



Our Outlook

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Sunday Services | July & August 2023

July 2 | *Sacred Objects?*

As spiritual people, we believe that all life is sacred, and we try to treat all living things with gentleness, and compassion. But inanimate objects are just things aren't they? Is there any reason to treat them with care? Perhaps part of a spiritual life is treating things with care.

— Peter House

July 9 | *Capturing Bugs in a Cup*

When my mother found a bug in the house, she'd always capture it in a cup, and let it out. Human beings cause so much harm to other species. We will celebrate the value of kindness, compassion, and gentleness.

— Peter House

July 16 | *You Didn't Live With Her*

We explore the idea that we are all experts on our own experiences, and we must honor the perspectives others have on their own lives—even when these conflict with what we think we understand.

— Peter House

July 23 | *Bucket List*

As I get closer to retiring, several people have asked me what my "bucket list" is. I will confess, I don't have one. I'm also not sure I want one. Does life even work that way?

— Peter House

July 30 | *TBA*

A report from GA by delegates.

— General Assembly Delegates from First Universalist

August 6 | *We Have Always Lived in a Non-Binary World*

In recent years, our trans and non-binary friends have been much more visible. Discussions of pronouns, and rest rooms dominate

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political discourse, and people behave as if it's all brand new. But in reality, we've always lived in a non-binary world.

— *Peter House*

August 13 | *A Return To Christian Values*

We liberals often recoil at the phrase “Christian Values”. But what we object to is a certain interpretation of them. Do we have any problem with REAL Christian values?

— *Peter House*

August 13 | *TBA*

TBA

— *Rev. James Galasinski*

August 27 | *Sticks and Stones*

We were always told as children “Sticks and Stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me”. We all know how untrue this is. We will explore all of the ways we can hurt each other with words.

— *Peter House*

❖ **Services begin at 10am** ❖

Worship will be online and in-person at First Universalist Church. Check our website for more updated info! Please join us – Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/131764422>; Phone number: 1-646-558-8656 with Meeting ID: 131 764 422. ❖



EcoJustice News

Submitted by Sarah Singal

Code purple: Before now people without compromised lung function have not worried much about air quality in this region other than to acknowledge the challenge faced by people with asthma or chronic lung disease. But a few days in

June have changed our awareness, and upstate NY is an area at risk, a direct result of climate change, drought and uncontrolled forest fires. Thank you, Rev Lane-Mairead, for your beautiful Love Letter to the Earth on June 11. If you missed it, check it out on our website: uuroc.org/sermon-recordings at 25minutes, 40 seconds.

So what can you do? Sign the Accelerator's climate pledge: climategfl.org/individual-pledge. Commit to actions of education, adaptation of your own behavior, collaboration and advocacy. After you've pledged online, sign the poster at the EcoJustice News table in the Clara Barton Lounge. Lois Baum signed the pledge and encourages going vegan. Recently she introduced speaker Harold Brown, a former cattle rancher, at a UU Animal Ministry webinar. Nice going, Lois!

Here's something else you can do. Join the Plastic Free July movement. Visit this link for ideas, info, inspiration: plasticfreejuly.org. Every action counts! ❖



“Wokeness”

*A Message from
Peter House*

Like so many of us, I follow politics closely. I get an hour of NPR on my daily commute. And I also read several publications every week. If you follow politics these days, it’s impossible not to encounter stories about Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, and his “war on wokeness”.

His policy agenda is inflicting real pain on real people – and not surprisingly, in most cases, on the most vulnerable people in our society. But in the grand scheme of things, Governor DeSantis will most certainly find himself on the wrong side of history.

Why? Because if we examine what “wokeness” really is, it is an umbrella term that encompasses all of the best human virtues. The very ones Jesus Christ is associated with espousing. They are also the values which we affirm and support in our seven UU Principles. Indeed, it is hard for me to imagine a more “woke” denomination than Unitarian Universalism.

Our first principle affirms the inherent worth and dignity of every person. That includes the trans folks and “drag queens” that have been frequent targets of this governor’s “anti woke” legislation. It also includes the vulnerable migrants who have been used as pawns when they have been bused all over the US without their consent.

Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations? It is hard to find anything just, equitable, or compassionate about the war on woke.

Can we truly be accepting of one another, if we demonize huge swaths of the population simply for being who they are?

And you can hardly have a free and responsible search for truth and meaning in a place where the government is actively banning books, declaring an accurate depiction of American History off-limits, and leveling felony charges against teachers who speak truth to power.

I think we can all agree that fully exercising the right of conscience, and the use of the democratic process are both severely threatened by any government which seeks to demonize certain individuals, censor any speech that doesn’t support the status quo, and terrorizes vulnerable citizens by making them afraid to exercise their right to vote.

