



The Flaming Chalice

The newsletter of The Unitarian Universalist Community Church
69 Winthrop Street ~ PO Box 8 ~ Augusta, ME 04332-0008

Winter 2022-23

Worship at UCC

In the Jan 4, 2023 E-blast, Rev. Christina wrote (in part):

The Worship Arts Team has been working marvelously and diligently for many moons creating worship for UCC. As you may know, I am only “half-time” which means that the worship folks are responsible for two to three services per month in addition to helping me create the services when I am in the pulpit. Bravo to each one of them.

We need some more Worship Arts Team members to help with all aspects of worship. Even if you are not keen on speaking in front of the congregation, there are many other worship tasks: tech support, planning services, creating worship scripts, finding guest speakers, making the sound system more efficient, brainstorming themes, creating alternative worship services, and more.

I know many of you reading this are already participating in the many ministries at UCC. However, if you do have time and feel working with me and the Worship Arts Team will bring you satisfaction and joy or help you grow, please reach out to me. If you think of someone you know in the congregation who may be interested, send me their name.

Worship is at the heart of congregational life. It is the one day each week we all come together for connection, music, spiritual reflection, inspiration, and to serve the greater community. In some way, as Rumi says, worship is about love. Without worship there would be no church, without church there would be no community. Worship is the most important ministry at UCC and possibly the most interesting. It takes up most of my time as your minister as well as many volunteer hours. Hopefully Sunday worship stays with us throughout the week sustaining us, remembering us, as The Rev. Dr. Gordon B. McKeeman reveals in the following:

Worship need not cease.
It can echo in our lives,
in our words,
in our deeds,
in our moods,
in our dreams.
Carry worship with you wherever you may go.
Be a blessing in your going out and your coming in.

Many blessings in the New Year!
Rev. Christina

Worship services are being held IN-PERSON in the Sanctuary.

***** Please see the E-blast for information about upcoming services. *****

If you want to watch the livestream of the service, please visit:

<https://boxcast.tv/channel/mtifpthOutvesiqgijej>

If you missed a service or want to watch a service again, the link above also allows access to prior services. Click on the play button on the video of the “broadcast date” you are interested in watching.

Minister's message

Dear Members and Friends of UUCU:

As January begins and the nostalgia of the holidays starts to fade, I arrive in winter. Although the days will get longer and the temperature is unusually warm, winter's chill will eventually settle in. More time inside, less growth outside, the impending snow, all call us inward to reflect on our lives, practice self-care, be creative, and pay attention to the small things that make our hearts sing, like crow, as Robert Frost eloquently reveals in his poem *Dust of Snow*.

The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree
Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.



I have always loved crows. I am paying more attention to them. Every time I am working at home in the late afternoon, I watch and listen. About an hour before the sun sets hundreds of crows gather in the stark high branches of the many trees behind my house. It appears they are having a meeting. Cawing in their ancient language as more and more of them fly to join the murder. When I hear crows caw, I am filled with energy and hope for a new day. Crow reminds me I am not alone – I am connected to the earth and the creatures and my fellow humans. It seems everywhere I go crow is there. I remember seeing crows gather in Israel. The crows in the Middle East and Europe are Hooded Crows. Cultures and religions assign different meanings to crow, some see crow as an omen, some as a blessing. Mythologies from all over the world based on crows are plentiful. For me crow is not good or bad, crow just is. The more I pay attention to one of the world's most intelligent animals; the more tuned into the mystery I become. Crow helps me pay attention.

I often see a crow scavenging alone or soaring from one telephone pole to another. The blackness of the crow makes me feel safe in my independence. For me crow symbolizes both the autonomous surviving self and the interdependence of community. During the spring, summer and early fall, crow life tends to be centered around small family groups which forage together during the day and roost together at night, usually separate from other crow family groups. In winter, however, most crows will roost at night in large communal roosts, often containing many thousands of birds, who gather from a wide geographical area. Humans are similar. We can be loners and territorial and we also need others. We gather in small groups and large groups. We like soaring alone through the day or week, but we cannot survive without each other. This is one of the reasons we come to church – for community. Community sustains me – family, friends, church, my spiritual groups all support my ability to be alone especially in the bleak midwinter.

I love how Native American healer, Sandy Pouncey, describes the medicine of crow. "Crow is the left-handed guardian. Crow knows the unknowable mysteries of creation and is the keeper of all sacred law. Crow is also the guardian of ceremonial magic and healing. In any healing circle, Crow is present. Crow guides the magic of healing and the change in consciousness that will bring about a new reality and dispel "dis-ease" or illness. You can rest assured whenever crows are around, magic is nearby, and you are about to experience a change in consciousness. Crow can give you the courage to enter the darkness of the void, which is the home of all that is not yet in form."

What is not yet fully formed in you? What, in you, needs healing? One thing for me that is not fully in form and needs healing is my heart. Morning meditation helps. I work with breathing, loving kindness, healing through geometrical forms, receiving information from my guides, and resting my awareness in the center of my chest. I often hear crows outside when I sit on my cushion.

Spring will eventually emerge, and the warmth and color will return. For now, in these next few months of winter, let us allow our communities to give us the strength and courage to delve into our hearts, into the last bits of darkness so that healing magically occurs, and our inner light shines brightly back towards the community. Let us cultivate our hearts to praise not to blame, to understand not to judge, to forgive not to admonish, and to love not to hate. Just like crows gather just before dusk, let us keep being drawn back to each other through the light of our hearts. Then perhaps we can shine our light on the people and places in the world that need our attention.

