



The Flaming Chalice

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

Spring/Summer 2020

A Virtual Community Gathers...

Sunday Morning Meditation

10:00 a.m.

Sunday morning meditation uses the traditional elements of Sunday morning worship services with a short reflection and time for small group breakout sessions to deepen the experience and nurture connections and relationships. The meditation themes focus on ways to keep the spirit of Life, Love and the Holy present in our homes, our breath, our acts of love and our justice seeking.

Wednesday Evening Meditation

With Rev. Carie Johnsen

7:00 p.m.

Wednesday Evening Meditation offers a time to pause, center in silence, spoken word, and community. The meditation lasts about 35 minutes and closes with an opportunity to share experiences and thoughts with the gathered community.

Until the Governor lifts orders on gatherings of 50 or more, our Wednesday and Sunday morning meditations will happen via Zoom videoconferencing. If you need assistance, setting up a zoom account, please contact us via the church office at admin@augustauu.org. We will be happy to provide a tutorial.

Your ZOOM Links and Numbers

Direct ZOOM Link: <https://zoom.us/j/8238070673>

To dial in: 1 646 558 8656

Meeting ID: 823 807 0673

Announcing our Soul Matters Themes for 2020-21

While it may be hard to imagine life beyond stay-at-home orders, it is also true that your professional staff team and minister are beginning to look ahead to next year's church calendar. We are making plans with a vision of flexibility as the guide. To that end, we are excited to announce the Soul Matters Themes selected with input from participating Unitarian Universalists congregations.

Sept: Renewal

Oct: Deep Listening

Nov: Healing

Dec: Stillness

Jan: Imagination

Feb: Beloved Community

Mar: Commitment

April: Becoming

May: Story

June: Play

A faith Journey...

The Church has left the building!

*Still, our ministry thrives:
in our homes, in our hearts, in countless acts of Love!*

*And, it is also true we miss each other.
We miss the familiar: the sanctuary we call home, the people we are bound to in faith,
the gathered community we call Unitarian Universalist Community Church.*

*Bound to this faith, this community, and these people in covenant,
we claim and we are claimed by our Unitarian Universalist
principles and values and, a Love beyond and greater than ourselves.*

*Yes the Church has left the building.
IN TRUTH, the Church has NEVER been the building.
The church is us: you, me, and we.
We are the Church!*

By the time this newsletter reaches your smartphones, computers and mailboxes, we will be in week eight of social distancing. No doubt we are all happy to do our part AND we may be a bit weary of this reality going on longer.

Ministering from my home office on Sewall Street was not what I signed up for. Nor did YOU sign up to be part of a faith community engaged from your home offices, living room couches, and kitchens tables. Yet, here we are! In our homes reaching out beyond ourselves to remain true to Life, Love, and the Holy; to remain connected, committed, and in covenantal relationship with the people of this uncommon faith.

While we all arrived at UUCC for different reasons, the thing we had in common was a desire to practice what it means to be human, to rise and fall with mercy and justice, to aspire generously, although imperfectly, to the glory of *Living the Grace of Love*.

The current lived reality of a Covid-19 world is a time of anxiety and fear. It is also a time of opportunity and possibility. Every day we witness the truth of both these realities in ourselves, in others, and in our community. These times remind us of our deep interdependence: our escapable web of mutuality. The stark suddenness of isolation and unknowing cast us into this fundamental truth: we need one another!

Overnight we shifted the course of our days. However reluctantly or fearfully, we showed up with all of our power and all our vulnerability. We quickly adapted to new experiences of community and new expressions of care and compassion. In these moments of growing together more resilient and strong, we exemplify the interdependently connectedness of a covenant of mutuality. This time of being alone together brings a transformative opportunity to be Beloved Community, to be the Church. I have witnessed countless ways in which folks keep showing up in fear and hope to bind us together in this moment for years to come. While some of you might respond with "what else are we to do," I say to you. "This is the best of humanity, this is a story of resilience, this is the grace of Love, this is the way of covenant. This is the Church: you, me, and we. We are the Church!"

So may it be in the days of unfolding and waiting and growing and keeping each other safe.

In faith,
Rev. Carie Johnsen

For those who would like to further consider the way of a covenantal faith, I offer you these resources.
[Choosing Mutuality: The Promise and the Practice of Covenant](#) by Joe Sullivan

Message from the President, UCC Board of Trustees

Message from Board President, Jill Watson

Dear Congregation:

As I write this, we are all under the state stay-at-home mandate dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. As I reflect back to just one month ago, it amazes me how many changes that we have had to deal with from learning this new thing called ZOOM to navigating the different ways to connect with others that does not include face-to-face physical contact, or “social distancing” as we are all familiar with these days. Even our shopping behaviors have changed with the wearing of facemasks and gloves, making sure to sanitize everything and of course, the endless washing of hands!

