

THE PIONEER

Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence 2020 Volume 50 No. 10

WORSHIP for JUNE

All Services at 10 am via Zoom & YouTube

June 7

What I Believe

Coming of Age Class

Our 8th and 9th graders share their reflections and gifts in a culmination of their year spent together exploring values, beliefs, hopes and dreams.

June 14

In This House, We Have Feelings

Senior Youth Group

One of the highlights of our year - our Youth Group members invite you to experience worship and an array of feelings with them.

June 21

Flower Sunday

The Reverend Janet C. Bush and Jessica Harwood

Our traditional service to mark the beginning of summer and to celebrate the beauty and wonder of community. We'll officially welcome new members and say a fond farewell to Dana Maiben as we thank her for her leadership as our Interim Music Director. Greg Hayes will join Dana for a rousing musical treat to end the service.

June 28

UU General Assembly Online Worship Service

Join us virtually for the largest annual gathering of UUs joining in worship. The worship service will include a collection for the Tomaquag Museum, an indigenous museum featuring an extensive collection and archive of Southern New England tribal communities. Live stream will be available.

[UU General Assembly 2020](#)



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USNF Covid-19 Links

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

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NOTES FROM THE MINISTER

“No One Knows What’s Going to Happen.” That’s the giant headline filling two-thirds of the page of last Sunday’s *NYTimes* “Sunday Review” section. It opens to articles about Covid-19, the longest one about how summer weather might or might not affect the continuing pandemic.

“Summer will be warmer. It will get colder again in the fall, and colder still as winter arrives.” So far, so good. Those seem like reasonable predictions. *“The warm weather may slow the rate of infection in some places, in others not. The cold weather may cause a new surge.”*



What do you think is going to happen? Over and over, as this has gone on, I have heard myself saying “nobody knows.” We do know that, as individuals, we have different sources of information, different experiences, and different assessments of our own, personal risk. And we need to be guided by the best recommendations our health professionals are able to make.

I panicked for a few hours on May 18 when I read the state’s new guidelines for religious communities. “Open at your own peril, and at the peril of the people in your pews. Manage your worship services under the same procedures required of supermarkets, from entry/exit to distancing to unidirectional aisles.” (It’s in very fine print.) Fortunately for me, the Board of Trustees was meeting that night. No one thought we should open.

Summer worship services will be online-only through Labor Day weekend. We have a full set of service leaders for all but June 28, when we have decided to invite everyone to attend the UU General Assembly worship - online. We’ll have social hour afterwards – online.

And what about the fall? What if things get much better quickly? Nobody knows. We will go forward. We will start to plan, as if....

I, the staff, and the congregation’s leadership are committed to serving all of our members, friends, and people from the broader community who are finding their way to us through our online presence. We will see each other this summer. We are in this together. That I know.

I am blessed and grateful to be your minister,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "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 Laurie Loisel

At our May 18 meeting, we engaged in deep discussions about complicated, layered topics: how and when should we move to in-person worship? What are the ethical implications around accepting money from the government's paycheck protection program?

As announced, despite the state's inclusion of houses of worship in the phase 1 reopening, the board voted to continue virtual services. Just days prior, we received a letter from UUA President Susan Frederick-Gray that took us all aback.

The UUA recommends congregations plan for virtual services through May of 2021. To read the letter in full, click here: <https://www.uua.org/pressroom/press-releases/message-uua-president-updated-guidance-gathering>

We wrestled with these conflicting sets of guidance in light of the specific circumstances of our congregation before arriving at the unanimous decision that continuing Zoom worship through summer at least is the right course for us.

Reopening seemed to pose unnecessary risks and would involve challenges to implement safely. Meanwhile, online worship and its opportunities to chat in small groups have deepened our connections.

We will thoughtfully deliberate about the best course for our beloved community next fall, winter and spring. We will keep everyone posted as plans evolve.

The Board also revisited our decision to apply for the PPP dollars. Bureaucratic complications held up applications as news reports revealed the great needs for this relief among small businesses. We talked candidly about the ethics of accepting this money given that and the separation of church and state. We voted not to move forward.

I pull back the curtain on these decisions to let you all know that as board members, we take very seriously our responsibility to consider matters in light of our mission and values as a community of faith. There is never one right course of action. Rest assured that we consider all of you, as well as our beloved USNF as an institution, in our deliberations.

My three years of service have been an honor, a privilege and a joy. It has enriched my connections with the Society and all of you as a community. Thank you.

REPORTS & ARTICLES

Treasurer's Message

As we gather on Zoom for Sunday services in the midst of the coronavirus crisis, you may be wondering about the state of the Society's finances. In short, our finances are staying relatively strong. We continue to receive timely pledge payments, and except for some extra expenses to support our technology to bring Sunday services to you and hold virtual meetings together, expenses should stay on budget or be somewhat lower. We are committed to fully pay our staff during this time. Some of our non-pledge income sources, such as the auction and building fees, will be much lower than anticipated. At this point in time, I anticipate a deficit of about \$15,000 at the end of the year in August. We are very fortunate, however, to still hold a surplus of more than \$40,000 to offset any losses in income and still provide a cushion into next year without dipping into our Legacy fund.

