



UUU NEWS

A BIWEEKLY NEWSLETTER OF

THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
SOCIETY OF ONEONTA

Week of August 22nd, 2018

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Minister's Article 1

Religious Education 2

Sawdust 3

Worship Services 7

MINISTER'S MUSINGS

The Courage to Covenant

On August 5th, our service focused on spiritual practice and the benefits to our health and spiritual wellbeing. The following day, one of you asked me "what creates a spiritually healthy congregation?" It was a great question, and my answer included a focus on commitments of time, talent, and treasure; seeing the spiritual call of our seemingly mundane committee and leadership work; and perhaps most importantly, members supporting each other with help, encouragement, openness, and kindness.

I was then shown the twelve word summary of the congregational covenant you all have been working on: "get involved, stay engaged, be respectful and openminded, grow and learn together."

As we continue this sabbatical time together, I believe it's more important than ever to lean into this – to practice this covenant even before it is – hopefully – adopted at your congregational meeting on October 28th. Because even though there may be some work yet to do on it, that doesn't mean you get to ignore it – now is when you have to begin practicing it.

Now let's be clear: this covenant is not about authority or demands. Covenant should not be a set of hard and fast rules that carry a punishment. Rather, it is a commitment about how we treat one another and how we forgive one another. It's the often forgotten line in the familiar Rumi poem, "come, come, whoever you are, wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving: Though you've broken your vows a thousand times, come yet again, come."

It's not about taking our toys – or our pledges – and going home. It's not about ghosting or disappearing or cutting folks off when we've messed up. Though we've broken our vows a thousand times, covenant

asks us to come back to the table.

That takes courage.

It takes courage to create covenant; and it has to be driven by everyone. It can't be dictated by the people in power, whether that's positional power like boards and religious professionals, or systemic power like the white people or the top donors. We have to be courageous enough to include all voices of those who have agreed to freely come together in the process of creating and living it out.

It takes courage to follow a covenant that actually treats everyone like a person, with inherent worth and dignity. And know that callousness chips away at dignity.

It takes courage to see covenant not as "yes or no" but as "yes-and." In a world where you must choose between false binaries like this or that, yes or no, good or evil, friend or enemy, black or white, covenant suggests that there are multiple choices that may all be true. Covenant asks us to look for possibility, to say yes, and... this too.

It takes courage to covenant, especially when covenant is broken. Covenant audaciously says "come back anyway, trust anyway, make room anyway."

Friends, we have to get this right if we're going to covenant at all. We have to pay close attention to how we create and live out covenants in our congregations. We have to have the courage to get it right in our congregations, or we have no chance of getting it right in the world.

How do we do it?

(Continued on page 4)

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Preparations are underway for a new year of UUSO Religious Education!

K-3rd graders will get to “fly” as *Unitarian Universalist Superheroes*, *Hogwarts Oneonta* will magically reappear in the Seekers 4-6th grade classroom, *Our Whole Lives* will bring vital information to young teens (7th and 8th graders), and *Young Religious Unitarian Universalists*, *YRUU*, high school students will meet together. There will be much more about these classes in future newsletters. You will soon be able to register for participation in UUSO Religious Education.

Our year begins with the Ingathering Service on September 9th. We will all come together from our summer adventures and join in an intergenerational service in the sanctuary.

Starting the RE Year with a Bang!

The RE Kick-off event will be the following Sunday, **September 16th**, at the Olympia Brown House. This year we will host a drumming workshop. We will make drums, learn about drums, and play drums together. We will welcome special guest teachers as well as have the chance to explore the rhythms of our own drumming. We will honor how “we each march to the beat of our own drum” and how we are more powerful together.

Here’s to our many adventures ahead!

Susan Ryder
UUSO Director of Religious Education
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SAWDUST FROM THE BOARD

The Board met on August 15 at 6:30pm in the Sanctuary. After a chalice lighting, opening words selected by Rev. Kimberley, and a check in with those present, we reviewed and approved the July 28 minutes.

Launch of the Campaign of Kindness: Rev. Kimberley reviewed her 12 recommended tenets of the new UUSO Campaign of Kindness. The Board of Trustees committed to following these to the best of our ability. To quote Rev. Kimberley: “if we take up kindness as this congregation’s spiritual practice, we may see a difference in how information is shared, how decisions are made, how people make space for one another, how people treat one another.” Based on recent unintentional missteps resulting in hurt feelings and a longtime member leaving UUSO, the Trustees are especially focused on tenet #9: Include the right people. When setting up meetings or sending emails, ask “Who isn’t in the room or on the email that may be affected”? Karen also reviewed with the Board her 10 questions to ask when considering a change such as “Who has been included in discussing the change?” and “Who will be impacted by the change?” The Board noted that our work on the Congregational Covenant of Right Relations fits well into this exploration, particularly the current draft summary phrases of:

- Get involved, and stay engaged
- Be Honest and Kind
- Be Respectful and Open Minded
- Grow and Learn Together

Treasurer’s report: We voted to add Karen Palmer, Arlana Young, Jeane Bennett-O’Dea, Margaret Davis and Sue Gates as signatories for the UUSO Community Bank Account with Sue as “read only”. We also voted to add the Endowment Committee Chair and Financial Secretary to the Walden Equity Account with Schwab. The Board reviewed the Profit and Loss Statement for July to be adjusted upon closing the 2017-18 year out.

Other Business: We reviewed proposed bylaws changes to be presented at the Congregational Meeting in October. We also discussed Sounding Board questions and comments which were all referred to other committees or to the bylaws.

