



The Flaming Chalice

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

Winter 2020-21

Worship at UUC

Sunday Services each week at 10:00 A.M. on Zoom

Information on Sunday services is included in the Weekly E-blasts.

Worship Themes

January	Imagination
February	Beloved Community
March	Commitment
April	Belonging
May	Story
June	Play

All services are held in the
UUC ZOOM ROOM ← ← **click this UPDATED LINK to join**
Meeting ID# 823 807 0673 - Passcode: 6971

Join by phone: dial 1 646 558 8656 (**NOTE:** toll charge may apply)

At first prompt (meeting id: 823 807 0673#)

At second prompt: press # (no personal id needed) <No passcode needed when joining by phone>

NOTE---*6 is mute AND un-mute on your phone. The host cannot mute or un-mute people who phone-in.

A faith Journey...

It is stunning to me that after all these years of spiritual practice, some weeks it seems, I am starting over anew. Just when I think I have a consistent practice to hold and ground and guide my being through the difficult and joyful days, something interrupts the flow. I am lost in the human proclivity to fill spaces with whatever is next on the list. Some days, pausing for a moment with divine mystery isn't even on my radar. Dutifully, at moments compulsively, I move from one deadline to another while simultaneously making my way to Sunday. I liken it to a moving walkway in the airport: efficiently, swiftly, mindlessly moving people on to the next destination.

Take for example, my practice of gratitude. Just this morning, I opened my gratitude journal to find I had not entered the deepest appreciations of my heart since Dec 2nd. That's two full weeks. Lost in a world of ministerial activity, I had forgotten to pause and connect my spirit to a practice of appreciation.

My spiritual meanderings since that last entry have been a bit like the highs and lows of the stock market. One day the sun is shining, my work is flowing, my day is balanced. The next, I'm dragging myself into the home office, a tried-and-true sceptic on a spiritual journey. All the while wishing I could just land on the couch with my steadfast pandemic pals - Netflix and AcornTV. I'm guessing I'm not alone. The darkness of winter, the pandemic deaths, the isolation of stay-safer at home, the injustice that rages on.

Beloveds, we're making it through the final month of 2020. The year when time went too fast and too slow all at once. The year of chaos and discourse that left us wounded, grieving, lost, amiss. The year when time went too fast and too slow all at once. The year of deeper collective awakening to the injustices around and within us. But, we made it. We're making it. Together. ~ [Cassidy Hall](#)

The sun has turned. The light will return. The vaccine is making its way into our communities. Blessed by the season of Advent with stories of hope and faith and love, we are reminded to recenter on what matters most. And this next week, once again, we will turn the calendar to a new year.

Cultivating a spiritual practice to guide our living involves commitment to a similar returning, again and again and again to the center of our being. Our mind, our bodies, our hearts, and our spirits are easily distracted. It is human nature. It is part of what we call the human condition. All of which is more reason to nurture beauty, joy, and delight.

Today, I am grateful for the wisdom within that keeps me turning back, again and again and again, to practices that sustain and connect. My gratitude list for today: a practice of stillness, sitting in silence, lingering into the day, and the comforts of nesting. A life-sustaining connection and relationship with a stellar circle of colleagues. The sweetness of my granddaughter who calls to say, "I miss you gamma. I love you. I want to see you. I want you to hold me." The wisdom of a child who listens to her heart and reminds me to do the same.

AND, I am grateful for you! Each of you! All of you! The people in this community who return again and again to their personal faith, their hope in humanities goodness, and their love of Unitarian Universalism. May we find in this New Year a commitment to covenant, to right relationship, to life, to love, and the holy. May we generously offer ourselves to the practice of cultivating the *Grace of Love* in ourselves, in our homes, in our families, in our communities, in our Church, in the world.

As we all settle into a winter like no other, what lifeline(s) and heart wisdom will nourish your days and guide your practices? How do you bring comfort to the weary winter soul? What wisdom calls you beyond yourself? What practice might shift your worldview toward beauty, joy, and delight?

May the wisdom of a child's heart and a muse's spirit illuminate the way.