The goal of a world community demands of us that everyone is treated with dignity, respect, and compassion. The war on woke then, is a war on this principle.

And if we are to respect the interdependent web of existence, we can’t deny the reality of climate change.

I’m afraid that whether we like the term, or not, we Unitarian Universalists epitomize wokeness. Let’s embrace the term, wear the label proudly, and work toward a world where everyone is woke. ❖



Why I Keep Marching

Submitted by Tom Williams and Connie Valk

When asked why he keeps on marching for PRIDE, Tom Williams shared this story. “Until I was 50 years old, I remained in a very painful closet, feeling guilt and shame. Coming out was like taking the lid off a steaming tea kettle.

I started marching in the Pride Parade in 2001 to show my support for a community of young LGTPQ+ so that each of them can feel accepted and not have to experience the pain of being closeted. My first parade was the most scary and at the same time one of the most affirming things I have ever done. Today I march because its fun. But, mostly I march because I'm proud of me.”

Our Church joins with other UUs to march or watch the annual PRIDE Parade on July 15 with other UUs. Sign up at pride@uuroc.org or in the Clara Barton Lounge during coffee hour in early July to participate. Please designate marching or watching.

Details regarding time, line-up number, parking suggestions, lawn chair watching/cheering crew, etc. will be emailed to all those who sign up. ❖

Drop-In Discussion

Submitted by Beth Ares

Drop-in discussions are held Tuesday evenings from 6:30-7:30pm via the church Zoom account. Contact DropInDiscussion@uuroc.org for the link, or look on uuroc.org! Sometimes discussions are based on books/articles, but you don't have to do any prep to participate. Just drop in!

July 4 | *Open Topic*

A freeform discussion while still following our usual guidelines of waiting to be called on, limiting comments to two minutes at a time and not asking to speak again until all others have an opportunity (just a reminder, dear friends).

July 11 | *What is neo-conservatism?*

We sometimes read about the “neo-conservative” war party in the U.S. government. Who are these people and what do they believe? Phil Ebersole will present some information and lead a discussion.

July 18 | *Fire! It's Complicated*

Join us as we discuss the complex relationship we humans have with fire—a relationship 200,000 years in the making. What impact did fire have on the development of our species? What impact does it have on our planet today? And what about the future? Can humans, and/or the many other lifeforms we share this planet with survive this combustible relationship? Keven Adams presents.

July 25 | *“Which Two-Tiered Justice System Are We Talking About?!”*

Many advocates of former President Trump are proclaiming that we now have a 'two-tiered Justice System', especially as they equate Trump's indictments against their complaint that Hunter Biden is only getting a 'slap on the wrist' for his crimes. Their complaint is based on the Founder's guiding principle of “Equal Justice Under Law” which is inscribed over the entrance to our Supreme Court. Let's explore whether or not we have a two-or-more-tier Justice System—in other words, whether or not we have ever achieved the goal of 'Equal Justice Under Law'.

Do you have a topic for us? Contact our team members with your Drop-In Discussion proposals: DropInDiscussion@uuroc.org. ❖



Three Outcomes to Know About from GA 2023

Message from
Rev. Michelle Yates

I just returned from the 2023 GA in Pittsburgh, PA. It filled my soul to be among so many UUs!

Our delegates will share their takeaways from the event in the months to come, but here are the three most important items that I think you should know.

We elected a new President of the UUA, Rev. Sofia Betancourt, after an uncontested election in which she secured 95.5% of the vote. She will serve a six year term. She takes the reins from Rev. Susan Fredrick-Grey, who saw us through the pandemic with wisdom and pastoral grace. Rev. Sofia served on the co-president team after Rev. Morales resigned. She will be the tenth president of the UUA, and is both the first openly queer person and the first woman of color to lead our faith tradition. She has named her top three priorities as communal care, collaborative leadership and facing the unknown together.

Article II of our bylaws, which previously contained the seven principles and six sources, underwent several amendments, and passed the vote to undergo revision over the next year. At GA 2024, they will vote on a final version. Rev. Sofia offered the most wise and pastoral response I have heard on the issue. To paraphrase, “No one is taking the seven principles and six sources away from you. No one could ever take anything from you. You're UUs. They will continue to help us to explore and explain our theology, just not in our bylaws. We have many sacred and formative texts as UUs and they do not live in our bylaws. The revision of Article II casts a new vision of our values as we move into the future, to live out our faith in ever deepening ways that we might create the world we dream about.”

Finally, the proposal to completely divest UUA investments from fossil fuels immediately did not pass. The board and staff of the UUA, do aim to continue moving in that direction in a sustainable way.