But we, as a faith community, are amazing! We are still meeting the needs of our community, while at the same time dealing with the daily concerns of our own families. During this past month, I was at the ER for pain and what ultimately turned out to be kidney stones. While I am still dealing with this issue, albeit without pain – thank God! – the number of cards, emails and phone calls I have received have brightened my days and filled my heart with gratitude. I truly am blessed to be part of such a loving community who has found alternate ways to reach out and touch those who are in need with a helping “hand” or a lift of the spirit. To everyone who have found ways to touch others hearts and lift up their spirits, I want to THANK YOU!

Please know that you are not alone during this pandemic, although it may seem that way with the social distancing. I want to thank Rev. Carie for setting up our virtual church service on Sundays @ 10am. If you haven’t attended, I would suggest you give it try as it has been a blessing to me on Sunday mornings and have helped maintain my connection to all of you (and I’ve gotten to talk with several people that I normally don’t get a chance to through the “chat rooms”). I also want to thank all our staff who continue to work throughout this pandemic to meet our ongoing church needs. Remember that your church community is here to help in anyway. If you have any concerns, please reach out to Rev. Carie or the board and we’ll hard to get your concern addressed. Also, know that your board of trustees & finance committee has not missed a beat during this crisis as they continue to oversee and meet our fiscal needs and goals.

I look forward to meeting, once again, as a congregation in our sanctuary when it is safe to do so. Until that time, stay healthy and safe.

Peace

Jill Watson
Board President

Letter from the UCC Board of Trustees

<Letter originally sent to all members and friends on April 30, 2020>

Dear Congregation:

In these times of uncertainty and the pandemic where we find ourselves under a stay-at-home order from the State, your Board has been working very hard to meet the ever changing needs and responsibilities that our church requires. We are finding that we are in uncharted territory for several pressing needs.

Below please read about our upcoming June annual meeting, updates on our congregational healing and financial status.

Annual Meeting

The Board has been discussing our upcoming annual meeting which, according to our bylaws, is to be held on the first Sunday in June. After consulting with two lawyers, Linda Conti & John Pelletier, the Board learned that our bylaws do not prescribe how we are to proceed in the event of an emergency, such as we find ourselves in at this present time. After a discussion of the pros and cons of a Zoom annual meeting, it was agreed that we would hold a special congregational meeting to propose delaying the annual meeting to a later date when we are able to meet again in person. We also agreed that we would rely on the UCC Covid-19 advisory group to make the determination of when we are able to meet again in person.

The special congregational meeting is planned for Sunday, May 17th at 11:00 a.m. via Zoom. The agenda of this special congregational meeting will include:

- Delay the annual meeting until such time that we can safely gather again in person (specifically, to hold the annual meeting no sooner than 30 days and no later than 90 days from the time the Governor allows in-person gatherings of more than 50 people in Maine with the UCC Covid-19 advisory group making the final determination of the meeting date);
- Continue with the same leadership slate in the interim period; and
- Continue the current budget until the annual meeting is held.

Congregational Healing

Your Board also had a long discussion on the next steps in the congregational healing and systems repair work and agreed that any external consultant needs to be from the UU faith. We also acknowledged that there are varying anxiety levels within our congregation due to the pandemic. We want to make sure our efforts are thoughtful of relieving rather than raising anxiety levels. In addition, people are experiencing trauma while dealing with this global pandemic and may not have the energies to engage in these healing efforts at this time. With these thoughts in mind, we continue to want to fulfill our responsibilities and hear congregant recommendations for the best way to rebuild covenantal relationships and trust.

Your Board agreed that the next step includes having a small group consisting of members of the Board of Trustees and members of the Committee on Ministry work with the UUA to clarify what approach should be used along with what are some potential goals and expected outcomes. After this step, the small group will bring their work back to the Board to help with planning to include the entire congregation in the work.

Financial Impact of the Coronavirus

Board members reviewed the March Treasurer's Report and then focused their attention on likely impacts of the pandemic on our church finances for the remainder of the current fiscal year. Treasurer Nancy Fritz reviewed a financial analysis that she prepared for the FY 19-20 budget (covering the period of July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020).

Total anticipated income for the year is \$223,360. Our approved annual budget anticipated income of \$247,924. Reasons for the lower projected income include: some folks may not be able to pay their full pledge amounts; some fundraising activities will likely not happen (spring concert, garage sale, for example); and there is no Sunday morning offering income while our buildings are closed.

Total anticipated expenses for the year are \$232,900, compared to the approved budget of \$246,268. There will be budget savings in building maintenance / supplies, heat, snow removal, cost of cleaning service, nursery care, religious exploration, and some other program expenses.

These changes will result in a possible deficit of \$9,500 for this current fiscal year. However, there is some good news. UCC has applied for (and received) a Paycheck Protection loan available as a result of recent federal legislation. We were eligible to borrow up to \$29,000 to cover some payroll and utility costs during this time. The loan will be forgivable as long as we retain our current staff positions and use the money as intended by the legislation.