The stewardship campaign raised \$319,400, an increase of \$22,000 over last year. Many, many thanks for your generosity. This gives us much hope in sustaining our staff and programs into next year. While we won't know everything about how or when the COVID-19 crisis will end, we should know more in the next few months. The Board will be discussing several options about preparing next year's budget. A budget will be presented at the annual meeting in August, even if it's an interim one.

We've added ways to donate on our website, through the GivePlus App, and by texting using a credit card or your bank account. Many generous donors have already given more than \$17,000 to the COVID emergency fund, Minister's help fund, Sanctuary fund, and the Interfaith Help fund since the beginning of April. You can also now contribute to the general fund to support our ongoing operations, and even pay your pledge online. We do ask that you cover the transaction fees if you can, especially when paying your pledge, so we receive your full donation. The fee will be computed for you.

My term as treasurer has officially expired (3 terms of 2 years each according to the Bylaws), but since a replacement hasn't yet been found, I am willing to serve one more term and the board has reappointed me. It's certainly has been a pleasure serving as treasurer and I look forward to continuing in the role.

Please know that we greatly appreciate your continued pledge payments. However, if this crisis has impacted you financially and you need to make any adjustments to your pledge for this year or next, just email me (treasurer@uunorthampton.org) or the office (office@uunorthampton.org).

In gratitude,

Dave Nelson

REPORTS & ARTICLES

Solar Update

Even though we haven't been able to be in our building, the 45 solar panels installed in August 2016 have been steadfastly producing energy. In the 3 2/3 years since their installation, the panels have produced 56 megawatts of energy, saving the Society \$12,600 in electricity costs. And, the solar renewable energy credits (SREC) we earn have provided an additional \$13,900 in revenue.

A year ago we joined a community solar project located in Clarksburg, MA through Co-Op Power in Florence. Our share of the energy produced by the project is credited to our electric bill. We then pay Co-Op Power 85% of those savings and keep 15%. For the 12 months since joining, we have saved another \$750 in electricity costs. Between our panels and the community solar project, 97% of our energy usage was generated by renewable sources in the last year.

Both of these projects were initiated by our Climate Action Group.

Submitted by Dave Nelson

Please Welcome Our New Music Director, Lemuel Gurtowksy



Lemuel Gurtowsky is a pianist and composer living in Hadley, MA. He works as a staff accompanist for UMass Amherst, Smith College, and the Springfield Symphony Choir. He is also the musical director of Act Too Studio's opera workshop, a summer program for teens based out of South Hadley, MA. As a composer and songwriter, Lemuel has toured extensively, performing at The Music Hall of Williamsburg (NYC), Reading and Leeds Festivals (UK), and SXSW (Austin, TX). His songs have appeared on NBC's Parenthood and MTV's Fantasy Factory. Lemuel received his master's degree in collaborative piano from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst where he studied under Nadine Shank, and holds a bachelor's degree in music theory from The Hartt School in West Hartford, CT. He will be joining USNF as our Music Director in late August.

REPORTS & ARTICLES

Looking for a Summer Read?

Members of the Racial Justice Task Force Will Lead Book Discussions in July and August

JULY - *Waking Up White*, by Debby Irving 291 pages

Waking Up White is the book Irving wishes someone had handed her decades ago. Sharing her sometimes cringe-worthy struggle to understand racism and racial tensions, she offers a perspective on bias, stereotypes, manners, and tolerance.

She also explains why and how she's changed the way she talks about racism, works in racially mixed groups, and understands the antiracism movement as a whole. Exercises at the end of each chapter prompt readers to explore their own racialized ideas. *Waking Up White's* personal narrative is designed to work well as a rapid read, a book group book, or support reading for courses exploring racial and cultural issues.

Facilitators: Corky Klimczak and Chris Mohn

AUGUST - *Red at the Bone*, by Jacqueline Woodson 196 pages

This is an engaging and moving family story about hope and dreams across the generations, beginning with the coming-of-age/Sweet Sixteen ceremony for Melody.

Jacqueline Woodson goes back in time to tell the story of Melody's parents and grandparents, showing how they arrived at this moment, and revealing their ambitions and successes along with the costs and the tolls they've paid. A beautifully written exploration of identity, ambition, gentrification, education, race, class and status, and the life-altering facts of parenthood.

Facilitators: Nancy Sardeson and Rev. Janet Bush

Exact dates to be determined. Please email Jessica dre@uunorthampton.org or Janet minister@uunorthampton.org if you are interested.

Quarterly Update of USNF Member/Friend Directory

It's time once again to update our member/friend directory. Let us know of any changes in your contact information; name, address, email, home and cell phone number(s). RE families are also invited to have their contact information included in the directory. Please email any changes or additions to office@uunorthampton.org.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Why Wizard Camp?