In faith, Rev. Carie

UCC Board News

Happy New Year Beloved Community. I enjoyed my holidays in “my bubble” which included my husband and my Newfoundland dog, in a slightly wet but wonderful winter landscape that allowed me to seek out the holy. I hope yours was joyous and safe!

Allow me to give you an update on ongoing Board activities the as we enter the New Year.

Getting a bit of business out of the way please note that--at least while we are meeting virtually--**Board meetings will be held from 5:00 – 7:00 pm**, still the second Thursday of each month. This is a change from the traditional 6:00 – 8:00 pm Board schedule. Just a heads up!

At its December meeting the Board reflected on the powerful impact of the Committee of Ministry’s (CoM) three Listening Circles and applauded the effective facilitation by CoM leaders. Those participating, it seemed, were able to enter the conversation carrying their hurt and distrust and leave feeling heard and humbled. CoM is currently considering how to move on from the Listening Circles in a meaningful way.

The focus of the Board over the next few months will be outward facing with a goal of speaking with you, the congregation, transparently and to develop a healing and healthy narrative.

This will be done largely through action steps that have emerged from the work of the Congregational Engagement Working Group (CEWG), followed by Board sub-committee work. *(Thank you, Susan Caldwell for distilling all of these items!)*

The following action steps for moving forward are noted as voted on and prioritized (for now), by Board members:

1. Offer congregation-wide workshop(s) on conflict resolution. Focus on ways to engage constructively with those with whom you disagree. (Possibly offered by UUA – or seek their input as a starting point.)
2. Open Board/Congregant regular meetings offered to hear anyone’s concerns, ideas or suggestions. At least 2 board members to volunteer each time. (Consider some structure/theme or none? Same night as Board meeting or different? “What’s on your mind?”)
3. Work with Worship Committee to suggest worship focus on: Kindness & Respect, Conflict Resolution and Beginning Anew (last one specifically offered by congregant through survey process).
4. Engage an outside mediator. Reach out to those who feel hurt or angry with leadership to have facilitated discussion. (Leah Boyd/Dynamic Facilitation is one idea. This idea has a budget impact.)
5. Personal connection between a Board member and unhappy/disgruntled member. Invite member to board meeting and engagement in governance at UCC.
6. Explore alternative to using Robert’s Rules of Order for meeting structure.

I hope you will look forward to and participate in actions related to all in the congregation as we move through the winter and spring months.

As always, please feel free to contact me with questions or concerns. Email is best at kathyannshaw@roadrunner.com.

In faith,
Kathy Ann Shaw
Board President

A message from the Committee on Ministry

Our committee decided it might be useful to share some history on Committees on Ministry in our congregation. Here is a reflection from our chair, Kathy Kellison.

I have served on this kind of committee three times. The first two were at All Souls, one of the two churches that became UUC. The first two were called The Ministerial Relations Committee. The task of each of them was to represent the congregation to the minister and help him (in both cases) figure out how to respond to concerns and complaints. Looking back, I see that in both cases the assumption we and the minister made was that the person who was complaining needed to be placated. We rarely engaged the idea that the minister might need to change. Nor did we consider that the culture of the congregation could be examined and taken into account.

The culture during each of these ministries was that the minister was in charge. The first used a 'divide and conquer' method. I was taken into his confidence and felt honored by that. He might say something critical of someone in the congregation and because I felt special, I honored that trust by saying nothing. It turned out many others had a similar 'special' relationship and we all kept his secrets. That ministry collapsed when the secrets started coming to the surface and, with the help of the UUA, we negotiated with him to end his ministry with us. The second minister's style was 'I'm in charge here'. When anyone questioned the conduct of his ministry, he fell back on his contract and his role as minister to assert authority and resolve disputes. His ministry came to an end when the Board challenged him and refused to back down. He offered his resignation and left.

This history is part of the legacy that Carie inherited when she accepted the call to be our minister. We have a history of seeing the minister as solely in charge, of ascribing power to the minister. Now having served on your Committee on Ministry for eighteen months I can say that my experience is very different this time. As this committee has grappled with conflict in the congregation, the committee has looked in depth at the role of the minister, the role of the congregation as a whole and the contribution of various individuals within the congregation. Our goal has been to interact with the congregation in a way that promotes open communication, personal responsibility, and trust.

