

the steeple

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

A Message from the Board President

By Hope Baker-Carr

As we ease gently into the Fall of 2022, after two and a half years of Covid, I think we are all hoping to return to something a great deal more "normal" than the past two years. And yet, it's still uncertain as to what "normal" will now look like. The Board of Trustees held their annual retreat at the end of August to welcome the five new members who have joined us (Eileen Blackwood, Jeb Spaulding, Kathy Stamper, Jill Stevens, and Susan Warner-Mills), to work on and approve a covenant that provides guidelines for our working together, and to set initial goals for the year. Uppermost in our minds is that this is the year that the Ministerial Search Team is undertaking the detailed process (developed by the UUA) of selecting a new settled minister to lead FUUSB for the next 7-15 years.

As the UUA Settlement Handbook states, "The search committee is both independent and accountable to the board of trustees." They work on their own in order to maintain the confidentiality that is required when considering various ministerial candidates. Yet, there may be times when they request assistance from the board and we want to be available in whatever way is needed. This may include: 1) attendance at various gatherings of members of the congregation where people are asked to provide input on the selection process, 2) naming two of the three members of a negotiating team to draw up an initial contract for a new minister (from UUA template) and handle changes that may be necessary when a prospective candidate has



Image credit: Charlie Rathbone

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From the Board President

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been identified, 3) putting together board documents (by-laws, policy, meeting minutes) to include in the packet of materials that are made available to ministerial candidates who are interested in learning more about FUUSB, and 4) participating in a Beyond Categorical Thinking Workshop.

Another goal of the year is to conduct a thorough review of FUUSB policy as recorded in the Board Policy Book. This will include the adoption of a completely new section on "Safety Policy" which is being worked on by a subcommittee of the board. Additionally, at our October meeting, the Board will be hearing from consultants who have been evaluating our Meeting House and other buildings to determine steps that may be taken to improve our energy efficiency.

It is going to be an exciting year for our Society. We encourage you to be involved!

Contact the Board of Trustees at

board@uusociety.org

Contact FUUSB!

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[FUUSB YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/c/FUUSB)



FUUSB Board of Trustees: (top row, left-right) Hope Baker-Carr, President; Rebecca Gurney, Vice President; Kathy Stamper, Secretary (acting); (middle row, L-R) Peter Clavelle, Mark Kuprych, Jeb Spaulding; (bottom row, L-R) Eileen Blackwood, Jill Stevens, Susan Warner-Mills



Water Communion, Sept. 11, 2022 Ingathering Service. Image: Erika Reif

From the Ministerial Search Team

By Peggy Owen Sands

Here's what your Ministerial Search Team (MST) has been doing for you:

1. learning about the updated search process supported by the Unitarian Universalist Association,
2. getting to know and appreciate the strengths of our team members,
3. and planning opportunities to gather information from each of you about your hopes for our new minister.

The MST members are: Brian Haas, Nancy Hellen, Tom Hyde, Rose Ledoux, Tom Porter, Peggy Owen Sands, and Amelia Schlossberg. You can find information about all of us on the FUUSB website under the Ministerial Search section at uusociety.org/members/ministerial-search.

We are looking forward to communicating with you in multiple ways in order to be as inclusive as possible.

As a start, we sent out a congregational survey at the end of September. We encourage our congregants to complete the survey. Our hope is to hear from as many of you as we can. This will guide us in our search for a minister who will match our hopes and dreams for the First UU Society. This information will also show any ministerial candidates our strengths and needs as a Society and our readiness to welcome and support a new minister.

By the time you read this we will have had our first Listening Sessions following the October 9th and 16th Sunday services. We have scheduled more Listening Sessions within the month of October. We hope you will join us for one



Ministerial Search Team: (top row, left-right) Brian Haas, Rose Ledoux (on screen), Darcey Laine (UUA trainer, on screen), Peggy Owen Sands; (bottom row, L-R) Tom Hyde, Tom Porter, Nancy Hellen, Amelia Schlossberg

session, either in person or online. If you are unable to access Zoom, please contact one of our team members and we will connect with you. We want to make this available to everyone.

We are excited to work with you to find a settled minister to help us grow and learn and to keep us moving forward into the future.

For the Listening Session schedule and Zoom link, and the Congregational Survey, visit uusociety.org/members/ministerial-search. Contact the Ministerial Search Team at ministerialsearch@uusociety.org.



Go Through the Heart

By Erika Reif, Director of Lifespan Faith Development

"Research shows that connection to place grounded in embodied experiences in nature, including those that invoke awe and wonder, are required steps along the journey to truly engaged environmental activism."

Jumping right to action is putting the cart before the horse. The actions may have an effect, but if we want conservationists, activists, environmental problem-solvers at heart, we must go through the heart."

- Christine Bulman, in "From Wonder to Action"

The quote above comes from a workshop that Rev. Tricia and I took part in on Star Island this summer, exploring nature and place-based approaches to Faith Development. This concept wasn't new to me, that simply informing our children of the horrors of global warming, or the plight of distant dwindling rain forests may inspire some limited action, but absent a sense of wonder and connection to the natural world, it isn't likely to produce engaged activists, and might leave them prone to anxiety and overwhelm.

This time, hearing these words above, I thought of how this relates not just to "nature" and ecological activism, but social justice as well. Our children are growing up in a moment that feels particularly fraught, and sometimes in our liberal faith it feels like we're all reacting to one threat after another, one injustice after another. We want our children to understand the importance of each call to action, but we don't want to lead them to despair. We don't want to shelter them from the inequities in our society,

but neither do we want to present them each Sunday with a laundry list of its problems.

