

THE PIONEER

Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence 2020 Volume 50 No. 8

WORSHIP for APRIL All Services at 10 am via Zoom

April 5

What We Believe

Steve O'Day, Cathy Lilly, and the Reverend Janet Bush

Steve will share his credo statement, Cathy and Janet will offer brief reflections, and Dana Maiben will offer musical delight.

April 12

O Mary, Don't You Weep

The Reverend Janet Bush

Wisdom and challenge in the stories of Passover and Easter, with a special musical guest.

April 19

Our Beautiful Blue Boat Home

Jessica Harwood, Maggie Shar and the Reverend Janet Bush

We'll acknowledge Earth Day with stories and a musical celebration of spring and our planet home.

April 26

To Be Announced



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USNF Covid-19 Links

- ◆ [Community Covid-19 Resources](#)
- ◆ [USNF Community Cares Network](#)
- ◆ [USNF Services on YouTube](#)

facebook



NOTES FROM THE MINISTER

Lisa, Jessica and I were relieved and happy to learn that, at least for now, workers in religious organizations are NOT “non-essential.” You might have been taught never to use double negatives – but this is a happy exception. They are doing an extraordinary job. We are all grateful to be able to keep the fires burning here at 220 Main Street, and to support the efforts to connect and care for one another.



What has touched your heart, since we have gone under siege?

My mother is in a nursing home in Leeds. When I call her, she doesn't remember about the virus, doesn't seem to realize how long it has been since I have seen her, or to know that no one else has had visitors either. That is a mixed blessing.

I got the ok to go over to the facility and stand near the glass door to the common area where she spends her day. From there I called and spoke with her by phone. It touched me to see the staff treating her and other residents with their usual good humor and kindness, and to see that she is getting moments of touch. It was good for me to see her.

I'm not sure it was good for her to see me. She was happy to see me, but then she was confused. My standing outside on the patio baffled her. She didn't understand why no one would let me in. I left with sadness – for her vulnerability, for all she has lost.

And so it is with many of us. We have moments of joy and gratitude, and moments of sadness, anxiety and fear. We have a long way to go before this siege is over. Please continue to reach out to one another. Hearing a friendly voice can help.

I have spoken with quite a few of you over the past several weeks, sometimes with a specific purpose, sometimes just to say hello. Recently I spoke with someone who remarked on how many people are making connections, showing care and concern and compassion for one another. It's heartening, we agreed. As are the trees beginning to bud, the lawns and beds abloom with crocus and scilla, the southern-facing stretches where daffodils are beginning to appear.

May spring bring you solace and moments of delight. May you do all you can to stay well. We are learning that we can be together in spirit while we look forward to seeing each other face to face, when that day comes.

I am ever grateful and blessed to be your minister.

Handwritten signature of Janet

TO CONTACT THE MINISTER: Please email or call for an appointment Mondays, Tuesdays, or Thursdays. revjanetbush@gmail.com; 584-1390 x202 (office); 727-8497 (home – before 9 pm for non-emergencies)

REPORTS & ARTICLES

Report From the Board of Trustees

Submitted by Rhys Eppich, Trustee

How do we stay connected within our congregation without a physical presence and how can we best be of service to our varied communities? The Board had a robust discussion about how we can use our wide ranging networks and community to reach out to our members and friends by using new and old fashioned technology.

We would love your suggestions on ways we can reach out remotely. Consider hosting a Zoom (or other) gathering for: a book or movie discussion, play bingo, I spy, a reading club, mediation moments, a musical jam session, singing, or just to check in. May we find new ways to connect and share.

The board is working on the budget and will finalize it at next month's meeting. For the time-being, we will be meeting more frequently as needed. For information about our new USNF Community Cares, visit this link on our website: <https://uunorthampton.org/social-action/usnf-community-cares-network>.

Our annual meeting date is planned for May 17 and the board will be discussing how to navigate the anticipated disruption in our traditional Annual Meeting plans and will keep you posted as plans develop and we continue to work on details.

We felt the online service on Sunday March 15 was intimate, energizing and successful; we hope you did too. Many enjoyed connecting with folks online in addition to the content. There has been a lot of positive feedback; keep it coming! Many thanks to David, Janet, Jessica, and Greg Hayes for a wonderful inaugural virtual service.

Sunday Services will continue to happen via Zoom: if you had trouble connecting or missed it and want to be sure to connect for the next service, people are available to help connect you! You can test your Zoom connection and/or Email Lisa and she will connect you with someone who can help. And if that doesn't work, call (413) 584-1390 and leave a message and someone will get back to you.

Other ways to attend service: call in via your phone or watch the play back.