Anyone who would like additional information about the status of this year's budget can contact Treasurer Nancy Fritz at nfritz@roadrunner.com or Finance Chair Catherine Palmer at palmercatherinemaine@gmail.com

The Board of Trustees also reviewed the status of the Stewardship campaign currently underway for supporting next year's budget. The pandemic and the greatly altered ways in which we are currently living has slowed the campaign progress. We encourage everyone who is able to submit their annual pledge for the FY20-21 fiscal year to send the pledge to the church office as soon as possible.

You can mail your FY 2020-21 pledge card to UUCC, P.O. Box 8, 04332-0008 or, if you are in the area, you can drop the pledge card in the mail slot at the Summer St. entrance to the church. If you has misplaced your pledge packet, please send an email to admin@augustauu.org to receive a new card. Our pledges comprise the biggest portion of our annual income (nearly 70%) so we need results of this year's campaign in order to finalize a budget for next year.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or need clarification on this letter. My contact information is Jill Watson, Jillwatson223@gmail.com or call 458-4437 or

Peace and healing thoughts for all of you and for our nation.

Jill Watson
Board President, on behalf of the UUCC Board of Trustees

News from Religious Exploration

It is humbling to hear all that you are dealing with and learning about all you are doing to support your families, friends and wider community! I am reminded of our UU words:

*This is the faith of the open mind
This is the faith of the helping hands
This is the faith of the loving heart*

I received a wonderful Religious Exploration resource from The Soul Matters UU Sharing Circle that centers on creating a Chalice Space in our homes to support and center us during challenging times such as now with Covid-19. Each week has a theme and an element we add to our home Chalice Space paired with a family worship activity. With the weather improving (certainly very gradually this April - come on May!) I plan to encourage creating an outside sacred space. These spaces offer us a place for reflection, prayer and healing. You can feel safe there and retreat away from a hectic world. It is a space where you can be spiritually present with those you care for and you may be missing. You can find joy, love and purpose there to rejuvenate.

OWL 7-9: I am in the process of organizing a few closing OWL 7-9 sessions via Zoom with OWL instructors Gary Chapin and Terry Cairn. They will be fun and interactive! You will hear from us in the coming days with some dates/times.

SAVE THIS DATE: **Sunday, June 7th** has just been set aside for our annual RE Bridging! We will be celebrating our Graduating Seniors and our OWL 7-9 Youth. How this will happen is creatively evolving and we will keep you updated!

I will be exploring a new amazing and fun UU program for our teens! It is called *The Fifth Dimension* and it uses episodes of *The Twilight Zone* to tackle a diversity of social issues and prejudices. In each session we will watch an episode together (via Zoom right now) (doo doo-doodoo🎵) and afterwards engage in discussion

and activities designed to encourage deep contemplation of the issues. Did you know that *The Twilight Zone* creator, Rod Serling was a Unitarian?! I will be inviting our youth for a few sessions this season and then we will pick up again in the fall RE year. You will be hearing from me shortly as I finish tweaking accomplishing this through Zoom.

I will be meeting with our RE Committee Chair, Martha Naber and our members in May to continue planning our Fall RE programming with every creative contingency we can think of! We look forward to sharing our updates.

Let our hearts continue to sing together

*From you I receive
To you I give
Together we share and for this we live*

Monique

MUSIC AT THE UCC



On March 8th, the music program at the UCC welcomed guest soprano, Jennifer Bates, and our interim UCCOO director, David Morris, for Stewardship Sunday. The music was so uplifting and inspiring! Jennifer's voice floated with such purity, and David joined our tenor section for the beautiful anthem by Stephen Paulus, "Hymn to the Eternal Flame". Soon after our church services moved to Zoom, and our beloved music program settled into a less public existence.

Music is an intimate form of art and expression, sharing our voices and sounds with each other in real time, in the moment, is an essential part of being a musician. Collaboration, and ultimately relationship, are a large part of our world. Although we are not able to gather and share these moments, I look forward to when we get to create together again.

I am missing my UCC choir "peeps" (as I like to call them) at our weekly rehearsals learning new music and our Sunday services together. In the meantime, we have explored what technology can offer; online music resources, silly videos, practice tracks, inspiring music, and checking-in with each other.

I look forward to choosing new choral music for our 2020-2021 season, this process will begin soon. I will be referring to our Soul Matters themes and research the bounty of choral music that continues to evolve in the universe! The choir will have their traditional summer break, from mid-June until late-August. As the UCC continues to follow the Governor's recommendations, we will see if our beloved music program will resume before our summer break, stay tuned.

I am thankful to be well and enjoying time with my family. Our dogs, Frankie and Pepper, are thrilled to have the whole pack together on a daily basis! My husband and I continue to navigate homeschooling and care for Myles, as we both need to work from home. My parents are both well, my mother (85) and father (87), are taking this in stride. My father is getting fabulous care at the Maine Veterans Home in South Paris, and we enjoy our FaceTime sessions with him. My mother is enjoying SO much alone time, while my brother, neighbors and I, continue to offer support from afar. I know she misses her visits with my dad.