Many blessings on the New Year!
Reverend Christina



CROWS by Mary Oliver

From a single grain they have multiplied.
When you look in the eyes of one
you have seen them all.

At the edges of highways
they pick at limp things.
They are anything but refined.

Or they fly out over the corn
like pellets of black fire,
like overlords.

(Crow is crow, you say.
What else is there to say?)

Drive down any road,
take a train or an airplane
across the world, leave
your old life behind,

die and be born again—
wherever you arrive
they'll be there first,

glossy and rowdy
and indistinguishable.
The deep muscle of the world.

Reconciliation Process leads to UCC Congregational Covenant

News toward the Creation a UCC Congregational-wide Covenant

One recommendation from our Reconciliation Process was for our congregation to develop a Covenant to guide us in our interactions with each other. The Board is happy to announce that a Covenant Writing Group has been formed to undertake this important work. Those volunteering are Ed Democracy, Allison Foust, Hilary Neckles, Jean Sizelove, and June Zellers. This Group will begin by using the information from our Water Ceremony at Ingathering Sunday and the notes from our first two Sharing Cafés.

The Covenant Writing Group will begin its work in early January. The Board anticipates that the Group will present its “work in progress” at a Sharing Café early this spring, providing yet another opportunity for congregational input. After that opportunity, the next draft will be presented to the Board. If you would like additional information before the Group convenes, please contact June Zellers at jzellers@roadrunner.com.

Notes from the UCC Board of Trustees

Dear Congregation,

We are an engaged, vital, and growing community. Since the Restorative Justice Sessions with Rev. Paul last spring, we have been implementing several of his recommendations and coming up with some of our own processes. I am proud of us for doing this most important work of community building at a time when community is so needed by so many. Here are some of the highlights of which many of you have participated, planned, or will attend:

Monthly Sharing Cafés - when we meet monthly in small circles often facilitated by Board Members and the Committee on Ministry. During these sessions, we discuss meaningful topics, often, related to the sermon. By allowing us to explore the topic more fully we get to know one another more deeply, building trust and growing in community with one another.

Congregational Covenant: At Reverend Christina's first service in September, we created a list of the attributes and values we hoped to foster in our community. Then, at a subsequent Sharing Café, we explored and expanded on these concepts. Now, we have a body of work that will be considered as a group of five will soon come together to create a draft of what will become our Congregational Covenant.

Fire of Forgiveness: In early December, Reverend Christina guided us through a beautiful ritual where, outside with a roaring fire, we contemplated the idea of forgiveness not only in relation to our church community but including ourselves, our families and anyone in our lives we could benefit from offering forgiveness. Then we placed our sticks carrying our intentions of forgiveness into the fire and sent them into the universe.

Nonviolent Communication Training: With the awareness that we all will benefit from improved communication skills, on Sunday, February 5, 2023, in lieu of a Sharing Café, we are invited to attend 2–3-hour session where we will be led in skill-building exercises by Leah Boyd – a certified trainer with the International Center for Nonviolent Communication, professional mediator, group facilitator and communication skills trainer. This will be an enriching experience – watch for details in an upcoming E-Blast.

On a personal note, serving as President of the UCC Board is an unexpected gift to me. I feel so deeply connected to this community, I love working with the Board, and Rev. Christina brings us vibrant energy and depth of experience at just the right time -helping us get to the next level of community connectedness.

The surprise is that, just as we as a community have our work to do, I occasionally bump into a place of vulnerability or personal growth, while carrying out various church responsibilities, that makes itself known to me in ways or times that can be unsettling. And then I remember, our development as spiritual beings having human experiences never ends -thank goodness. Grateful to be on this journey with you.

In loving gratitude,
Michaela Loisel, Board President

Updates from Lifespan Faith Formation

Cheers for the New Year Everyone!

First, I send you a warm smile of Thanks for all the donated gifts for the December Family Violence Project Holiday Program! The gifts brought much comfort & joy during difficult times.

We join together in this 2023 New Year together, building on our 2022 fall experience with our church fully open! It is wonderful to be in the Sanctuary together again - singing too! - and sharing coffee fellowship indoors. Please save the date, January 15th, for the start-up of Fellowship Lunch (formerly Elder Lunch)

following Sunday Service. Contact Marilyn Dunn to help or for more information at maine2007@hotmail.com or 512-5382.

This fall I have been busy with our Membership Committee members reorganizing & revitalizing our committee responsibilities, vision & goals! We are excited & enthusiastic to continue this work throughout the new year. I have also been supporting & assisting Helen Zidowecki and the Communications Workgroup reviewing, revising & updating parts of our church website.

Our Social Justice Committee is planning their February 12th Sunday Service - I am honored & excited to collaborate with them & their important work around the 8th Principle! In February of 2021, some members of the Social Justice Committee and I attended The UU New Day Rising Event that centered around the 8th Principle, what other Social Justice work congregations are involved in and their pathway towards adopting the 8th Principle. Here is an opportunity to experience this amazing zoom event and its wealth of SJ resources/connections again at the UU 2023 New Day Rising Event! Here is the Link: <https://www.uua.org/central-east/calendar/new-day-rising-cer-2023> (A suggested registration donation of \$10, \$30 or \$50 is asked for)

Breaking UUA news:

On Dec. 8 2022, the UUA Presidential Search Committee announced it has moved forward the nomination of the Rev. Dr. Sofía Betancourt for UUA President. The new president will assume a six-year office in summer 2023, replacing Rev. Dr. Susan Frederick-Gray, who was elected to the role in 2017.

