitude for all we get at the First UU by giving of our time, as much as we can, given all the demands life makes on us. *And every year, given our circumstances, we express our gratitude by pledging all we can during the Stewardship Campaign. Stewardship is taking care of things we care about, every year, with the long term in mind. Stewardship manifests our generosity. It is a key way we, together with all of you, build this spiritual home that fosters and sustains so much Love.*

A successful stewardship campaign this year is essential as we embark on the search for a Developmental Minister. I hope you can join Wendy and me by being as generous as possible during this stewardship campaign. We have so much to be grateful for at the First UU and *Now Is the Time* we get to show it.



Why I Am Excited About Next Year

By Louis deRosset, Member-at-Large, Board of Trustees

This is my fifth year on the Board of Trustees, and my thirteenth year as a member of our Society. I am excited about next year. In fact, I have never been more excited about where our Society is going than I am right now.

Here is the story of our last few years from my perspective. We started out asking ourselves what we wanted to do and what we wanted to be. Some of the answers revealed that we faced some difficult and interrelated problems. Matters came to a head in the last couple of months, as we worked together to understand the issues and to figure out how to address them.

What's exciting to me is that we now have a very good idea of what our challenges are. As you may remember, we made a list of them as part of our application for a developmental minister. What's even more exciting to me is that we have already taken our first concrete steps together to address them. These problems are soluble. Other congregations have solved them. And, we are at this very moment in search for a developmental minister whose job it will be to help us walk the trail they have blazed. What's most exciting to me is that, next year, we will begin overcoming the challenges we face.

So, I'm pretty fired up.



The 2019 FUUSB Stewardship Campaign: What to Expect

Now Is the Time for Our Annual Stewardship Campaign!

By Nancy Knox, Stewardship Team Co-Chair

Our annual **stewardship campaign** is where we raise more than half of our budget! This is when we fulfill our shared covenant with a pledge to help fuel First UU's essential mission, programs and activities. We do this collectively as a congregation, through our individual financial commitments. (See Gene Bergman's story in this *Steeple* issue for more on how we align our money with our values.)

As a UU congregation, we create and manage our First UU budget in a fiscally responsible way, so we need an accurate understanding of what our members plan to give during the coming year. Your pledge is vital to planning the great work we can do in the coming year!

The 2019 Stewardship Campaign runs from mid-March to mid-April, 2019:

- **Celebration Sunday - March 17** - The kick-off, when we celebrate our awesome First UU community, and ask you to make your pledge.
- Pledge cards and brochures will be available at the March 17 services.
- You will receive a letter via email/snail mail with information about how to pledge.
- Campaign runs from **mid-March to mid-April** when WE pledge for 2019-20.
- Raffle for great prizes - When you pledge, your name gets entered.
- **Gratitude Sunday - April 14** - Join us when we thank YOU for all you do for First UU, and for pledging!
- Pledge payments will be made between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020.

We ask you (members, and pledging friends) to pledge your resources for fiscal year 2019-20 as early in the campaign, as generously as you are able *for your circumstances*.

How you can help (we're all in this together!!):

- Pledge early – *NOW IS THE TIME!*
- **Pledge as generously as you can** – Consider increasing your pledge if you can.
- You can pledge online at uusociety.org/donate/stewardship
- We seek "Stewardship Ambassadors" to help with a variety of tasks:
 - Tell us your UU story for the *eNews* or other formats.
 - Reach out to other UUs as needed.

Questions about the campaign? Email stewardship@uusociety.org or talk to Nancy Knox or Kim Hier. (See us at tables in the Parlors during March/April 2019.)

Questions about your personal pledge? Contact Christina Fulton at xina@uusociety.org or 862-5630, ext. 22.



Deepening Our Welcoming

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



In the last issue of *The Steeple*, I shared some thoughts on our collective work of welcoming. I wrote: “Welcoming involves the collective work of us all... The diversity of relationships in our congregations includes a beautiful spectrum that spans across gender, sexual orientation, family configurations, race, religious background, education, class, abilities, health, and political affiliation. Welcoming this diversity means we can’t assume that those we meet here are just like us. It means seeking to know and appreciate those we meet at a level that goes beyond our similarities.”