The UCC choir and UCCOO 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, please email Bridget Convey at: musicdirector@augustauu.org.

All are welcome!

Update from Rev. Claire Curole, Community Minister

It seems like more than two months since I last led worship in Augusta, but it really was only the beginning of March when we shared the "Gospel According to Mushrooms" -connectedness, interdependent relationship, transformation.

Little did we know then that we'd soon find the world turned upside-down by a virus, something too tiny to see and yet large enough to disrupt our lives so suddenly and so completely.

But here we are, staying connected, building those relationships, and figuring it out when everything we thought we knew about what to expect has been set aside and we have more questions than answers. And as we do, we - ourselves, our community, and our world - are being transformed.

We are growing into whatever happens next.

I continue my ministry as a chaplain at Mt. St. Joseph (Waterville) and Maine Medical Center (Portland.) Unlike many of us, my work has not changed a lot - there's just more of it: listening to nursing home residents who are anxious about family in the community, or frustrated by the strict isolation rules that are in place to limit the spread of illness, if it should occur; comforting hospital patients who cannot have family or friends to visit; assisting facility staff to balance their own fears and sorrows with the critically necessary work of caregiving in stressful situations.

That's what I and my fellow chaplains are doing through all of this -- along with our day to day lives navigating spouses working from home, family concerns large and small, getting the studded snow tires off the car in time, baking bread and paying bills and trying to stay connected to our own faith communities.

One of the pieces of staying connected, for me, is gathering a Ministerial Formation Team whose role, as described in the Winter newsletter, is to support a newly credentialed minister serving in a congregation: by meeting regularly, about once a month, to talk with the new minister about issues related to their ministry; and to assist the community minister in preparing fellowship renewal paperwork by offering appropriate feedback. I'd originally planned to begin our work this spring, but now I look forward to getting that group assembled soon in order that we may begin our work in the fall. I hope that if invited to serve, you will consider this opportunity to share in professional community ministry.

Peace,

Chaplain Claire

Finance Committee Update

Our Treasurer, Nancy Fritz, estimated in early April that our current budget for 2019-2020 would show a pandemic-related deficit by June 30 of about \$10,000. About the same time, the Federal government announced the "payroll protection" stimulus for small businesses and non-profits. With the backing of the Finance Committee, Nancy immediately applied to the SBA on our behalf.

The UCC was approved for a federal "loan" of **\$29,700**. This money was deposited into the church's operations account within days of our application at the Kennebec Savings Bank. This federal money, if we apply it ONLY to UCC payroll and campus utilities by June 11, will convert to a grant (not a loan). The Finance Committee will Zoom-meet on May 7 to fine tune exactly how to apply most, if not all, of these funds.

As you know, our 2020-21 Stewardship campaign is also in full swing. To date, \$122,655.84 pledge dollars have been committed by 57 pledge units.

Lastly, the Finance Committee tabled a discussion about whether to conduct an online UUCC annual auction with donated items.

Submitted by Catherine Palmer, Chair, Finance Committee

Communications Work Group

The focus of this edition of *The Flaming Chalice* is on the revolutionary changes that have occurred with the covid-19 outbreak, how UUCC as a community of faith has responded, and reflections for moving forward. *The building has been closed but Church is open!*

The March 4 E-Blast announced many meetings and activities at UUCC! A week later the March 11 E-Blast announced disruption. The Board had created the Ad Hoc Covid-19 Advisory Group of medical professionals from the congregation that outlined the changes in the usual way of doing things, like being served at fellowship hour and finding alternate ways to connect than holding hands for the closing. The March 18 E-Blast announced cancellations of long-established events like Stewardship Campaign events and concerts. It noted additional changes: staff team working remotely, Pastoral Ministry Team developing ways to connect with congregants and moving to virtual communications with ZOOM.

Communications: In a time of change and uncertainty, communication is even more critical. The main publication for activities and information about the ongoing work of the community remains the E-Blast that is sent electronically on Wednesday afternoons. With additions to its usual functions, the Board took on the Stewardship Campaign and created Ad Hoc Covid-19 Advisory Group. Letters and reports have been sent to the congregation around these activities.

As the crisis was unfolding, Rev. Carie started sending out communications on spiritual connection and being in community in a different way several times a week. Look for “Virtual Opportunities for the Week” Sunday nights, “News from the Pastoral Ministry Team” and “Spiritual Reflections and Community Connections” during the week.

Activities within the community changed to using the virtual path via ZOOM. On March 22 when Sunday Worship changed to Sunday Morning Meditation, with participants connecting from their own homes. Added to readings, a reflection, and music was the breakout sessions of up to about 5 people for several minutes as a way of maintaining the community connections.