Here is a link if you would like to read the Rev. Sofia Beetancourt's Biography:

[Presidential Search Committee Nominates Rev. Dr. Sofía Betancourt for Unitarian Universalist Association President](#)

For more UUA News & Connections:

<https://www.uua.org/central-east/blog/opportunities-123>

<https://www.uua.org/topic/news>

The Mid-Coast Religious Exploration Leaders & I continue to meet each month. We are brainstorming some youth and family outings for the Spring! I am optimistic & looking forward to sharing more as plans unfold.

“A seed today is a forest tomorrow.”
— Matshona Dhlwayo

Sowing the seeds,
Monique

**** NEW ** CLFF initiates the Unitarian Universalist Connections**

Unitarian Universalist Association Connections

Coordinator of Lifespan Faith Formation (CLFF) initiates the Unitarian Universalist Association Connections (UUA Connections)!

The UUCC is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations. The Coordinator Lifespan Faith Formation has established UUA Connections to consolidate, coordinate and disseminate information received from UUA. Any of us may receive information and relate to UUA: UUA Connections delineates this work within UUCC in several areas.

Connecting with the UUA: CLFF works through UUA Connections to collaborate, educate and enrich working together to strengthen Unitarian Universalism. We can start by being familiar with the

UUCC website section About Unitarian Universalism (<https://augustauu.org/visitors-newcomers-and-membership/about-unitarian-universalism/>) and toward the bottom of that section, see Unitarian Universalist Association (<https://www.uua.org/>) and the New England Region (<https://www.uua.org/new-england>)

Participation in General Assembly, the annual meeting of the Association, could be coordinated through UUA Connections. General Assembly June 21 - 25, 2023 is held online and in-person in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In addition to details of attending, the UUA looks for input from congregations throughout the year. Which actions we take, when and how, can be coordinated by UUA Connections.

UUA concerns of interest to UUCC: CLFF will guide defining UUA initiatives so that the respective roles, resources and responsibilities for various activities would be clear and collaborative. For example, this is a year of study and revision of Article II of UUA Bylaws. The Study Commission is intently asking for interaction with UUs individually and as congregations in this revision process. (<https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/article-ii-study-commission>) UUA Connection could make the congregation aware of this generally. However, focus on the Eighth Principle, also part of Article II, is being undertaken through Social Justice, coordinated through UUA Connection.

Communications and Publicity are coordinated by the CLFF: notices of immediate interest may appear on the Home Page of the website under Special Notices with links to more information, in E-Blast and The Flaming Chalice (Newsletters) and other announcements. UUA Connections itself will appear on the UUA website under Minister/Staff/Church Life. Scroll down to the last section, UUA Connections.

The UUA Connections focuses on these functions: Connecting with UUA, defining and collaborating with UUA concerns also of interest to UUCC, and communicating events, and concerns and actions.

Contact: Monique Bergere, Coordinator of Lifespan Faith Formation

Updates from Music Director



MUSIC AT THE UUCC Winter 2023

The UUCC choir and orchestra are so excited to be creating music inside the sanctuary. Music Sunday was a great success and an enriching experience for all!

The choir and orchestra plan to combine forces again for Stewardship Sunday 3/5 and Easter Sunday 4/9. We have already begun the planning process for these services and we cannot wait to start rehearsing the music!

Choir rehearsals will resume on Wednesday, January 4th from 6:00pm to 7:30pm inside the sanctuary. Returning indoors with the support of the acoustics in our beautiful sanctuary and the fabulous grand piano bring us great joy! N95 or KN95 masks are required for all singers, these masks are available at the front entrance (Winthrop Street) when you arrive to choir rehearsal.

The UCC choir and UCCOO (orchestra) are eager to share music with you that will lift your spirits and invigorate your hearts and minds. We are always welcoming new members! If interested or have questions, please email Bridget Convey at: musicdirector@augustauu.org
All are welcome!

Updates from the Church Administrator

By Lynn Smith

Off we go into a new year... but first... MANY THANKS for the gifts and cards that I received this holiday season. I really appreciated the gifts and the warm thoughts and wishes for the season and beyond!!

Over the last few months, many changes were happening in our community that affect this office. Technology and office equipment was changing, we had considered upgrades to our wireless network. We looked for a new cleaning company and a new copier and have now transitioned to these new services. As COVID-19 restrictions were lessened, the church awoke: groups were reconnecting in the church and on Zoom and events and renters were beginning to return to our spaces. Schedules were constantly changing as groups tried to identify a new space and time that would now best serve their group participants. More calls than ever were received from the wider community seeking help with food, gas, rental assistance, etc.

While some tasks that are normally done in the office have been shifted to other groups or individuals, it seems that other tasks and priorities have just absorbed the expected free time. I suspect that the "free time" will be more available now that some of these larger and immediate priorities have been finalized.

Some office updates:

Our shared Google workspace has been working well for the Worship Arts Team to track service participants and information, collaborate on preparing Orders of Service and supporting visiting ministers. Thanks to Karen Allen our Worship Arts Chair, Rev. Christina and all the members of the Worship Team. This team has been doing a wonderful job of identifying a wide variety of worship leaders for compelling and interesting services each week that Christina is not at the pulpit. It is undoubtedly tiresome work! I hope that there is some response to Rev. Christina's call for new team members (see Worship section of this newsletter on Page1).

Our copy machine has been updated with a newer model and we are continue to work through the kinks.

We have hired a new cleaning company that is doing good work keeping our buildings clean. We may need to continue the search to find a cleaning company that can "do good work" for a price that is a bit more budget friendly. If you know of any cleaners that might be interested, please let me know.