I have experienced Carie's participation in this process very differently from what happened with her predecessors. She has sought guidance from many people outside our congregation and encourages our committee and the Board to do the same. She welcomes questions and deep discussion of the issues. She acknowledges her mistakes and her struggles. She honors our observations and thoughts. She does not try to control our decisions or outcomes, although she is free with suggestions and resources. I see her as a minister who embraces questions and challenges and leads by her example of ethical behavior.

The role of the committee in the congregation is to oversee and care for the ministry and mission of the congregation. We do not advocate for either the minister or the congregation. We work with the leadership of the church to promote shared ministry. We recognize that each of you connected with our community has gifts that can help us bring our collective mission and ministry into the world. It is through collective action that we in this church continually bring into being the community we hope to be. It is the task of the Committee on Ministry to see that our church is always becoming a place where your gifts are welcomed and your contribution is honored. Our collective ministry and mission are too important for anything less.

I am honored to have worked with Debbie Mattson and Jim Caldwell and to continue working with Michaela Loisel and Erin McGrath.

Please reach out to any of the members of the committee to talk about shared ministry or anything else on your mind related to the ministry of our congregation.

News from Religious Exploration

Monique McAuliffe: Coordinator for Lifespan Faith Formation (CLFF)

Dear All,

This Pandemic has certainly subdued our ability to be visible and open - I expect this to change as we get the Covid-19 virus under control and begin to open up again **and** grow!

As Coordinator for Lifespan Faith Formation we are pursuing creative ideas for programming and activities to reach all ages and we are focused on how to relate and attract young adults and families. I am using the term "we" to include me and the Personnel Work Group. We are actively developing and defining the work of Coordinator for Lifespan Faith Formation. This work is not just about developing programming and activities but how we can improve and invigorate our "Welcoming In" of new visitors and potential members.

I would like to share with you the definition of Lifespan Faith Formation and the mission of Coordinator for Lifespan Faith Formation (CLFF) we have developed. I have also added in some questions being queried to our committees and spiritual groups. I plan to meet with them over the coming weeks in January 2021 and submit a report on their reflection of these questions. I would also like to hear from you as well. Please reach out to me with your thoughts and insights to these questions:

What is Lifespan Faith Formation? *Lifespan Faith Formation recognizes spiritual, social, ethical and moral development as a lifelong journey. Through opportunities for discovery, learning, reflection, study, and service with peers and across generations people develop a greater sense of belonging and connectedness to themselves, each other, the wider community, the earth, and that which cannot be named.*

*The **Coordinator for Lifespan Faith Formation** (CLFF) provides dynamic, relevant, and innovative leadership to support members and friends of all ages in the personal journey of spiritual exploration and faith formation, and cultivates a sense of belonging and connectedness rooted in Unitarian Universalist values, principles and theology.*

Questions:

1. What does faith formation mean to you at this point in your life?
2. How does [this group] meet the spiritual needs of its constituency (e.g. elders, for Seasoned Souls)
3. How could CLFF enhance [this group's] efforts to meet the current spiritual needs of its constituency?
4. What more would you like to do, with CLFF's help?
5. What unmet spiritual needs has [this group] identified for its constituency?

I truly appreciate hearing your voice and encourage the conversation to continue - Onward and Upward UUCA for 2021!

New Year Blessings,

Monique

COVID-19 Advisory Group Message

Following a summer of successful outdoor small group ministry meetings, the COVID-19 Advisory Group received multiple requests to allow the meetings to continue indoors as the weather got colder. Indoor meetings significantly increase the risk of spreading virus infections (like COVID-19) and the Advisory Group sought outside expert input in formulating a plan. We crafted a plan based upon Maine CDC metrics that would guide us in determining the safety of ongoing indoor meetings.