Few activities were cancelled. Some events have been delayed or rescheduled for a later time. However, a significant number of ongoing activities have continued via ZOOM:

Seasoned Souls

Sangha on Monday and Thursday evenings, with some additional programs

Small Group Ministry

Read, Learn, Share with Kathy Kellison

Yoga with Debbie Mattson

Goddess/Earth Circles

With the postponement of the Social Activity Dinner and Movie planned for March 20, Dale McCormick, Gary Chapin and Debbie Mattson instituted the Friday Night Social on March 27. They have incorporated activities expected in a physical setting into the virtual environment. Likewise the new offerings listed below, with the date started, engage participants in activities during the session.

(Mar. 26) Writing to Wake the Soul with Debbie Mattson (Thursday, 10am)

(Mar. 27) Friday Night Socials: Dale McCormick and Gary Chapin for movies, Open Mic Poetry, Charades This weekly event was in planning as the pandemic hit.

- (Apr. 6) Read Aloud & Discussion with Martha Naber (Monday, 1pm)
- (Apr. 23) Home Alone Coffee Clutch with Nancee Campbell (Thursday, 9am)
- (Apr. 28) DIY (Do It Yourself) Series with Cheryl Clukey (Tues. 4pm)

My apology if events were missed. New activities are welcome for one time or ongoing. As you create events or schedule meetings, please give information to Lynn for inclusion in the E-Blast. These are also noted in Rev. Carie's Virtual Opportunities.

Technology has two distinct parts. One is the electronic meetings, namely ZOOM. It has been interesting to hear pros and cons about the switch to ZOOM. Certainly there is the loss of being physically present. On the other hand, it makes gatherings possible that would not happen otherwise in a way that we can see and hear each other. People are helping each other with devices from which they can connect and learn the process. It seems that the UUCC community has moved quickly into the ZOOM phase. For this period of time, all of the activities mentioned are via ZOOM. *People are encouraged to connect by phone if video connection is not available.*

The second thing about technology is the diversity in experience and expertise. We have about five regular communications being sent electronically weekly from the office and the minister in this time of high need for connection. Not everyone has ready access to the technology: they may not have own computer or options for places to connect are presently closed, such as libraries. The phone tree is available for people who do not have e-mail and want to receive some of the items. *We all can assist in making sure that others receive information.*

Please reflect on the happenings in the UUCC community in the last two months and what the future may hold. How has it been for you?

*Notice how, individually and as a congregation, we have become more aware of people who live alone, changes in people's abilities to get things that they need when usual means are not available, the complexity of wellbeing and how things change. May our sensitivity increase our compassion as a community.

*Notice the intention of the multiple ways we can and do connect with those we know and those we may not know. We seem to be calling people – more people, more often, sometimes for longer and maybe deeper conversations. May we make the practice of connecting a more integral part of our involvement with this faith community.

*Notice our ability to learn new ways of being as ZOOM has brought us into homes, and connected people to the community setting. We learned at different rates, in different ways and to different levels of comfort. May we continue to learn new ways of doing things within UUCC.

*Notice how you have been connected to UUCC during this time. What have you given? What have you received? What have you missed?

Please continue noticing as we move forward into a future that will be different from what we had before covid-19 and with care will continue to provide what we all value at UUCC.

Pastoral Ministry Team – Changes in the Ways we Communicate

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pastoral Ministry Team has changed how we communicate as a team and how we communicate with our church community. Instead of meeting monthly, we now meet weekly, on Zoom, to share updates and concerns about members who may need companionship and care. We have increased our outreach and have organized volunteers to be phone companions to friends in the church.

For those living alone or feeling alone, we are offering a new fellowship opportunity, the Home Alone Coffee Klatch, which meets every Thursday from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. for casual conversation. In response to other needs, The Caring Cooperative continues to run errands and provide calls, cards, and meals. During this

time of sheltering at home, we are checking in with more individuals in an effort to meet increased need for all these services.

To help us maintain a sense of community, Reverend Carie is now emailing weekly “News and Updates from the Pastoral Ministry Team.” Included are names and contact information for those facing particular hardships, resources to contact for financial help, for face-coverings, and for our usual support services. Additionally, the updates list contact information for all Pastoral Ministry Team members and members of the Ad-hoc COVID -19 Advisory Group, which is also standing by to offer compassionate care.

The Pastoral Ministry Team has increased communication through virtual meetings, broader telephone outreach, and weekly emails in order to better serve our church community in these unsettling times. The emotional challenges of social distancing, of securing food and medicine, and of managing changes in routine have affected all of us to some extent. The Pastoral Ministry Team is here for you, just a phone call, text, or email away.

May you be safe and well.

Martha Pelletier, Chair of the Pastoral Ministry Team

Home Alone (Or Feeling Alone) Coffee Klatch emerged from a Pastoral Ministry Team reflection on the number of parishioners who are living alone or feeling alone. Bring a cup and us come from your homes via ZOOM each Thursday from 9-10am. This is a time for casual conversation to stay spiritually connected while physically separated.