Technology has been improved after a faulty laptop was refunded and we purchased a new laptop. The new laptop is working well for the worship team but still needs some fine tuning to work with the OWL device to allow for hybrid gatherings. We will continue to address any issues.

I will begin working to expand the shared google workspace with the Membership Team as we review and better our process to welcome and connect newcomers to our church and manage our membership, friend and visitor lists.

We will ultimately make use of the unlimited domain email addresses in our new Google Workspace as we increase access to allow groups to manage and communicate better with its participants.

The transition to Breeze has mostly stalled after the data transition was unsuccessful and some questions surfaced about the program's ability to handle fiscal year accounting. Months have passed as I have struggled to find the time required to return to this important project. As soon as year-end processing is complete, this work will become a huge priority. If you want to see more about the features of this powerful system, feel free to visit the Breeze Church Management website at <https://www.breezechms.com/all-features>.

Pastoral Ministry Team Report

Pastoral Ministry Team Report

The Pastoral Ministry Team and Reverend Christina held our annual Quiet Refuge service in mid-December to honor and share feelings of loss that so often arise during the holidays. For me, this service has become an integral part of the season, a recognition that, to quote poet William Blake, “joy and woe are woven fine.” In all seasons, the members of the Team are available to talk one-on-one with anyone who may benefit from compassionate listening and presence.

The work of the Pastoral Ministry Team in recent months has involved maintaining connections with community members in need and providing meals, rides, errand runs, and cards. We have also provided longer term support for a few people facing ongoing challenges. Because support services are short-staffed as we all try to return to “normal” in the wake of the pandemic, our need for volunteers, particularly to provide rides and run errands, has increased. If you can help with these services for church members and friends, please contact me.

In Faith,
Martha Pelletier

COVID-19 Advisory Group Message

All of us are totally exhausted with hearing about COVID and we yearn for the return of our “old normal”. Looking around as we visit grocery stores, malls and other commercial sites, we are very aware that hardly anyone is wearing masks anymore. The message we are continually receiving is “the world has moved on” and that COVID “just isn’t that big a deal anymore”.

We are in the waning days of 2022, nearly three years since the first cases of COVID-19 were arising in central China. So much has changed during those three years, AND some things are distressingly the same. Airborne viruses are still very much with us and are, in fact, multiplying and thriving.

The COVID virus continually mutates creating new variants that disguise themselves in clever ways to avoid our immune systems. BQ 1 & BQ 1.1 are two of the newest variants and are now responsible for most COVID infections in the US. For healthy, young people these newer variants do not seem nearly as deadly as the original virus.

Unfortunately, COVID has morphed into a serious disease primarily for older people. Age over 65 is the single greatest predictor for serious illness and death from COVID-19. In fact, more than 90% of COVID deaths occur in people over 65. Currently more than 300 Americans are dying every day from COVID, that’s about 100,000 people a year making COVID America’s third leading cause of death. Since Thanksgiving, hospitalizations, ICU admissions and deaths from COVID have all increased significantly in Maine. Of the 17 Mainers who have died from COVID since Thanksgiving, all of them have been over the age of 60.

Due to near universal physical distancing and mask wearing during 2020 and 2021, many of us were not exposed to seasonal influenza or RSV (normally a respiratory virus infection in children) during those years. As a result, our immunity to these viruses has waned dramatically and we are seeing significantly increased virulence and infectivity this year, including many older adults becoming very sick from RSV. Experts are describing the surge of COVID, influenza and RSV as a “triple-demic” and it is filling hospitals and ER’s with very sick people.

Fortunately, there are very effective steps we can all take to reduce our personal risk as well as protecting our neighbors from these viral infections.

1. Get your flu & bivalent COVID booster shots (they are very effective in protecting you from severe disease or death).
2. Wear a mask in group settings indoors to protect yourself & those around you.
3. Hand washing or using hand sanitizer are both particularly helpful against flu & RSV.

All of these nasty respiratory viruses are spread via an airborne mechanism. Unfortunately, UUCC does not have a functioning ventilation system to remove or dilute these virus particles. Throughout the spring, summer and early fall, we relied upon opening windows and doors to help ventilate our building and reduce the risk of respiratory virus transmission. In early September, with cold weather approaching, the Board voted to appropriate funds to install HEPA (high efficiency particle air) filters in the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall. These filters can trap airborne particles as small as 0.1 micron (virus size) and are the next best strategy to ventilation for reducing the risk of respiratory infections. The installation of eight (8) HEPA filters in the Sanctuary and two (2) in the Fellowship Hall was completed in late September.

In late September, the Board advertised & convened two (2) Listening Circles (one in-person & one on Zoom) to elicit feedback from the congregation regarding relaxing COVID safety precautions for in-person gatherings. The single most unifying theme to emerge from that exercise was the strong desire for the congregation to resume singing during worship services. Somewhat less than one third of participants were in favor of making masks optional during worship services. Based upon the responses from these Listening Circles and the clearly expressed desire for our services to remain as inclusive as possible while emphasizing Community Safety, the Board voted for the following changes:

1. Universal masking in the Sanctuary, hallways and bathrooms.
2. People wishing to sing need to wear a N-95 or KN-95 mask (provided for people needing one).
3. Masking is optional in the Fellowship Hall.
4. Eating and drinking would resume in the Fellowship Hall including coffee hour, lunches and dinners.

The COVID-19 Advisory Group has not needed to meet since early October, but remains an ad hoc group available to advise the Board when the need arises in the future.