For the time being, all committees and meeting will take place remotely: Zoom, other on line platforms or conference calls should be used. If you need help setting these up, please email Lisa.

The Board met again for a special meeting on March 30. We started discussing contingency plans for our Annual Meeting. We extend our continued thanks to Lisa, Jessica, Frank, Dana, Annie and Rev. Janet for all they are doing.

REPORTS & ARTICLES

NEWS FROM SANCTUARY

On April 6, 2018 Irida Kakhtiranova entered into sanctuary here at the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence. During these past two years, the lives of Irida, Bryan, and the kids have become woven into the very fabric of life at USNF and we have become family.

As a congregation, we quickly put aside an early concern about having enough volunteers to do this for the long haul. Volunteers from the congregation and beyond stepped up to provide accompaniment, rides for Bryan and the kids, grocery shopping, laundry, farmer's market and so much more. Separate volunteer groups developed around the various tasks; some used Sign-Up Genius, some used email and some just texted with Irida directly. With minor adjustments here and there, Sanctuary appeared to be operating relatively smoothly.

And then came Covid-19 and all of our worlds changed. As events across the Valley began closing, we had to make the difficult, but necessary, decision to postpone the Rise Up for Irida concert at the Academy of Music, scheduled for March 21st. And we worked with Janet to determine how we could continue Sanctuary and keep both staff, who continue to come into work, and the Johnson family as safe as possible.

Irida and the Sanctuary Team have come up with a plan that keeps Irida and the family together without the need for AVs. There is a small food committee that works directly with Irida the family's food needs are being met. It is essential to limit the number of people who have contact with the family. Irida is very good at reaching out when she needs something, so the Sanctuary team feels comfortable with our plan.

For the time being, Irida has had to shut down her pierogi business. While homeschooling fills Irida's time, there is no replacement for her lost income. Hence, the family's need for funds continues, now as much as ever. Grocery store gift cards are very much needed and can be purchased through Lisa in the office. Folks can also donate directly to Irida via her GoFundMe site, <https://www.gofundme.com/irida-in-sanctuary-family-fund>. As always, the Sanctuary Team wants to thank everyone for their contribution to Sanctuary, large or small.

In Community,

The Sanctuary Team

REPORTS & ARTICLES

USNF Community Care Network

One beacon of hope in this challenging time is the love and care we have for one another. The new USNF Community Care Network is a practical way we can care for and receive care from one another. If you HAVE A NEED for any of the following, or if you CAN HELP with any of the following, or both, this network is for you.

- Shopping and delivery of food
- Pharmacy pick-up and delivery
- A specific essential item (thermometer, radio, old laptop, etc.)
- Zoom help for people who are new to the technology or who only have a landline
- Financial help (contact Janet or the office directly, revjanetbush@gmail.com, 413-584-1390 x 202)

In just the first 30 hours of its existence, the USNF Community Care Network received many offers to help, and was able to get a used radio to a member who requested one, match a loaned laptop with someone without a computer, and arranged grocery delivery for a family. Several shoppers have been connected with people who can't go out.

Here's how it works:

Let us know WHAT YOU NEED and/ or WHAT HELP YOU CAN OFFER, by doing one of the following: (1). Email a note to usnfcares@uunorthampton.org, with the following information:

- Your full name
- Phone number
- Email address
- Town you live in
- IF REQUESTING HELP: What you need, and when
- IF OFFERING HELP: What you can do, and when
- Any other info you'd like us to have

Or (2). Call the USNF office 413-584-1390 x 201 and leave a message for the Community Care team. You'll get a call back as soon as possible.

If you have a **need for financial assistance**, email or call Janet (revjanetbush@gmail.com or (413) 584-1390 x202). All online plate donations going forward will be allocated between community organizations offering support and our own Minister's Help Fund. If you wish to **donate to financial assistance**, you can do so on the USNF [homepage](#), or mail a check made out to USNF (220 Main St., Northampton, MA 01060). Please note that it's "For emergency help" in the memo line.

REPORTS & ARTICLES

The Community Care team will reach out directly to requesters and helpers, to coordinate. NOTE: Specific information about requests and offers will be kept strictly confidential.

If you know of anyone among our USNF members and friends who doesn't have email access while at home, or who might not see this message, please call them to see if they need anything and/or can offer anything.

For requests that involve tangible goods, both requesters and volunteers will be asked to follow clear, simple guidelines for the protection of everybody involved. Although there is no way in this environment for any transaction of goods to be completely risk-free, it is critical that everybody involved commit to best practices for safety.

EVERYONE, please NOTE: If you are in a high-risk category as determined by the CDC, based on your age or medical condition, we hope you are taking extra precautions to avoid exposure as much as possible. We encourage you to ask for help.