--Nancee Campbell

Seasoned Souls

Seasoned Souls Growing Stronger! Nancee Campbell

Seasoned Souls is a group of members and friends of UUCC aged 65+ who have been meeting as a support group for several years. The fellowship, concern and care that has emerged from this group has influenced its members and has become a vitally important method of communication and connection in this time of social distancing.

Seasoned Souls is an open support group, and they currently meet via Zoom on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month at 10:30 a.m. If you are aged 65+ and feel the need for company during this stressful time, please feel free to join *Seasoned Souls*. They will bring an element of companionship to your days and remind you of the blessing that is UUCC.

Small Group Ministry Updates



During these trying times The Small Group Ministry Committee has met by ZOOM several times. Our annual year end Appreciation Gathering for group facilitators is on hold for the moment pending the stay at home policy being lifted. While the committee wishes to be able to gather these folks around food and thanks for their leadership this church year, we certainly don't want to put folks at risk if it is not yet safe to "return to normal". So stay tuned as the picture seems to change almost daily. We will contact SGM leaders by phone to give you an update on if or when we can have our year end gathering. In the meantime, keep reaching out, hold your zoom meetings, continue to be there for each other, and stay safe!

Our seven groups have kept in touch with their members and share their ongoing lives under self-quarantine situations. Five of the groups have had meetings electronically, some members joining by video and some by

phone. This has been a learning experience with technology itself and a new way of being together. There is increasing comfort in the process the more that it is used. One group noted they have received a gift in the increased capacity to allow connection but emphasized the need to balance virtual with actual personal meetings when restrictions are lifted. Consideration of the many facets of isolation has brought appreciation for various ways the disruption impacts us physically, emotionally and spiritually. This also has brought awareness of the many ways we can help and be present with each other.

If you would like to join an existing group or possibly a new ZOOM group, please contact Linda Findlay (linda.findlay@gmail.com, 377-8028).

Small Group Ministry Committee Member: Linda Findlay, Judy Gallant, Michael Conley, Helen Zidowecki

Social Activities – Cheryl Clukey

Yes, isolation has certainly affected and changed certain areas of my life. For instance, I am sitting here writing, dressed very informally. But I digress.

Social Activities had a variety of spring activities and presentations to look forward to...but.... unfortunately we had to cancel 4 activities I was excited about: Whaling in Maine and New England; FRED the AFGHAN DOG, The story of a Marine who saved a dog and brought him home (quite a story); wool felting class, the 8th season of Dinner and a Movie. These will all be rescheduled.

Social Activities are important to creating different kinds of connections within our church structure, so I decided to offer virtual Social Activities with the use of ZOOM -- .UGH!! THE FIRST DIY (Do It Yourself) event happened April 28: Ice Cream in a BAG. My goal was to offer FUN, SCIENCE and ICE CREAM in an engaging and humorous way. Woo Hoo! How great is that?? These virtual DIY opportunities will provide a different, light hearted connection to those who wish to participate. The next DIY will be Artisan Bread...the way bread was made long long ago...Sooooo easy!

I have also been maintaining phone connections and food with 7 UUs. I have benefited from these phone conversations as a way of getting to know members that I didn't know very well before. Social Activity comes in many forms.

I am putting a call out to all our UU friends. We have all been self-isolating for 6 weeks and I don't know about you but I'm getting pretty damn sick of myself. I am asking that we start keeping journal/log of what we have been doing for those six weeks: What has brought us comfort and what has brought us frustration? How we handled being lonely if we lived alone? How did we waste our days? Did we move from being lonely to MAYBE transforming that into getting to know ourselves and welcoming the solitude? Did u watch 'everything' on Netflix? Did you learn a new skill? How many times did you not put pants on? How many days did you not changed out of your pjs? Did you try to have conversations with your pets or try to teach them how to play gin rummy...and have them walk away? Are your pants so tight u can't feel your legs? What have you really missed? What have you learned about yourself? WELL, you get the idea...use any media you wish: photos, poem, journals etc. They might be humorous, filled with frustration, sadness, etc.

When this is over, I will schedule a Social Activity to share and laugh at ourselves and hug each other. We have all missed human connection and touch...I think..♥

Read, Learn, Share Book Group

Read, learn Share has Zoomed, as have other church activities. We had a successful discussion of Mink River in April and anticipate continuing with this format until church reopens. We have books in May and June to read and discuss. The book for May is Born A Crime by Trevor Noah and in June, the book is A Terrible Country by Keith Gessen. Anyone interested in either or both of these books is invited to join us.

Additionally, we are coming upon ballot season. In June we will collect titles from anyone who wants to suggest a book you think would lend itself to a good discussion. A ballot circulates to everyone who has expressed interest and we will use ranked choice voting to pick next year's titles. The winners will be circulated by email to those who vote and will be published in the fall newsletter. Submissions should be sent to June Zellers at jzellers@roadrunner.com.

READ SHARE LEARN meets the first Thursday of the month from 1-2:30.