The COVID-19 Advisory Group

Betty Cairn
Terry Cairn
Harry Grimmnitz
Don Naber
Cathie Nielsen
Marty Soule

Communications Work Group

The amount of activity within this community is exciting! It is probably more noticeable because we are emerging from the restrictions of the pandemic and trying to navigate back into relationship.

And it is not the same as it was three years ago: we have introduced 'virtual' as a gathering format; we have experienced caution related to infections and what prevention means, and we have been isolated in various ways (such as not being with loved ones in times of illness). Maybe we have become more hesitant to rejoin groups in the same way as previously. So this requires more understanding of where people are in the 'reentry' process.

This raises the importance of communications. We all can make connections smoother. Think of these things:

The calendar is on the website to help you and your group with scheduling meetings and events initially AND changes that may occur in format (in person to zoom, for instance; hybrid), timing and cancellations. Once you decide on a time/venue, etc, be sure to contact the Administrator for posting. Events are posted when the office is open – so please plan early and often!

We participate in parts of the community -- within the context of the larger community. Your focus may be on a specific committee or program. Is the congregation aware of how that is part of the total life of the church? When was the last article in a newsletter or the E-Blast? Sometimes we may think that others are aware of our work, yet how have we been part of making the work of the group known?

In communicating what we are doing, providing some background might help identify your work. If there is a report, where is it available (such as links electronically or contacting a specific person or the church office)? None of us are involved in all parts of the church community, but we can all be aware of the parts that comprise the whole.

Do you give feedback on the work that you are doing? If you have held a specific event, what was the result? Who attended? What was the outcome? This feedback starts the next initiative. Indeed, people may look forward to what comes next if they know the results of your efforts.

A critical part is talking so that others can understand. Jargon and abbreviations may be 'inside language' that breaks the flow of communication when we need to stop and decipher details. Admittedly, however, people are coming to understand what UUCU zoom and Boxcast mean --and that the connecting information is in the E-Blast. So the jargon can be helpful, if mutually understood and clarified when it leaves a puzzled look. Communications do get tricky!

So welcome to the partnership of communication. May we bring clarity and receive clarity as we interact. And may this be a gift to ourselves and others in the upcoming year.

Communication Work Group: Lynn Smith, Church Administrator (admin@augustauu.org), Kathy Kellison and Helen Zidowecki

Worship Arts Team

Greetings from the Worship Arts Team! How wonderful it is to sing in the sanctuary again, whether in the choir or the congregation. Please wear a KN-95 or N-95 mask if you wish to sing. Masks are available at the church; if you need one be sure to ask as you come in.

We have been working on improving the sound for broadcast. We now have a second over-ear microphone, and the handheld mic has been adjusted to make it easier to use and to hear. Thank you for your patience as we continue to refine our technological systems.

We have heard that some feel that announcements can run too long or disrupt the worshipful atmosphere at the end of a service. To speed and smooth the process, we are asking that announcements be written out and given to the Worship Associate to read. Paper and pencil will be available. You may hand your announcement to the Worship Associate before the service or place it in the plate during the offering. We appreciate your cooperation as we make this change. Some special announcements may be made by others but that will be an occasional exception.

Finally, if you know of someone who might be a wonderful guest speaker for worship, please contact Christina or a member of the Worship Arts team. We are open to suggestions!

Wishing you many blessings in the New Year,

Karen Allen

Chair, Worship Arts

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee has oversight of multiple areas of the church's fiscal health. We are in the process of creating a covenant for the committee that clarifies our relationships with each other as well as our relationship with the church community that we serve.

Finance:

- We have a carryover of \$15,941 from FY 21-22.
 - The Board approved utilizing \$7,500 of that carryover as a line item for the Settled Minister Search process in a revised FY 22-23 Budget.
- Thanks to the diligence of Nancy Fritz & Wick Johnson, the church has received the \$7,955 tax credit from the IRS under the Employee Retention Credit provision of the CARES Act.
- The committee formulated and the Board approved an updated version of the UUCU Rental Rates. These were last revised in 2018.
- The committee is reviewing proposals for the church to receive all of its electricity from renewable solar energy sources.
- FY 23-24 Draft Budget:
 - The committee reviewed the budget for the current fiscal year and began updating line items for the coming fiscal year.
 - A 5% cost of living increase was proposed for our staff.
 - Following the January Finance Committee meeting, the draft budget will be forwarded to the Board for its consideration in establishing the stewardship goal.

Stewardship:

- Our stewardship chairs coordinated our Annual Appeal letter which was sent to members & friends of the congregation. Once again, a \$6,000 match from an anonymous donor is available to supplement our efforts.

Fundraising:

- The November pie sale generated \$789.05 in sales (\$189 more than budgeted).
- The Holiday Boutique held in the beginning of December raised \$1,759 (\$759 more than budgeted).
- The Hannaford card program remains in full swing and has raised \$2,000 for the church so far this year. If you haven't participated, you should talk with some of the many members of our church community who do
- The CLYNK program is running smoothly with \$400 already donated from returnable bottles.

Planned Giving:

The Board approved the Guide to Holistic Stewardship which brings together the various ways of contributing to the success of our church both financially and by contributing time and energy. This will be reviewed by the committee annually to ensure that it remains up to date.

The UUCU Finance Committee:

- Betty & Terry Cairn – Stewardship
- Marilyn Dunn – Invested Funds
- Allison & Karen Foust – Fundraising
- Harry Grimmnitz – Chair
- Nancy Fritz – Treasurer
- Wick Johnson – Planned Giving
- June Zellers – Member at Large.

History Committee

The times, they are a changing.....

A time of change is opportunity to look at what we bring forward from the past, even in a new way.