This Crisis is an Opportunity for Democracy

There's an ancient Chinese proverb reminding us that "within every crisis are the seeds of opportunity." Here, let's focus on what the COVID-19 crisis means for growing our democracy.

Item: On March 20th Represent.Us launched [how to vote at home](#), that connects any voter with the options in their district for voting at home.

Item: There's a bill in the U.S. Senate that would make it possible for all Americans to vote at home. This bill (S.3440) would require all states to allow voters to request absentee ballots. (You can support this bill by going to [Support S.3440](#).)

By the time you read this, there will likely be more examples of people creating new opportunities for democracy in this time of crisis. Meanwhile, as of March 23, eighty-four USNF members and friends have volunteered to work on "USNF the Vote" projects. Together, we are registering voters, fighting voter suppression, and reminding people to vote – all actions we can do from home.

You're right. We don't know what voting will look like in the fall of 2020! Yet – our human condition seems to be to do the best we can when we can, and then adjust to new reality. Regardless of what voting will look like, engaging new voters and re-registering purged voters is a good thing to do.

These actions resonate strongly with our UU Principles. Simply put, we're called to grab hold of history's pendulum and swing it back – away from the hyper-*independence* we've wandered into and towards our true human nature – *interdependence* with the web of all existence.

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REPORTS & ARTICLES

Let's allow this crisis to inspire us. After all, from the place of believing in human potential to be good and do good, we can imagine....everything!

So if you haven't yet signed up for "USNF the Vote," please contact me at droitman1@verizon.net. Together, we will restore and grow our democracy! - submitted by David Roitman

FY2020-2021 Stewardship Campaign Is Successful



RED

We are wrapping up our stewardship campaign as we write in late March. We are so grateful that our members and friends responded to our trust in generosity. As of March 24, 145 individuals and families in our congregation pledged \$313,550. As a few more pledges are pending, we project about \$318,000 in total. This is a very encouraging \$20,000 increase over last year. Over half of us pledged increased financial support! Nine newcomers pledged for the first time. Our collective generosity significantly turned around a two-year trend of pledge decreases.



MAGENTA

We are so very grateful to each of us who made a pledge. Every gift matters. We are also grateful for the 20 volunteer solicitors who spoke individually with about a third of our congregation and for all those who welcomed those conversations.



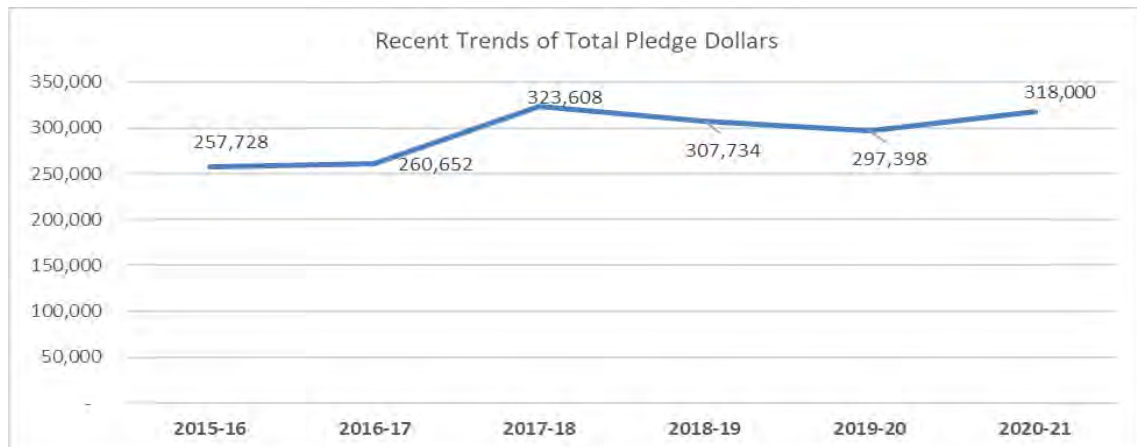
PURPLE

Our campaign concluded just as the covid-19 disruptions began locally. We pray for everyone's safety. Even as we've been kept physically apart, we've found new ways to connect, support each other, and worship together. The growing number of us participating in virtual Sunday services confirms: *what we do here matters, now, more than ever.*



BLUE

The pandemic and shutdowns are affecting businesses, employment, and investments. We can't know how long it will take to recover or what recovery will look like. But we do hope conditions will improve by September 2020 when our fiscal year begins and we start to fulfill our new pledges. We hope you can sustain your pledge.