Over the last few months I have engaged in a number of conversations inside and outside our congregation on the concept of welcoming, particularly as it pertains to the “Welcoming Congregation” program sponsored by the UUA. This program, which began in 1989, was created to create welcoming spaces for LGBTQ+ individuals in our congregations. FUUSB completed the Welcoming Congregation program in June 2000 and provided a spiritual home for many in the LGBTQ+ community. In addition, the congregation engaged in social justice work around LGBTQ+ rights including marriage equality. LGBTQ+ individuals have served on staff and key leadership roles at FUUSB. Many of you are here today because of this great work.

At the same time, over the last thirty years since the Welcoming Congregation program was established within Unitarian Universalism, the general understanding of LGBTQ+ issues has both broadened and deepened. Many other spiritual communities and

community spaces outside of UUism have expanded their welcoming and programming to LGBTQ+ folks. There is also greater understanding of the complexity of queer experiences, embracing a spectrum of sexuality and gender, for example. At the same time, I continue to hear stories of how queer-identified individuals struggle to find safe, nourishing and inclusive spiritual spaces even in UU congregations. Many of those stories originate from trans and gender non-conforming individuals.



I serve on the steering committee for TRUUsT (a UU trans religious professional organization) and we recently published [a report](#) based on a survey of trans Unitarian Universalists. The results show a deep gap between the promise of the Welcoming Congregation program and the lived experiences of trans UUs. The report shows that the majority of trans UUs experience a lack of spiritual connection and care, a lack of inclusion, and marginalization in our congregations. That marginalization increases for people of color, non-binary people, and disabled folks. Trans UUs also reported experiencing other identity-related oppression such as racism, classism, ableism and ageism. This suggests that

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Deepening Our Welcoming

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one of the reasons we are failing so many trans UUs as a faith tradition is because we've been unable to counter multiple forces of oppression within our congregations.

In response to this report, I'm working with a number of lay members in sponsoring a course this spring aimed at deepening our welcoming, building on the previous work of this congregation. We will be announcing dates for a series of discussions and a workshop which are part of a program titled [Transgender Inclusion in Congregations](#). This course was created by a trans and UU-led organization, Transforming Hearts Collective, which means by investing in this course we are also supporting the work of trans UUs. The outcome of this work will include specific actions the congregation can take to deepen its welcoming for all. You'll find specific details on this program in our upcoming weekly *eNews* and other announcements. You are always welcome to reach out to me to learn more or to get involved.

I know this work is important to a number of our members and friends and will create a lasting impact for those who seek a spiritual home at FUUSB.



Where Did All the 7th Graders Go?

By Valerie Wood-Lewis

Any given Sunday, you may notice that a percentage of our 7th-grade kids are not at UU and their Family Ministry classroom is dark. Sleeping in? Skiing? Nope! They might be sitting on cushions at the Zen Center, learning to meditate. They might be dancing an Israeli Folk dance before marveling as the Torah is opened at Ohavi Zedek, or adding their evergreen branches to the Druid Solstice circle at Oakledge.

Our 15 students are visiting at least 13 other faith communities this year, plus doing service projects and having social outings. Occasional classroom time is used to prepare, get background, reflect, and compare elements of different faiths. It's a huge commitment for leaders, young people, and parents. All of this adds up to kids who cement their understanding of UU principles and learn to articulate them, learn to ask questions respectfully, practice their lifelong journey towards nonjudgement, and build bridges to others often quite different in belief systems, in our polarized world.

It also means kids who are more engaged with their own faith development, and more interested in their attendance at FUUSB, heading into OWL and YUUTH group.

Be a part of reinforcing this amazing program by asking students about their trips. If you see a 7th grader at coffee hour, ask them what it was like to have a rock band accompany worship (at Essex Alliance), to sit quietly at the Friends Meeting House, to be in the ethnic minority at the Migrant Justice Fiesta, to be an elf on the Polar Express, or to compare beliefs and traditions with a youth group just down the street at the Methodist Church!



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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

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the **steeple**

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

The next issue of *The Steeple*
will be published in June.
The deadline to submit articles
is **May 28.**

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