If we want them to be resilient defenders of the beloved community, perhaps we must "go through the heart" in this as well. We must show our children what is beautiful and magical about our human family and the wonderful power we have when we come together. We must cultivate their sense of belonging and acceptance in the place where they live, in their faith home, before we can ask them to be its protectors.



Pride Parade, Sept. 18, 2022. Image: Erika Reif

Our Children's Faith Development activities this year might seek to familiarize our kids with the 8 Principles, to impart a little knowledge of other faiths and cultures; we might mention some UU history, or ask them to ponder their place in the universe. However, the goal will always be to make our children feel that they belong here, to be a place where they can show up as their full authentic selves and be loved and appreciated, to help them experience a small piece of that beloved community we hope to have their help in creating.

From the Meeting House Grounds Group

The Meeting House Grounds Group is working to welcome neighbors who visit our grounds while keeping the area safe for everyone. We are building community in these efforts.

We recognize that the inequities in our broader community contribute to the unhoused and substance use which is part of this situation. Following our UU Principles, including the adopted 8th Principle, we are seeking connection through making relationships. Community is built through relationships.

The Meeting House Grounds Group started meeting in the winter/spring of 2022 after initial awareness by the FUUSB staff and a sermon that our Ministerial Intern Rowan Van Ness delivered, titled “Radical Welcoming,” with Geoff Duke as the Worship Associate. [Here is the link](#). Geoff starts at 22 min. and Rowan at 33 min.

This caught the attention of a group of individuals who immediately met with David McFeeters as the staff representative, and started in motion what we now call the Meeting House Grounds Group.

We practice compassion and acceptance. We spend time on the Meeting House grounds to greet our neighbors, exchanging names. We pick up trash and discarded syringes to prevent injury. We have Narcan available and we install needle boxes. We are caring neighbors. We also are helping and supporting our staff who work diligently to ensure our safety while remaining welcoming to our community.

There are many organizations in the Burlington area who are already engaged in community work and mutual aid. A major part of our work



Meeting House Grounds Group: (left-right) David Call, Darrell Fields, Sarah Russell, Sally Millichamp, Charlie Rathbone, Martha Molpus, (not pictured: Jana Porter, Sarah Rosedahl; staff: David McFeeters, Christina Fulton, Rev. Tricia Hart)

will be building connections in the greater Burlington community.

Some of the local organizations we have been in contact with are: Howard Center - Safe Recovery, Spectrum, Vermont Interfaith Action, Turning Point, Community Support services of the Burlington Police Department, CEDO (Community and Economic Development Office) Elmwood Village, and Food Not Bombs. We continue to explore and reach out to others.

On September 26 and October 2 we offered listening circles to consider the radical welcome of this work. There will be subsequent discussion/action groups, such as the UUA’s Widening the Circle. Beginning in October, we are offering “Sunday Morning Breakfast” at 8 a.m. on Sundays.

We have a vision of neighborhood gatherings of UU members, neighbors using the grounds, and others in the community sharing food and conversation, building community. We are beginning our work, connecting with others, spreading the word of Radical Welcome on our Meeting House grounds. Have ideas? Email us at RadicalWelcoming@uusociety.org.

From the Climate Justice Team

By Jud Lawrie & Rosanne Greco

The Climate Justice Team (CJT) had several successes over the past year. It's very encouraging that the legislature passed important climate legislation which moves the state significantly forward in terms of reaching its climate goals. Our team developed a comprehensive "advocacy package" designed to provide guidance and encouragement to UU members to use in contacting their legislators, writing letters to the editor, sending messages to the governor's office, etc.

We shared this information with FUUSB members as well as our climate contacts at 13 other UU congregations in Vermont that are part of the VT UU Climate Network we created. In addition, we offered two workshops, one on the problem of plastics and the environment, and one on responsible climate investing.

Many of you know I have decided to step down as the Chair of the CJT. Gratefully, Rosanne Greco has stepped up.

So, now I'll "pass the mic" to Rosanne...

Jud Lawrie was the person who suggested we FUUSBers come together to address the climate crisis, and he called a gathering on this WAY back in the winter of 2020. Within weeks of his initiative, Covid hit. Despite this, Jud did wonders keeping the FUUSB Climate Justice Team going (via Zoom) during the whole of the Covid times, even after many of those who attended the initial meeting dropped away, including me.

When Jud said he was stepping away as the leader of the team, I

thought it was time for me to get more involved. For much of the time the FUUSB CJT was active, I was absorbed and my time occupied with climate and environmental efforts in my city of South Burlington, in particular trying



Natural lands in South Burlington preserved by climate activists



Natural lands in South Burlington destroyed by a developer. Images: Rosanne Greco

to preserve natural resource lands and get the city to take climate actions. That work continues, but I think I may

now have a bit more "free" time to devote to my faith community's climate work. This is possible because so many of the CJT's planning team offered to help with the "chores" involved in the CJT.

You will be hearing more about our ideas in the upcoming weeks. One of our first actions is to hold "Climate Conversations" which are simply to gather folks together to talk about our thoughts and feelings about the climate crisis. Most social justice actions start with folks talking with each other. So, let's start talking!

Contact the Climate Justice Team at climatejustice@uusociety.org.