Please reach out with any questions! I will be off from June 27 to Aug. 27, but I look forward to continuing these conversations.

Yours in the Journey,

Rev. Michelle ❖

Finance News & Notes: *We're Hiring!*

Submitted by Ann Rhody, Finance Chair

The Finance operations of the church have grown and changed over the time. It has become clear that a paid staff member is needed to manage more of the workload. A job description was developed in early 2022, and we had hoped to hire someone soon after. But when budget time came a year ago, there just we just didn't have the funds.

Just a few weeks ago, the congregation approved a budget which DOES include funding for a Finance staff person! We are looking to support a position at about 10 hours per week.

To be clear, we are NOT looking for someone who is just a "bookkeeper" or "accountant." Writing checks, making payments, and accounting with Quickbooks is only one part of what our Finance volunteers currently do.

We'll need someone who can manage payroll, benefits, and navigate the nuances of our church's particular financial policies and practices. We need someone who will get to know our community, our people, and our mission.

Do you know of such a person? Here are some of the qualifications from our job description:

- A minimum of an Associate's Degree in bookkeeping or accounting.
- Relevant work experience a plus.
- Strong knowledge of computers and accounting software, QuickBooks, Google Drive, and Microsoft Office.
- Ability and willingness to communicate and collaborate with the Minister, the Treasurer, and the Finance Committee.
- Ability to work with sensitive and confidential financial information appropriately.
- Willingness to learn about Unitarian Universalism and to bring the values of our faith to our financial endeavors.

Once we hire a staff person, Finance volunteers will be freed up to do the important work of managing finance policy, vision, and longer-range planning.

Please contact finance@uuroc.org for info! ❖

Summer Social Justice Plates

Submitted by Connie Valk

At the Annual meeting each year, our congregation votes on the organizations we want to receive Social Justice Offerings. These are collected on the third Sunday of each month.

In July the plate will go to Rochester Refugee Resettlement Services: rochesterrefugeeservices.org.

In August the plate will go to St. Joseph's House of Hospitality: saintjoeshouse.org.



Please check out these amazing organizations. You can donate via our website uuroc.org — please designate organization or month of SJP (July SJP). If you donate by check write this in the memo line. Cash donations on the third Sunday are automatically devoted to the Social Justice organization. ❖

Annual Church Pic-nic!

Submitted by Connie Valk



Housing For All:

Please Join Us!

Submitted by Marti Eggers and Chris DeGolyer

At the annual meeting on June 4th, the congregation voted to make Housing For All (HFA) the church-wide project for the next two years. HFA's vision is: making homelessness fixable and rare while working toward more safe, low-income housing for all. Its mission is to support existing organizations and legislation that share our vision.

We hope this project will tie together several of the existing social justice circles in our church. Several circles directly address homelessness, such as the Homeless Heartbeats, Crafting Blankets for Our Community, and the congregation project, Family Promise (formerly RAIHN). For other social justice circles, the connection is less obvious, but real. FIRE, which works to erase racial inequity, is directly connected to the housing issue. Past racist policies in Monroe County of redlining, exclusionary clauses in property deeds, zoning, and bank lending practices made it harder for people of color to find housing and to own homes. Covert discriminatory hiring and rental practices continue today, making it harder for minorities to find and afford housing. Disparities in the quality of education between city and suburban schools make it harder for minorities to have well-paying jobs so that they can afford housing.

It may be a stretch to connect the Housing for All project to the Pride Parade Circle, but LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to be disowned by their families and find themselves homeless.

The EcoJustice Circle works to reduce climate change, the existential issue affecting all of us, but it affects people living on the margins of society even more. Severe storms, flooding, high temperatures, and wildfires produce climate refugees, increasing the numbers of people experiencing homelessness. Once homeless, people have less protection against storms, heat, and smoke-filled air. On a hopeful note, Sarah Singal reports that NYRenews has been successfully advocating to pass climate justice laws in New York State. One of these laws is the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, which has the goal of transitioning to 50% clean energy by 2030 and 100% by 2050. 35% of the law's benefits are directed to disadvantaged communities. Sarah said, "if it is done right, there will be jobs and community

improvements in the neighborhoods of most concern, and with these jobs, families on the brink of losing their homes may avoid homelessness and families who have lost their homes may find sustainable housing." NY Renews has many opportunities for more advocacy to implement this law, and Sarah invites us to join in.

The HFA project has three components: education, service, and advocacy. Education includes finding the answers to why homelessness is increasing and what we can do about it. We can reach out to people experiencing homelessness to find out what they need, talk to organizations to find out how we best can serve, and research proposed legislation. We can invite speakers, discuss this topic in our discussion group, and review books on the topic in the book club.