Unfortunately, just as this plan went to the Board for approval, the autumn spike in COVID-19 cases hit and Kennebec County became a site of widespread community transmission of the virus. As of mid-December, the rate of new cases of COVID-19 in Kennebec county is six and a half times (650%) higher than the upper limit of safety we established in our plan. The Advisory Group continues to monitor Maine CDC data weekly for evidence of when we can safely implement our plan.

Don Nabor, EdD has been contributing a series of weekly informational messages relating to COVID-19 in the UUC E-blast.

COVID-19 Advisory Group members:

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

Getting Ready to Return by Wick Johnson

Last Fall when we began renting Drew House part of the plan was to make sure we were able maintain all programs and services that had been housed at Drew. That process has now begun. It is the Board's goal to use January to develop a specific plan and approve necessary changes at the Board meeting in early February.

There are a number of elements and we are first getting input. Lynn Smith is being consulted about rental use and internal group use, Monique McAuliffe is providing insight about Religious Exploration and Lifespan Faith Formation programming needs, Helen Zidowcki is giving feedback about the History Committee needs and Reverend Carie and Building and Grounds are involved in the entire process.

At this point, a number of key pieces are being looked at. It is likely that the current nursery space will be made into two separate rooms creating Nursery, R.E. and group meeting space. We are also looking at Judd House to see if the Minister's office and study might be divided into two separate spaces. Finally, we will be looking at re-furnishing the Robbins Room in order to make it a more welcoming and comfortable space to meet in.

Renting Drew House helps us financially and highlights our commitment to social justice but it makes it more difficult to accommodate meetings. We are a welcoming community and our role providing space to others is key to our mission. The plan that will be put forward will recognize this and provide new options.

Because it is unlikely that we will reopen until later in the spring, we have time to put this all together. A draft plan will be presented to the Board at the January 14th Board meeting. If it receives preliminary approval the Board will take feedback and hold at least one informational/feedback meeting to get comments and suggestions prior to the February 10th Board meeting. If approved the goal will be to have all changes completed by the end of March. The plan will include some expenses and the Board and Finance Committee will work together on the funding plan. The major expense will be furnishings for the Robbins Room. We may use Future Facilities funds for this, ask for one-time donations to help fund it or some of each.

We are entering a time of new beginnings, internally, externally, on so many levels. This is an opportunity for us to work together as a community to prepare for the coming years.

Wick Johnson, Board of Trustee Vice President
In care of the Renovation Working Group

Finance Committee Update

The 2020 Year-End Appeal is underway. Members and friends - We hope you will consider supporting our faith community with a year-end charitable gift.

The Finance Committee is busy working on the DRAFT 2021-22 Budget. A COVID-19 Holiday Fair was held and items were picked up on Dec. 5, 2020. A silent auction for March 26, 2021 is on the calendar.

To fulfill the requirements of the UUCU Financial Policies and Procedure, mandatory criminal background checks are underway for all members or staff who handle church funds.

History Committee

As we work with church leadership in renovations that follow the move of the History Room from the Drew House to the Nursery area, we realize that much of our connection with the UUCU is part of our personal involvement over the years. We have the 'official' and legal documents. We also have the 'informal history', the background stories. As we are part of the community, we are part of the history. In fact, the History Committee motto has been "Capturing our History as we make it."

In the process of change, we want to highlight some of the things that are in the History Room. We have moved framed notes from the wall in the Robbins Room to the History Room. One was a note from Samuel Longfellow, brother of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who grew up in Portland and became a Unitarian minister. His note from around 1853 related to his possibly preaching in Augusta on a Sunday during the summer. But did he come? The answer is still in our old history logs, waiting to be found to complete the story.

The note from Ralph Waldo Emerson was declining an invitation to preach at the Unitarian church in Augusta: "When I know my audience and when it is in easy reach from my home, I usually find it difficult to refuse. But I have not at present any thoughts to offer your society that would justify my going so far and interrupting formal writing at home to deliver them. So I pray you to excuse me, and if I shall find myself at any short time hence, in circumstances that are mutually more covenant, I may take leave to reopen the correspondence. Rev. Emerson, June 20, 1864"

We have a long and important part in the history of Unitarian and Universalism in Augusta and much beyond. Universalist Rev. William Drew (Augusta 1833-1848) and Unitarian Rev. Sylvester Judd (1840-1853) were active leaders in their respective denominations. Since their ministries in our background overlapped for eight years, we may wonder if they ever considered or envisioned consolidation that occurred about a hundred and fifty years later.