ELDER LUNCH TO FELLOWSHIP LUNCH

The *Flaming Chalice* announced the First Elder Lunch on Sunday, October 25, 2009. According to Dan Sorensen, this originated from a conversation between Dan and Rev. Lee DeVoe, Interim minister (2007-2009). He introduced the lunches to offer opportunity for older members of the congregation to have informal conversation and maintain contact. The time was set as daytime, and related to another major community event, the Sunday service.

The definition of 'Elder' was left to the individual. Over time, the ages of participants seemed to be less of a concern than the desire for community. There was a core group involved in organizing the lunches. One of the consistent organizers and advocates of the lunch was Marilyn Dunn, until the lunches ceased due to COVID - 19 in March 2020.

And then comes the welcome announcement in the December 7, 2022, E-Blast from Marilyn Dunn: Fellowship Lunch is starting the third Sunday of January. There are a few changes: that now we have one Sunday service so that the lunch replaces coffee hour rather than following a second service, and that the volunteers can watch a stream of the service as they prepare! Welcome to the new crew and the broader focus of fellowship "in the style of our pre-covid Elder Lunch"! Thanks, Marilyn – and to those who are joining her-- for keeping this tradition of fellowship alive in a new way.

ONE TO TWO TO ONE – AS TIMES CHANGE

Throughout the history of Winthrop Street and All Souls UU churches in Augusta, there seemed to have been one service on Sunday morning. In 1990, All Souls, which was housed in a house/converted studio on King Street, expanded to two services to accommodate a growing membership. This followed into the consolidation of the congregations into UUCU in 1992. Demographics and culture changes and church attendance gradually declined – a trend with many churches. There were some suggestions of possibly returning to one service. Well, this was decided for us with the onset of COVID-19 when we were not able to meet in the church at all.

And in this period, there was the introduction of electronic services, namely zoom. We entered into a new way of relating, with its advantages and disadvantages – disturbance in personal contact. As the space was reopened to allow limited numbers, we made the services accessible also through live streaming. We are still working through the various ways of experiencing worship together. And with our looking at how we connect throughout the community, it is hard to imagine that we would return to multiple in person services in the near future – but we are becoming more aware of multiple formats available for connection.

SO AS 2023 APPROACHES, consider what we are bringing with us into the future because of continuing value, although maybe in a different way. The times, they are always changing!

History Committee: Richard Bridges, Chair; Heide Munro, Helen Zidowecki

Small Group Ministry Updates



The Sunday morning service on December 11 celebrated Twenty Five Years of Small Group Ministry and Ten SGM Services at UUCU! This continued reflection of the place of Small Group Ministry within the life of UUCU that was the focus of the Fall (September 2022) newsletter.

During the December 11 service, we explored the 'elements' or core parts of Small Group Ministry and suggested that they could be the 'building blocks' that we are discussing for UUCU as we move

forward. Thanks to the participants from the five Small Groups who reflected on these core parts, why they were important, and the impact for individuals, the groups themselves and the larger church community. The following are available on the UUCC website:

The livestream of the service. <https://boxcast.tv/channel/mtifpth0utvesjqgijej>

The script of the service with presentations

Building Blocks of Small Group Ministry, The insert in the order of service.

<https://augustauu.org/minister-staff-and-church-life/small-group-ministry/sgm-basic-elements/>

We have received several inquiries about joining/rejoining Small Group Ministry!

If you are interested in exploring this, please send us the following information for planning:

Time you are available for meetings: daytime, evening, specific days of week

Available: in person, virtually (zoom or hybrid)

Composition: group randomly selected (usually be time availability), men's group, women's group, mixed group

Other consideration or questions that you have:

Also contact us if you are interested in being a Group Leader.

We would like to work on placements in groups after the holidays.

Please contact us regarding your interest with responses to the questions, or other questions.

We look forward to hearing from you by **January 13!**

Groups set their own time and location for meeting, and times may change to accommodate participants. Presently meetings are: 2nd and 4th Monday 6-8pm; every other Monday 6:30pm; 1st and 3rd Wednesday 10:30am; 1st and 3rd Thursday 10am; varies on the schedules of group members.

Small Group Ministry Leadership meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 29, 11:30-1:00pm from the Fellowship Hall, by hybrid or zoom. SGM participants are welcome, and we look forward to introducing new/returning members. Agenda will be available mid-January.

Small Group Ministry Contacts: Linda Findlay (linda.findlay@gmail.com, 377-8028); Helen Zidowecki (hzmre@hzmre.com, 582-5308)

Information about Small Group Ministry is found on the UUCC website at:

<https://augustauu.org/minister-staff-and-church-life/small-group-ministry/>

Social Justice Committee

Social Justice Committee

Co-chairs: Mary Kane and Debbie Mattson

The Social Justice Committee has multiple focuses; some of them are distinct for this church year, most of them are on-going.

1. 8th Principle: We want to acquaint the congregation with the 8th Principle—the meaning of it and the on-going action it requires of us. The 8th Principle has not been adopted by the UUA although it has been adopted by many UU churches. It is a Principle about “Beloved Community” and the need to undo racist practices and other practices that marginalize people and are barriers to a truly inclusive community. If the congregation begins to embrace the 8th Principle, we will ask the congregation to adopt it.
2. Involvement in Social Justice: We will continue to help both the congregation and individuals become involved in social justice activities. We will explore links that already exist between individuals in the congregation and social justice movements as a method to help other people become involved. Current members of the Social Justice Committee are involved in the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network, Capital Area New Mainers Project, Kennebec Advocacy Team, Meals on Wheels, UU the Vote, and various other actions.