A Message from Debbie Mattson

My plan was to leave Maine for a camping trip on the eastern shore of Maryland on March 14. As the day approached, it became more and more unlikely that I'd leave Maine. Plans changed and I ended up at Sugarloaf ski mountain the day the closed the facility. That was OK since I don't downhill ski anyway. But the area became deserted. Although I was on vacation, I was addicted to the news. I checked the internet over and over again for the latest updates on COVID 19. I learned I would not return to the University, the court, our church, or the homes of friends and family.

Church services and activities adapted to virtual. I was so excited, experiencing isolation, to attend the movie discussion on Friday night that I arrived via zoom a week early. There were another 7 days to wait for social interaction. Understanding my need motivated me to explore possibilities to connect and to opportunities for others to connect. I began by offering a zoom writing group to explore theological themes such as hospitality, hope, faith, and redemption. I was asked to resume the Wednesday night yoga class by zoom. With fear and hesitation, I agreed. Both the writing group and yoga are well attended and remain open for others to attend either as a one-time, occasional, or a regular attender.

I am grateful for the opportunity—the preparation and facilitation of both groups gives me focus and rhythm. I have joined other zoom activities offered by the church including the Sunday worship services. Participating is more than making the isolation tolerable, I am connected and in real time relationship.

Peaceful heart Sangha



March 2, 2020 celebration

Just a bit before we all stopped gathering at UUCC to protect the health and safety of our community, we celebrated our 12th year of mindfulness meditation practice as Peaceful Heart Sangha at UUCC. Our community, which began as a weekly Sunday morning meditation group in 2001, has evolved over time. Our most recent transition is that over the last 6 weeks we have met every Monday 6:15/6:30 – 8:00 PM and Thursday 7:45/8 – 9:30 AM via zoom!

We enjoy sitting and practicing with each other in the new format. We stop, calm, rest and heal together so that we can more wisely sort through what is most important for us to be doing at this moment in our lives. At the same time, we nourish our needs for beloved community and connection during the pandemic.

With zoom we are able to share our practice with friends (new and old) and members of other sanghas from all around Maine, Colorado, North Carolina, Ohio, and Brooklyn, NY! What a gift! We continue to have sitting meditation and a mix of special readings, recitations, audio/video sharings, musical offerings, deep relaxation, and special time for sharing from our hearts.

We are also reaching out via phone and email to check on sangha friends who have not been able to join us in our new format.

Please feel free to join us for sangha anytime! Write to peacefulheartsangha@gmail.com or martysoule@gmail.com for details.

GODDESS/EARTH CIRCLES

The Spring Equinox or Ostara celebration by the Evergreen Coven on March 21 and the Goddess/Earth Circle gathering on March 22 were cancelled while the earth itself started showing signs of rebirth. On April 26 Goddess/Earth Circles held a ZOOM session with the topic of “Kali and the Coronavirus.” I googled “goddess and coronavirus” and received the article “The Coronavirus is Here to Teach Us What We Need to Know – Let It.” Kali is the Hindu goddess of destruction and chaos who also carries a lotus, the bloom of hope, beauty and wholeness. We decided to let the Goddess/Earth Circles gathering on May 31 evolve as we move closer to the time.

Contact Helen Zidowecki for information and the material used at the March session.

A Note from Martha Naber – Read Aloud

Why did I offer to read aloud on ZOOM? Several reasons come to mind. The first is that I love to read aloud and believe it is fun and relaxing to listen to someone reading aloud. Nothing is expected of the listener, just to listen. The second reason is that I found a book I hadn't seen for a while on the shelf as we were gathering things to take with us to Florida. The title and content appealed to me, and I thought it might appeal to others as well. On our long trip back to Maine I read bits of it to Don which initiated some conversation. This is the third reason I offered to share this with others.

The book entitled Attitudes of Gratitude, How to Give and Receive Joy Every Day of Your Life by M.J. Ryan is the book I am reading to anyone who gathers to listen. As I read, others offer comments, share stories, talk about what this looks like in their life. We are getting to know each other in new ways. We are exploring what does this mean in light of the current times. And no one needs to DO anything to participate! We gather; I read; we talk. And we do the same the next week. Feel free to join us. We are thinking about possible books for when this one is completed.

Martha Naber

A Message from Dale McCormick

Community is why I do it

During the decade called the 1960s my life centered around the lesbian feminist community in Iowa City. Back then LGBTQ+ people were feared and existed at the margins of society, so we small band of lesbians created a community for ourselves with all the support systems of the mainstream culture. By building the bookstore, women's center, restaurant, women's clinic, women's press, newspaper, and political organizations, we forged bonds that still bind us.

Today my spiritual life, my friends, and my sense of belonging largely revolve around the Unitarian Universalist Church of Augusta.

So, when the pandemic reached Maine and the UUCC closed the church building to protect us and halt the spread of the virus, we were left with a big hole where all of the wonderful events, conversations, and support had been. I had to figure out a way to pull all of us in together remotely.