The History Committee is refining and expanding its notebooks of Historical Notes with many facets of congregational life over the years. Ask us questions about our history. And visit the History section on the UUCU website under Ministry/Staff and Church Life www.augustauu.org

The History Committee would like to have more people involved in making our history more accessible. Contact Helen Zidowecki (582-5308 or hzmre@hzmre.com)

Small Group Ministry Updates



Towards a New Year

Even as the New Year of 2021 careens into our vision, there is a human tendency to reflect on the expiring one. 2020 is a year, of course, that can't end too soon for almost all of us, having brought us societal discord, widespread economic distress, and the greatest health crisis in 100 years.

Even solid and indispensable institutions, such as libraries, museums, concert halls and places of worship, have been pummeled as never before. The UUCC has been no exception, along with its various committees and organizations, including Small Group Ministry.

There have been some positives, surprisingly enough, during this ordeal in SGM, which are worth observing. This week would have been the annual holiday gathering for my group, complete with the light-hearted Yankee Swap, a baked ham and the obligatory figgy pudding. This holiday tradition, however, will not happen, nor will any other similar celebrations among the other groups. That is certainly a cause for disappointment and sorrow for all of us who cherish these traditions.

On the positive side, however, is that technology, specifically Zoom, has been a lifeline to Small Group Ministry this past year. With a group as geographically far-flung as ours, for instance, making meetings has always been a challenge. Kids' activities, travel, or even physical relocation in my case, can make physical meetings, even with a central location, often problematic. Zoom has solved these issues, for the most part. While I can't speak for the other groups, I can emphatically state that our SGM meetings have been very well-attended. With the onset of winter and its travails, Zoom would provide a viable alternative to dangerous travel. Even when the world returns to normal (and it will, trust me!), Zoom will remain a vital part of SGM heading into the New Year and beyond.

We would like to start 2021 with a Small Group Ministry Leadership meeting on Sunday, January 17, 12:30-2pm via UUCC zoom. The meeting is open to both facilitators and participants in groups. We look forward to additional sharing and imagining how our Small Group Ministry moves forward.

The session plans for UUCC Small Group Ministry have been updated on the UUCC website (Church Life/Small Group Ministry/Session Plans). As members of the UU Small Group Ministry Network, we send some of our session plans for posting on that Network website (www.smallgroupministry.net under Small Group Sessions). In addition, this is a resource of over a thousand session plans for us. We are describing the Small Group Ministry Session plan as a unique type of UU Literature! Take a look to see what is discussed in small groups, or to use for individual reflection.

All of us ache fervently for a return to normality and the comfort of routine, and we hope that 2021 will eventually provide this hard-earned respite. Until then, your SGM Committee wishes our groups a safe and healthy holiday season, and keep tuning in!

Michael, Helen, Linda and Judy

Read, Learn, Share Book Group

Read. Learn Share

Our group meets on the first Thursday of the month from 1:00 until 2:30 from October through June. Each month is a new book. We talk about general reactions, themes, writing style, character development, whatever comes to mind. Books are chosen by ranked choice voting over the summer from titles suggested by participants. Books are usually available through interlibrary loan. We alternate fiction and nonfiction month to month.

We invite you to come to the session whenever a particular book interests you or become a regular attendee. Someone present usually remarks that they are glad they read that particular book and probably would not have if not for the group.