3. Share the Plate: Each month an offering plate is circulated during the Sunday service for a specific organization that promotes social justice through their actions.
4. Reverend Carie Johnsen Social Justice Fund: Each year the Social Justice Committee chooses an organization to receive \$1,000 from the Rev. Carie Johnsen Social Justice Fund. The Social Justice Committee is active in growing the fund. It is now self-sustaining; but as the funds grow, we will have the capacity to financially assist with more social justice work.
5. Social Justice Responsiveness: We will respond, to our capacity, as need and as opportunities present themselves.
6. Collaborate with the Overnight Warming Shelter: We are seeking opportunities to assist the South Parish Congregational Church in their ministry to unhoused adults. They are able to provide overnight shelter 7 nights per week. Help is needed with food, clothing and outer wear, bedding, and cleaning chores. The shelter is closed from 7 AM to 7 PM; and although there are day services, there are gaps in the services. We are exploring ways we may help fill some of the gaps.
7. Grow the Social Committee: We hope more people will join the Social Justice Committee.

A Special Report from the Social Justice Committee

Day in the life of overnight shelter guests...

Two members of the Social Justice Committee, a board member, and our minister toured the Overnight Warming Shelter at the South Parish Congregational Church prior to its opening. The shelter is a renovation of the section of the church that used to house the RE program. It now has dorm rooms with cots for overnight guests, a gathering room, and an office. At the time of our visit blankets were needed; the board member brought 5 beautiful, handmade quilts.

Now it is open and operates at capacity (24 guests) every night. A member of the Social Justice Committee visited the shelter to learn from the guests about gaps in services during the day. Twenty-four people were in shelter the night of the visit; needs vary from one person to the next. And, every guest is impacted by gaps in services.

The shelter operates from 7 PM to 7 AM. The shelter guests leave at 7 AM after coffee and self-serve breakfast of cereal and toast. Between 7 AM and 9 AM there are no day services for the unhoused. Some people go to the laundry mat, others spend a \$5 gift certificate at Dunkin Donuts, one meets her friend and dog for one-hour, some walk around to stay warm. All of them are waiting for a place to open and welcome them. It maybe Lithgow Library at 9 AM, LINC Center at 9 AM, Augusta Recovery Re-entry Center at 10 AM, Warming Center at 9 AM.

The Bread of Life serves lunch from 11 AM to 1 PM Mondays through Fridays; local churches provide a meal to go on Saturdays from 4 to 5:30 (when asked where they eat this meal; they say, "The street.").

The hours between 4 PM and 7 PM are challenging, day time services end at 3, 4, and 5 PM. There are no food services on Sundays between 7 AM and 7 PM and LINC, Lithgow, and the Warming Center are closed.

The Social Justice Committee is exploring possibilities to help bridge some of the gaps in services. If you are interested in helping please email Debbie Mattson debbiemattson@hotmail.com or Mary Kane marykane072@gmail.com.

Read, Learn, Share Book Group

We often say that books open doors or are windows on the world, or that books widen our horizons. And there are many more trite references to how books affect our lives. It is true that books can be powerful influences.

I have been reader almost as long as I can remember. I've had doors opened and horizons widened. I must say, however, that joining a book group has opened even more doors and windows and made my horizons even wider. I can only bring my knowledge, my experiences, and my biases to the books I read. That means there is an inevitable limit on what I find there. It is this limited view that I take with me and offer to the group. That is me doing my part as a member.

What happens in the discussion is that eight or nine other people do their part. I see the book through their eyes and find my knowledge, experiences and biases broadened far beyond what I can do on my own. I have read books I would have ignored that I am glad to have read. I have developed a deeper appreciation for language, an awareness of themes I completely overlooked, understandings of character which were hidden to me. I can and do read on my own, and I have discovered that reading and sharing with others is even better.

I invite anyone who is intrigued by reading to consider visiting our Read Share Learn Group on the first Thursday of the month to join the adventure. Choose one or all of our remaining titles for this year and drop by. We are currently meeting in person in Fellowship Hall and at the same time in the church zoom room using OWL technology. We will be discussing the following books:

THE LAST WATCHMAN OF OLD CAIRO by Michael Lukas on February 2, TO MAKE MEN FREE; A HISTORY OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY by Heather Cox Richardson on March 2, THE MIDCOAST by Adam White on April 6, MILL TOWN; RECKONING WITH WHAT REMAINS by Ken Arsenault on May 4 and finally ONCE THERE WERE WOLVES by Charlotte McConaghy on June 1.

We look forward to seeing you!

Kathy Kellison

GODDESS/EARTH CIRCLES

The meetings of Goddess/Earth Circles are generally held on the fourth Sundays, 1pm (except October and May). These will be by UUCU zoom during the winter. Other formats, such as in person and hybrid, may be tried in the spring. Location is noted with the meeting announcements in the E-Blast.

Women from UUCU have been crowned in various locations and women's UU events since the 1990's. In March 2012, Maggie Ricker requested to have a Crowning ceremony at UUCU. October 30 was the tenth continuous Women of Wisdom (WOW) celebration, of which crowning ritual is a part. Thanks, Maggie.

We have added Remembrance of participants who have died. On this tenth anniversary of the WOW celebration, we remember five of the twenty-four crowns from UUCU: Alice Gifford (Died April 19, 2017), Mary Perkins (Died Oct. 24, 2017), Lois Whitcomb (Died Jan. 16, 2020), Ruth Butts (Died May 26, 2020), Phyllis Cudmore (Died July 5, 2021).