Early into the pandemic I called Rev. Carie to compliment her on her initiative at creating Zoom church for all of us. I'll never forget her response. She said she's good in a crisis and that it's one of her highest functions.

In that first conversation I offhandedly mentioned that in addition to worship, we ought to have a movie night on Zoom. The next thing I knew, I was hosting it and watching YouTube tutorials about Zoom so I could learn how to do it.

What I miss most is playing music with the UUCCOO (Unitarian Universalist Community Church Occasional Orchestra) and the choir. I've been searching for a program that will allow us to play music together remotely. A musician from Waterville suggested the JamKazam website, but alas, after hours and hours of trying to make it work, Marilyn, Gary, Stef, Cheryl and I could not even sing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star in sync. I'm not giving up. My next step is to invite a few musicians to gather outside and record it for Sunday worship. And if that doesn't work, I'll think up something else because the support of a community is something we all need, and amidst all this thinking and trying, I have felt connected to all of you.

The covid-19 crisis is drawing me to the classics, which seems fitting since we are living through an existential threat that will define our era. Yesterday I wrote an email to the orchestra urging them to watch *Tosca* on the Metropolitan Opera's free stream because *Tosca's* aria, Vissi D'Arte expresses an ageless complaint "I have lived for art; I have lived for love... why, God, do you treat me this way?" A lament that many of us have felt about covid-19.

Today King Henry's Saint Crispian Day speech from *Henry V* comes to mind. The King is urging his small band of surviving soldiers "once more into the breach" to defend England. He tells them, "We few, we happy few, we band of UUs;" will always remember this day. I changed the last word in the long tradition of UUs striving for gender equity and because we small band of UUs will also always remember how we stepped into the breach in the fight against covid-19. I hope Shakespeare won't mind.

Tomato Adoption Week is still on and begins May 24, 2020

It takes more than a virus to stunt Dale's tomato seedlings. They are growing well and will be on sale during the week of May 24th and available for curbside pick-up at the church. All proceeds go to the church so please plan on getting your tomatoes from the UUCC. There are all colors and sizes, early, midseason and late. Lovingly raised for you.

2020 Tomatoes

Regular Size

Red	Yellow	Black	Green	Striped
-Oregon Spring -Dester -New Girl	Moonglow -Moonglow -Speckled Siberian	-Black Krim	-Malakhite Box -Green Zebra	-Striped German

Cherry

Red	Yellow	Black	Green
-Sweet 100 -Juliet	-Jaune Flamme	-Black cherry	

Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) News

The Northern New England District Spring Assembly & Annual Meeting has been postponed until September 25-26, 2020. The current officers, board members and Nominating Committee will continue to serve until that meeting.

At the September meeting, top on the agenda will be the future of the NNED itself. Changes in the organizational structure of the UUA have left the NNED without staff. Despite a committed and active Board, we have come to see that the District as we knew may no longer be viable. The Board has spent two years looking at options and developing possibilities for the continued support of UU congregations in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.

Of paramount importance has been ensuring that the substantial endowment of the District continues to be used in accordance with the spirit in which it was given. Delegates to the meeting will hear about and vote on what we want the future to look like. More information about the programming and issues coming before the meeting will be available closer to the date.

The UUA's 2020 General Assembly is still scheduled for June 24-28. The Planning Committee and the GA staff at the UUA are working to create a completely virtual event. This is, of course, because of the pandemic so planning has only recently started and announcements are still pending with details. It is important to note that GA has many years of experience with streaming GA events and welcoming off site, on-line delegates. Therefore, they will be expanding an existing practice, not creating something entirely new. Many UU's are excited by this event because it will make GA less expensive and drastically reduce the environmental impact of 4000 people traveling to and staying in Providence.

Helen Zidowecki and David Rand are registered to attend as off-site participants. There is still time to sign up. Registration for off-site attendance is \$150.

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

Newsletter Submissions

Submission Deadline for FALL newsletter is August 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. 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 welcome! *** You will receive a confirmation e-mail of receipt of your submission.

Minister: Reverend Carie Johnsen

Board President: Jill Watson

RE Coordinator: Monique McAuliffe

Choir Director: Bridget Convey

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

Office Administrator: Lynn Smith
Phone: (207)622-3232 or email: admin@augustauu.org

Office hours: 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. (Tues, Wed & Thurs)
No office hours: Monday or Friday

Rev. Carie's VIRTUAL Office Hours:

Mondays and Wednesdays:3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

To schedule a visit, appointment, or meeting during these hour, contact Rev. Carie at 508-221-5295 or use her local # 623-3663 (both lines will reach her!) or you can also email her at RevCarieJohnsen@gmail.com

Monday is Rev. Carie's Sabbath. She does not attend to emails, phone calls or meetings. For pastoral emergencies please call her cell phone (508) 221-5295. She will return your call as soon as possible.