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

RE at Home - Exploring Values

"We learned to bring meaning into uncertainty and chaos by maintaining grounding practices and developing new rituals. Rituals have been instrumental in building community, promoting cooperation, and marking transition points. Rituals reduce anxiety...and even work on people who don't believe in them, research shows. Additionally, rituals benefit our physical well-being and immune-system."-Ari Honarvar

Routine has been a big buzzword lately -- now that our routines have been thrown out the window and families are trapped at home together. We are told again and again how important it is to have routines and social media feeds are awash in color-coded schedules. I am finding that routines are hard to stick to when everything is changing so rapidly, when there are so many unknowns, and when I want to be involved in so many different things. And I am trying to practice compassion for myself and everyone else. It is okay when the routine is upset. It is okay to make mistakes (thank you for your patience during online services!). It is okay to just be -- without a routine.

There are elements of my days that I am sticking to -- even if they don't happen at a regular time. When I have a free moment, I am going out for a walk. Our dog is getting more exercise than ever! When I am feeling overwhelmed, I stop what I am doing and breathe deeply. When I am not burned out on screen time at the end of the day, I try to call someone I love to connect briefly.

Rituals have brought me a great deal of comfort during this time. Having a set of intentional activities relaxes my mind and allows me to focus back on what matters. Even though on some days, I only meditate for 2 minutes, it starts my day with calm and intention. During story time at 4 pm, I light the chalice and anyone who is on the call checks in with each other; these simple rituals are settling. When we sit down to dinner, my wife and I share something beautiful or inspiring from the day.

I invite you all to incorporate rituals into your day and week. Below, you will find resources for 20-30 minute rituals. There are also directions for making your own chalice and writing a chalice lighting so that you can use it daily for rituals.

Family Ritual Resources

- [Make Your Own Chalice](#)
- Mindfulness Practices Together: [Presence](#)
- Outdoor Practice: [Connecting with Each Other and Nature](#)

Here are helpful resources for families:

- [How to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus](#) - UNICEF
- [Emotional Support Suggestions for Families During School Closings](#) - Hilltown Cooperative Charter School

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me to talk and connect: Jessica Harwood, dre@uunorthampton.org, 584-1390 x203

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

APRIL: WEEKLY SCHEDULE



Monday through Thursday at 4 pm: Story Time with Jessica

Come together with other kids and families to check in and connect. Jessica will share a story and invite reflection on the themes and ideas. Here is the link to join: <https://zoom.us/j/880344797>

Daily Challenges

[Daily challenges](#) allow you and your family to connect with each other and the 7 Principles and the 6 Sources of UUism. They are posted on our [RE Facebook page](#).

Sunday RE

We are hoping that families will tune into our online Sunday services. We are working on incorporating various elements to engage the whole family. For our 4th through 8th grade class, we will offer a class and check in from 11-11:45 am every Sunday after the service. The Zoom link for that class will be sent by email. The COA class will continue online as needed.

Parent and Caregiver Groups

Parents and caregivers deserve a break right now! We invite you to come together for some reflection, sharing, mutual support, and grounding.

- Wednesdays 8-8:45 pm - <https://zoom.us/j/363904856>
- Sundays, 11:30-12:15 - <https://zoom.us/j/631712325>

Jessica's Office Hours

Join me on Wednesdays from 5-7 pm to check in, say hi, and connect: <https://zoom.us/j/254449462>

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

YOUTH GROUP

Annie Doran

In the midst of social isolation, The Youth Group is connecting online multiple times a week. There is silence and expressions of struggle yet a lot of laughter, smiles, singing, and joy. We find moments of gratitude and are helping each other find light within ourselves and within each other.

Our Climate Change Compost Project is on hold to roll out, but we will continue to get prepared for making it happen!

Youth Group Service is postponed until later in the Spring. It may be the very first year that we are not rushed to create it! There's a look on the bright side! Details to come...

YOUNG ADULT GROUP

Annie Doran

The Young Adult Group will be checking in and connecting via zoom on Wednesday April 1st. Anyone 18-40 is welcome to join us! <https://zoom.us/j/697309160>

Please contact Annie with any questions or needs youthfulUSNF@gmail.com.

We will continue to envision what shape the Young Adult Group takes for the coming year. In the face of the pandemic, I imagine we will feel a greater sense of collective purpose and have greater clarity about how we want to be together. Details on meeting virtually to come.

Unitarian Society of
Northampton and

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

THE PIONEER
THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF
THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF NORTHAMPTON AND FLORENCE

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MARCH PIONEER DATES

Deadline: April 23

Publication: April 29

*Articles should be 350 words or less.
Send submissions to pioneer@uunorthampton.org.
Include the word "PIONEER" in the subject line.*

Office hours: Tuesday through Thursday 9:00-3:00
Contact the Society at 584-1390. Visit us online at www.uunorthampton.org.