



# The USNF Beacon

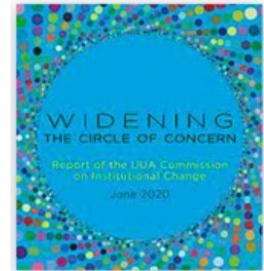
Weekly Newsletter of The  
Unitarian Society of Northampton & Florence

September 21, 2021 Vol. 2, Issue 9.3

## Committee Reports & Happenings

### **Widening the Circle Discussion Groups - Sept 26, 4-5:15 OR Sept 29, 7-8:15**

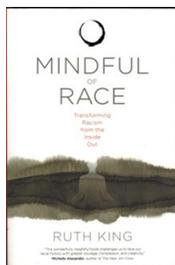
*"The world around us is different than it was a decade ago. Or even five years ago. The question is, how will our "living tradition" keep up with the times? What choices will we make - or fail to make - and how will that affect the relevancy and the survival of our faith?"*



What does it mean to be a Unitarian Universalist? What choices might USNF make to keep up with the times and be a sustaining faith? Join the conversation about the future of UUism and how we want to shape our congregation at the first Widening the Circle Discussion Group. Read or listen to the [trends chapter in the report](#). Choose a conversation: Sunday, September 26, 4-5:15 location TBD OR Wednesday, Sept 29, 7-8:15 over Zoom. RSVP to [dre@uunorthampton.org](mailto:dre@uunorthampton.org).

### **Small Group Circle Sign Up Is Now! Sign Ups Needed by September 26, 2021**

September always brings change and renewal. One of the changes you can do for yourself is sign up for a new year of Small Group Circles. Have you been in our groups before? Or are you new to our groups, maybe even new to the congregation? Our small facilitated groups meet once a month for two hours, a time we set aside from the rest of our lives to look within, to ponder big questions, and to connect in a deeper way with this handful of friends. Not friends yet? You will be. You'll get to know each other in profound ways, maybe even get to know yourself in new ways. Please sign up by September 26 to be assured a space. All groups start in October with the topic of *"Connecting Through Our Stories"*. Many of our topics this year are designed to help us process this pandemic time we are living through. The November topic is *"Lost and found: Revelations from recent time"*. We require a commitment from October through June so that the groups can mesh and grow together. Being that we are still in pandemic times, we will start all groups on Zoom. Some of the groups will move into the facilitator's home if that is safe for everyone. The Tuesday evening group will be on Zoom throughout the year to accommodate people who live far, who don't drive at night, or who just prefer the ease of Zoom. FMI: Katie Olmstead, [KDOLmstead@aol.com](mailto:KDOLmstead@aol.com), 413 585-0564. To sign up: <https://uunorthampton.org/quick-links/2020-small-group-circles>



### **Renewed book discussion: *Mindful of Race: Transforming Racism from the Inside Out* by Ruth King - Oct 13 thru Dec 1, 2021**

Save the dates and consider joining our discussion of the book, *Mindful of Race*. We'll meet to discuss the book via Zoom every other Wednesday, 7 to 8:30 pm, starting October 13 and concluding December 1. On the alternate three weeks, we'll offer silent, sitting meditation - with instruction for those new to practice - and a brief period of meditation for all.

We expect the book discussions to be valuable for everyone. We'll explore how Buddhist-inspired mindfulness can help us understand the harmful habits of racism and cultivate a culture of care and healing. We'll read and discuss the book and encourage meditation practice as we awaken to, and engage with the challenging experiences arising from racism. We'll plan to meet by Zoom until we know if it's safe to meet in person in the parlor. FMI and to sign up, contact Craig Dreeszen; [craig@dreeszen.com](mailto:craig@dreeszen.com)

If we want to change the world, we must change ourselves. The author, Ruth King, offers a prayer, *May our thoughts and actions reflect the world we want to live in and leave behind...May we meet the racial cries of the world with as much wisdom and grace as we can muster.*"

Discussion leaders are David Caruso, Chris Spicer, and Craig Dreeszen. Broadside Books has, or can order, the book.