We started sharing personal writings and quotes as part of the Women of Wisdom Celebration around Samhain since 2015. The WOW started with crowns. Others have participated --some younger and some who did not feel ready to be crowned — and expanded our appreciation of the wisdom inherent in all phases of our lives. Participants in Goddess/Earth Cycles are invited to share in the WOW Book, which is available to Goddess/Earth Circle participants.

The November 27 meeting was on Wisdom and Gratitude. We did not meet in December but suggest revisiting the Winter Solstice Service 2020 on light and dark, with readings, contributions from group members and pictures. This is available on the UUCU website

<https://augustauu.org/minister-staff-and-church-life/goddess-continuing/> and click on Archive, or contact Helen for a pdf.

The dates for gathering the rest of the church year, 1:00-2:30pm:

January 22 Imbolc (awakening of the earth) and planning session topics.
February 26
March 26 Spring Equinox
April 23 Beltane
May 21
June 25 Summer Solstice

Interest has been expressed for having a croning ceremony this spring. Contact Helen or a participant of Goddess/Earth Circles for more information and if you are interested in exploring croning.

We will also be considering topics suggested previously:

- Incorporating earth-based recognitions into our lives and at gatherings
- Incorporation of the concept of goddess and specific goddesses
- Other things that we want to continue exploring, items mentioned in the June Newsletter: "...Wicca as spiritual connection with the divine in nature, ourselves and life.... Transcendentalism and Naturalism (as part of UUism), dreams, Tarot and other divinations."

Material from the gatherings and more information is available. Contact Helen Zidowecki (582-5308, hzmre@hzmre.com). Material is on the UUCC website (Church Life, Goddess).

Peaceful Heart Sangha

We are a Mindfulness Meditation practice group in the Plum Village tradition. Our free gatherings are open to all whether you have ever meditated before or not. We meet online every Monday 6:30-8pm (except the last Monday of the month when we meet in person at UUCC). We also meet every Thursday 8-9:30am in person at River Studio, 332 Water St, Hallowell (except the last Thursday of the month when we meet on zoom). We continue to wear masks when we meet in person, to protect the more vulnerable in our community. Our gatherings include a 20 minute sitting meditation, Dharma teachings, a time for sharing, and other practices.

If you have questions or want the zoom link, please reach out to martysoule@gmail.com.

You can also join us for our special winter practice:



2023 January Intentions Practice

The dark, quiet beginning of the new year is an ideal opportunity to deepen our meditation practice and to experiment with new ways to bring our mindfulness practice into our daily lives. We are invited to look deeply to see what would nourish us, help us move closer to our deepest aspirations, and help us to gradually change the things that hold us back from happiness. Then for one month we are invited to practice with our personal commitment.

Let's consider what would be most nourishing for us to explore and then gather together online for our Opening Session, January 14 and Closing Session, February 11

You can also join us in this practice without attending the Opening/Closing

What practice would we like to add to our lives for the duration of one month?

Some ideas for practices that might nurture our growth could include:

A Mindfulness practice: eg Sitting Meditation, Walking Meditation, Eating Meditation, or a different Mindfulness practice - daily, weekly, or whatever fits - for 5, 20, or more minutes at a time.

Daily Life Mindfulness: To be fully present/aware as I perform one simple daily task, e.g. while brushing my teeth, feeling grateful that I have teeth

Study: To read/study a particular sutra, teaching, or book

Dharma Talks: To listen to one or more Dharma Talks during the month. Some resources include: The podcast, *The Way Out is In* (<https://plumvillage.org/podcasts/the-way-out-is-in/>), talks by Joanne Friday (joannefriday.com), meditations & talks on the free Plum Village App, talks by Michael Ciborski (TrueMiddleWay.org), etc.

Five Mindfulness Trainings: To mindfully observe my own behavior in light of one of the 5 MT during the month.

Practice: To attend a retreat or Day of Mindfulness or create my own home DOM.

Practice Generosity: To offer my time and resources to benefit others

Buddy Practice: To connect with another sangha member several times during the month taking turns to share about our joys & challenges in our lives and practice. If you are interested in this, please contact Christine calittledance@gmail.com and we can help you connect with a sangha buddy.

Sangha Gatherings: Plan to attend sangha &/or opening &/or closing session of the January Intentions

Sometime before January 14, we are invited to decide -

I would like to deepen my practice for one month in this way:

Unitarian Universalist Community Church
P.O. Box 8
Augusta, Maine 04332-0008

Newsletter Submissions

Submission Deadline for SPRING newsletter is April 17th

Submissions received after this date may not be able to be published.

Please submit all articles as an attachment in a Word document using Arial font size 11. Please do not submit articles in PDF format. Don't forget to give your article a title and sign it. Send an email to newsletter@augustauu.org with the article as a word attachment! ***Photos of church activities are welcomed! *** You will receive a confirmation e-mail of receipt of your submission.

Contract Minister: Rev. Christina Sillari

Board President: Michaela Loisel

Coordinator of Lifespan Faith Formation:

M. Monique Bergère

Choir Director: Bridget Convey

Contact information for Committee chairs and other leaders can be found in the UUCC directory or obtained by contacting the Church Administrator.

Church Administrator: Lynn Smith

Phone: (207)622-3232 or email:

<mailto:admin@augustauu.org>

Office hours: 8:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. (Tues, Wed & Thurs)

No office hours: Monday or Friday

Rev. Christina Sillari

Office Hours on Wednesday and Thursday

Call or email to set up an appointment

minister@augustauu.org

(207) 807-9232

Contact the minister for pastoral emergencies by phone. She will return your call as soon as possible.