The titles for the rest of the year are:

January 7	<u>American Prophets: The Religious Roots of Progressive Politics</u> by Jack Jenkins
February 4	<u>A Burning</u> by Megha Majumdar
March 4	<u>Long Live the Tribe of Fatherless Girls</u> by T, Kira Madden
April 1	<u>The Overstory</u> by Richard Powers
May 6	<u>Braiding Sweetgrass</u> by Robin Kimmerer
June 3	<u>Homegoing</u> by Yaa Gyasi

For more information, reach out to June Zellers at jzellers@roadrunner.com or Kathy Kellison at kell6787@gmail.com

GODDESS/EARTH CIRCLES

The meetings of Goddess/Earth Circles have been by UUCU Zoom, on the fourth Sundays at 1pm, unless otherwise noted. Information about sessions is available prior to the session and joining zoom by phone as well as video is welcome.

December 27 Service at 10am “Toward the Solstice”. Dark and light are bonded companions, where there is one there the other. This year is different from other years. Reflect on darkness that has turned us toward the light. Stories, reflections, readings as we cross the threshold into a new year.

January 24 Gathering “Changing Woman” of Native American mythology will be the guide through the changing years. Reflect on the year that has passed and naming what from the year goes with us as we anticipate the year ahead. “Changing Woman” walks through the stages of life and the seasons of the year, constantly changing and never dying.

February 28 Gathering “Prayer and the Goddess” Are the prayers and the communications to, with and about the Goddess different from those with a male or other deity? What does the wording of prayers say about relationship with a holy power? We will specifically consider the traditional Lord’s Prayer, the original translation from Aramaic, and a Lady’s Prayer.

We will be gathering on March 28, April 25, May 23, and June 27. The topics are to be decided. Suggestions, comments are welcome.

Material from the gatherings is available. Contact Helen Zidowecki (582-5308, hzmre@hzmre.com). Also see the material on the UUCU website (Church Life, Goddess)

Social Justice Committee

Social Justice: It's Who We Are

As Unitarian Universalists we affirm seven principles through which we envision an equitable, interconnected world community. Each principle offers aspirational guidance for being our best selves, while together they articulate a collective responsibility for social justice. In recognition of the many ways UU's are defined by social responsibility toward all humanity, this year our Social Justice Committee will identify and facilitate opportunities for all members to advance social justice, both individually and in community with other church members.

First, we recognize that many folks at UUCC are already engaged in a wide variety of social justice activities. We will create a directory of UUCC Social Justice Actions where folks can learn who's doing what and identify potential areas for individual action. We hope that members already doing this good work will serve as resources for others. Please send your name, contact information, and area of social justice engagement to Hilary Neckles (hneckles@gmail.com) to be included in the directory and inspire others to action.

Second, we have identified two focus areas for active engagement this year, racial justice and electoral justice. Watch for the Social Justice Corner in the first e-blast of each month, where we will identify ways to take positive action toward "justice, equity, and compassion in human relations"

Peaceful Heart Sangha



Peaceful Heart Sangha Bi-weekly Mindfulness Meditation and January Intentions Practice 2021

January's cold and quiet can be a lovely time to settle in, to care for ourselves and consider our deepest aspirations, to consider one or two steps that we could explore to help us move in a direction that we believe will help us heal and grow, especially during these challenging times. If you would like to join the Peaceful Heart Sangha in this practice, please consider joining us online on Mondays (settle in ~ 6:15pm, sangha from 6:30–8) &/or Thursdays (settle in ~ 7:45am, sangha from 8–9:30). All are welcome!

Also if you would like to join us for a special month long winter practice, our January Intentions Practice will have a formal online opening on the morning of January 9 & closing on the morning of February 13. Please reach out for details, if you want to learn more.

Questions: martysoule@gmail.com or 685-9270

May all beings be well, Marty

This page was intentionally
left blank.

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

Newsletter Submissions

Submission Deadline for SPING newsletter is April 19th

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 are welcomed! *** You will receive a confirmation e-mail of receipt of your submission.

Minister: Reverend Carie Johnsen

Board President: Kathy Ann Shaw

Coord of Lifespan Faith Formation: 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 Church Administrator.

Church 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 **VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS**

To schedule a visit, appointment, or meeting, please call **(508) 221-5295** or use her local # **623-3663** (both lines will reach her!) or email her at RevCarieJohnsen@gmail.com

Emergencies please call her cell phone (508) 221-5295. She will return your call as soon as possible.