### Share the Plate Nominations Fall 2021

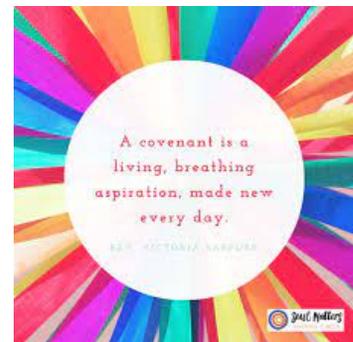
Every Sunday, part of our worship experience is *'passing the plate'*, accompanied by inspiring words and beautiful music. Did you know that 50% of our plate collections are donated to service or advocacy organizations? You've probably heard it announced during the service, "this week our plate donations will be given to the Interfaith Help Fund, or UU Get Out the Vote, Cathedral in the Night, UU Service Committee or many others." We choose groups that promote our UU values and principles, and with which members/friends are involved. These groups are often local, but they do not have to be.

We are opening up the process of selecting the groups to which we will donate to and so are inviting the congregation to offer suggestions. These will be reviewed and voted on at the upcoming October Coordinating Council Meeting on 10/4/21, and then again at the Jan 2022 Coordinating Council Meeting.

If you would like to suggest an organization, please send your idea along to one of the Co-Moderators of the Coordinating Council, Mary Price-[maryprice368@comcast.net](mailto:maryprice368@comcast.net) or Steve Kramer - [steve@progressprinciple.com](mailto:steve@progressprinciple.com). Please give us a BRIEF description (just a few sentences please) of why you think we should donate our plate to this group. A link to a website is helpful. These brief descriptions and a link to the organization website will be sent out with the Coordinating Council Agenda for 10/4/21. The council meets the first Mon. of each month from 6:30-8pm on Zoom and anyone in the congregation is invited to attend and vote on the plate donations.

### Save the Date: Congregational Gatherings Sunday, November 7, 11:30 am

We'll convene for another of our popular Congregational Gatherings, Sunday, November 7, right after the worship service, again by Zoom. The *Widening the Circle* Steering Committee is partnering this year with the Stewardship Committee to invite you to reflect upon what it means to be in covenant with each other. "Unitarian Universalism is not a creedal faith. It is a covenant of faith -- more properly said, we are a covenantal faith" (UUA). To whom and for what are we responsible in the interdependent web of existence? As we still remain physically distant and can't gather in congregants' homes as we've done in recent years, it feels especially important to listen deeply to each other and share what connects us. Please plan to join a small group discussion on Nov. 7 for an hour in community.



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## Climate Action Group Updates

The Climate Action Group has been motivated by the increasing number of manifestations of the Climate Emergency. Last week, editors of 200 national and international medical journals published an editorial stating that, despite Covid, climate change is the greatest threat to public health worldwide.

Over the late spring and summer, we had discussions of the book *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer and conducted a summer service. On Sunday, Sept 12, we had a happy outing at DAR which included a picnic, hike, and swim for the intrepid. We plan to hold more outdoor outings to build morale among members of our group and congregation.

We have come to the conclusion that individual climate actions are of much greater value if we can motivate others to join and spread the word. In consequence, we will be conducting a happy game at USNF to encourage climate action and advocacy among all of us. CAG members are also engaged with RE and working to decrease

## New Member Interview - Wally Rapalus

It only seemed natural for Wally Rapalus to look into the USNF community of faith as one questioning where he places himself within the wider world. Wally has chosen to follow a path in which questions lead him to more questions. In most of his adult life he has applied this introspection by being careful not to jump to conclusions, while also fully engaging into the search for deeper meanings prompted by our worship services and community work.



Wally began attending services at USNF in the fall of 2019. A proud gay man, he feels welcomed by both the inclusivity and diversity of our community. Coming from a troubled childhood, that reality became formative by the “rounding out” of where he stood on faith, gender, and sexuality.

He values the many opportunities to participate in activities, both within worship and outside of worship, that explore spiritual questions with speakers, offering information and support. He finds USNF to be a place where civil rights bear a living theme, a unifying cause.

Wally feels inspired by the connections that were formed and maintained during the health emergency of the Covid-19 pandemic, writing: *“Yet we are together that in questions of life and death you have delivered a thesis of this Society through your investment in me, and I in you! Here is my claim that whatever our frustrations and desires are meant to be, the new plateaus of discovery are within my reach.”*

## USNF Beacon Publication Schedule

The *USNF Beacon* is published on Tuesdays with featured articles appearing each week. The monthly schedule is:

- Week 1 - Minister's Notes
- Week 2 - Board Report
- Week 3 - Committee Reports and Articles
- Week 4 - Religious Education and Faith Development
- Week 5 - Editor's choice for month's that have 5 Tuesdays

Articles/photos are due in the Friday before the week they are to be published. Please limit your article to 250 words or contact Beacon Editor.

Send submissions to: [newsletter@uunorthampton.org](mailto:newsletter@uunorthampton.org)

Contact  
Us



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