Hopefully by now you've heard that USNF will be offering a School of Wizardry for kids from age 5 through 17 this summer: <https://uunorthampton.org/education/usnf-school-of-wizardry>. Some of you might be wondering what in the world this has to do with Unitarian Universalism or religious education. UU Harry Potter Programs are somewhat common, not because Harry Potter is a secret Unitarian Universalist (perhaps he is?), but because religious education is a chance for kids to learn about things that matter to them and explore their values in a fun, engaging way.



Many kids love entering a world of magic and wizardry (many grown ups too!). Creating this engaging, imaginary world allows kids and youth a chance to think and reflect about who they are and what their values are.

Each day of the School of Wizardry, the students will explore a value such as power, respect, justice, possibility, and hope. Each house represents a virtue: peace, love, faith, and hope. In house meetings and classes, students will consider how they may live these values and virtues. As the students build their sense of community and togetherness in their house, they also consider how they can embody these important values in their lives.

One of my favorite things about religious education is that the curriculum can change and adapt for the students, the teachers, congregations, and lives of the people involved. It is a chance to play and explore, rooted in our 7 Principles, values, and community. As Jenn Blosser, the Director of Religious Education at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fort Meyers (our partner for Wizard School) says, "There is something really sacred about play." Students and teachers together get to jump into a new world, rooted in deep reflection, inspiring the search for truth and meaning.

If you would like to find out more about the School of Wizardry or help out, email dre@uunorthampton.org.



Summer Family Faith Development

Please reach out to Jessica with how we can best support your family this summer. Would you like family activities? Sunday morning kid and youth classes? Weekday kid connections?

Fairy house by Seamus Sullivan.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

JUNE: WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Monday through Thursday at 4 pm: Story Time with Jessica and other adults in the community. Come together with other kids and families to check in and connect. We will light a chalice, check in, play a game, and share a story with reflection on the themes and ideas. Here is the link to join: <https://zoom.us/j/880344797>



Tuesday at 2 pm: K-3 Introduction to D & D. Play together in this game led by a junior youth student. Email dre@uunorthampton.org for links.

Wednesday at 3 pm: 3-4th grade art club. Weekly art projects led by youth and a young adult. Email dre@uunorthampton.org for links.

Thursday at 5 pm: D & D for youth and junior youth. Email dre@uunorthampton.org for links.

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

All of our services in June will inspire a celebration of our children and youth. On June 7, eighth and ninth graders we'll celebrate a year of Coming of Age class with a service. Over the course of the year, they have engaged in conversations, activities, group building, and community service projects to help them explore who they are and what they believe. You will get to learn more about this from their "I Believe" reflections at the Coming of Age service.

On June 14, the youth group will share a service they have been working on for most of this spring. Lastly on June 21, our flower service will celebrate all of the students and teachers who worked so hard to make this year possible. Thank you all for your help, involvement, and support of our USNF Faith Development Program.

Our 4th through 8th grade class will continue from 11:15—12:15 every Sunday through June 14.

Would you like a reading or study buddy for your child? We have adults in our community that want to help out over Zoom. Email dre@uunorthampton.org.

Jessica's Office Hours

Join me on Wednesdays from 4:30-6:30 pm to check in, say hi, and connect: <https://zoom.us/j/254449462>

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Older Adult OWL: Body Image

June 12th 1:30 to 3:30

RSVP to dre@uunorthampton.org for Zoom links

For participants age 50+: We will consider body image, aging, self-esteem and sexual self-efficacy, while working to reframe negative messages. The workshop offers reflective activities that encourage honest and compassionate views about the body and aging. A key element of this exploration is the idea that a more positive body image empowers older adults to make decisions based on their own self interests, rather than trying to please others.

Youth Group

Annie Doran

Youth Group is still rocking our Wednesday Hangs and Sunday Youth Group meetings (virtually, of course!). Our June 14 *"In This House, We Have Feelings"* worship service is well underway. We are learning new skills and adapting to organizing techniques in this virtual world! It should be a fun one, so tune in on June 14. Please encourage children to tune in, too!

We are having a lot of fun planning our alternative to the annual youth group camping trip. This year we will have an "Extreme Self-Care Virtual Youth Group Weekend!" We are making our own lists of what extreme self care looks like (and tastes like) and will plan on doing (and eating) many of those things during the weekend extravaganza. Since it is virtual, we will check in with each other often to report back and share more deeply. It will most likely happen after school ends, so no one is stressing about homework (or writing worship service sermonettes). Perhaps this will be a YG tradition starting this year (not replacing camping, of course)!

Young Adult Group

Annie Doran

With so many unknowns in our community, at UNSF, and in our own lives, we have postponed our visioning and planning session until September. If anyone would like to connect, share ideas, or share stories, please get in touch with Annie at youthfulUSNF@gmail.com.

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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

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JULY/AUGUST *PIONEER* DATES

Deadline: June 25

Publication: June 30

*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 am - 3 pm
Contact the Society at (413) 584-1390. Visit us online at www.uunorthampton.org.**