There are several ways church members have served and can continue to be of service. We can work with various organizations such as REACH to provide food and clothing, do direct outreach with Captain Gabriel Person of the police force or the Sisters of St Joseph, and renovate or clean apartments with Family Promise. Of course, donating money to organizations serving the homeless helps too!

We can advocate with the city, county, and state, and federal government to fund more low-income housing and to pass other proposals by writing letters or talking with our legislators.

There is something each of us can do. If you have an initiative you'd like to work on, please contact Marti Eggers or Chris DeGolyer, HFA team leaders. We hope you'll join us! ✦





Universalist Convocation

Submitted by David Damico

For over 30 years, Universalists have gathered at our annual convocation (meeting) to learn, explore, and celebrate our heritage. The Universalist Convocation is recognized as a Related Organization of the UUA, but operates independently.

More than forty people attended the 2023 Convocation held May 19-21 at the historic UUs of Mt. Airy (formerly the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Restoration) in Philadelphia, PA. Organized in 1820, they are the last historical Universalist church remaining in Philadelphia and the only UU church in America with a beautiful Universalist History Window depicting famous Universalists. The Convocation came at the end of a three-year celebration of congregation's 200th anniversary. Fittingly, the convocation theme is *"Telling Our Stories: 200 Years of Universalist History in Philadelphia."*

The keynote speaker was Dr. Dan McKanan, a historian and the Ralph Waldo Emerson Unitarian Universalist Senior Lecturer at Harvard Divinity School. His presentation was entitled, *"From Moral Injury to Reparations: What's Love Got to Do with it?"*

Another workshop gave local authors Kathy Baxter and Reggie Harris an opportunity to read excerpts from their books. Kathy Baxter read from her memoir, *In the Shadow of the Hanging Tree*. Kathy's personal story was about her efforts to develop programs and lessons to portray an honest view of American life in the country's journey to racial equity.

Convocation Grant

At the annual business meeting, the Universalist Convocation awarded the UUs of Mt. Airy a grant of \$300 from the Universalist Convocation Grant Program. The gift provides funding for accessibility improvements to the church's open-door neighborhood pantry. Rev. McKinley Sims, the home minister, was presented a check by the Convocation's

Treasurer, Jay Kiskel.

Heart of Universalism Award

Each year during the business meeting at the Convocation, the Heart of Universalism Award is presented to someone who embodies the power of love and service and the spirit of Unitarian Universalism. This year the honor was bestowed on Arnold "Brad" Bradburd by Convocation President Robert Stolar.

The award commendation read "Brad and his dear wife Julie have been lifelong devoted Universalists. They are members of the Unitarian Universalists of Mt. Airy. Brad was a very successful businessman but made time to serve his faith. Brad served as a trustee of the UU Service Committee, the former Joseph Priestly District, the UU Pennsylvania Legislative Action Network and is a member of the UUA President's Council. Brad and Julie have been active participants in the struggle for social justice in general and racial equity in particular.

Brad was the financial advisor for the Pennsylvania Universalist Convention for many years and supervised the management and dispersal of funds to benefit the Universalist churches in Pennsylvania and Universalist efforts elsewhere, including Murray Grove Retreat Center in New Jersey.

Brad has been generous financially as well as with his time. He and Julie have supported the UU House, Murray Grove, the Martha and Waitsill Sharp Society of the UU Service Committee and funded two Bradburd Scholarships for Excellence at Meadville Lombard Theological School. When Black Lives UU was being launched, Brad and Julie donated \$1,000,000 as matching challenge funds to the UUA's Promise & Practice campaign for BLUU. Brad is a mentor to many UU's and lives a life that demonstrates his values and motivates others to do the same.

More About the Universalist Convocation

For more info visit UniversalistConvocation.org.

After the Convocation's Saturday program concluded, Reggie Harris was the star performer at the church's evening Folk Factory.

Reggie Harris, a renowned musician, told his story of growing up as a low-income African American in Philadelphia, highlighting the opportunities and setbacks he encountered on his journey to becoming a folk musician, educator, cultural ambassador, and civil rights advocate worldwide. ✦



First Universalist Church of Rochester

150 South Clinton Avenue
Rochester, NY 14604



First Universalist Church of Rochester, NY

Nurture the spirit and serve the community.

First Universalist Church is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association, a liberal religion with historical roots in the Jewish and Christian traditions.

Worship service begins at 10am on Sundays

Summer Minister | Peter House

Minister of Life Span Faith Development |
Rev. Michelle Yates

Music Director | Dr. Brock Tjosvold

Office Manager | Emma Barry

Nursery Care Provider | Carol Williams

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More info is available on our website: uuroc.org

The usual deadline for all submissions to *Our Outlook* is the 15th of each month.