Next BOT Meeting and Sounding Board: The Board will meet next on Wednesday, September 19 at 6:30pm in the Sanctuary. All UUSO members and friends are welcome to observe. We also encourage comments, questions, and concerns to be expressed during the “Sounding Board” held on Sunday, September 16.

—Karen Palmer
UUSO Board President
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(Continued from page 1)

Kindness is the key. During my time as your sabbatical minister, we'll be focusing on kindness and covenant – this week, I asked the board of trustees, the sabbatical team, and the staff to take seriously the process of being more kind and more inclusive of others when taking actions, having conversations, and making change. You'll be hearing more about our campaign of kindness from them and me in the coming days and weeks, but know that these remarks are the start.

It matters that we are kind to one another. It matters that we are transparent about our actions that might affect another. It matter that we ask who is not in the room, who the stakeholders are, whether it's necessary or useful, or whether a change needs to happen immediately or over time in order to be kind to all.

And – it's about being kind to yourself, too – taking responsibility for your own reactions, asking yourself if it's worth being upset about, or quitting over. Remembering that covenant makes space for mistakes and reconciliation.

We don't have to be perfect. That's the grace of our Universalist faith. But we do need to try to get it right, because the call of our faith is deeply embedded in loving the family of humanity. And that's not just some huge 7-billion person concept. That's you. And you. And the person next to you. And the one who hurt your feelings. And the one you made a cutting remark to. And the one you would rather not be on a committee with. And the one who makes you smile when they're near. And the one you had a hard time with once but forgave and now enjoy. And the one who has learned to trust you again. And the one who is still learning.

You come to the Unitarian Universalist Society of Oneonta for many reasons – spiritual growth and deepening, to put your faith into action as you answer the call of love, to do your part to draw the circle of love ever wider. Remember – the people in this congregation also belong in the circle of love.

It's time to stop whisper campaigns and backroom meetings and subtle – or not subtle threats. It's time to be up front with each other. It's time to consider the human element in this very human organization. It's time to be covenantal. It's time to be a beacon of hope and love – to attract people who want to be here because of how good you are to each other. On December 9th, don't hand Rev. Craig a broken cup – hand him a chalice full of loving kindness.

Rev. Kimberley Debus
UUSO Sabbatical Minister
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BACKPACK BUDDIES & PERSONAL CARE ITEMS

Hello Everyone,

Fall is just around the corner and school is almost started. The children need good food to help them concentrate and have energy for all of their school activities. Please give generously to Backpack Buddies so that many children can be supplied with weekend and evening food. As always, we will collect non-perishable, kid-friendly, vaguely nutritious food items on the first Sunday of the month, **September 2**. As the days get cooler, soups, stews, and other potentially warm food is particularly good. In addition, we are collecting personal-care items for homeless and less fortunate individuals and families. Gather all your vacation leftovers and bring them along. Of course, we accept monetary donations, too -- cash or checks. Please make checks out to NENY Regional Food Bank, with Delaware/Otsego Counties Backpack Buddies on the memo line. Let's start off the school year with a big collection to help the kids in our community have enough to eat. All our contributions are greatly appreciated.

—Dawn Kilts, for the UUSO Social Action Team

PLANS UNDERWAY FOR THE NEW CHAPIN MEMORIAL CARPET

By now, many people have seen the sample of the new carpet chosen with congregational input by the Aesthetics Committee to be installed in the sanctuary, foyer, and coat room this Fall. The Properties Committee has been busy securing contractors and carpet installers to begin the work with a projected start date of September 10. At this time we will need 6-10 sturdy volunteers to place all Sanctuary chairs on to the stage so the old carpet removal, floor repair, and electrical work can begin. Please contact Karen Palmer if you are interested in helping out. It is likely that the following Sunday service will either be held on the wooden floor or in an alternate location. If all goes well, the carpet will be installed the following week and we'll be holding the next worship service on a brand new carpet. Again, a team of volunteer chair movers will be needed. Naturally unexpected surprises may occur as the old carpet is removed and the floor repair begins so flexibility and patience will be required throughout this project. We are indebted to Tom O'Brien for making the initial arrangements with Colortile of Oneonta and various contractors and to Duncan Smith, chair of Properties for coordinating the project.

—Karen Palmer
UUSO Board President

HONORING OUR SHARED MINISTRIES THE SOCIAL ACTION TEAM

The Social Action Team (SAT) is actively living out our UUSO Mission by "Reaching for a Better World". Throughout the past year SAT reached out to the community by sponsoring events featuring dinners and films on anti-militarism led by former member, Lisa Barr and former chair Suzanne Miller along with the other members. Other projects from last year and continuing this year include supporting the NAACP film series, Backpack Buddies, UUSC Guest at your Table, Family Services support, Social Action Table after Worship Services (literature, petitioning, letter writing), Food for Thought events, and Change for Change coordination. The Social Action Team has also sponsored events to support Syrian Refugees and other causes. Their meetings hosted by Alice Siegfried at her home include the spiritual components of lighting a chalice, reading opening and closing words, and reviewing their covenant. They enjoy a social time together with a potluck following the meeting. The current Chair is Carol Malz and the current members are Chuck Hudson, Dawn Kilts, Rhiannon Ham, Kari Reynolds, Kathy Shimberg, Janet Sutta, Emily Philips, Alice Siegfried, Dotty Hudson, and Arlana Young. Cindy Squires rolls the coins and makes the deposits for Change for Change. The Social Action Team truly brings UUSO's Mission outside of the four walls of its buildings and into the world to make a positive difference.

HELPING SYRIAN REFUGEES

Thanks to the generosity of our UUSO family, the Social Action Team (SAT) was able to send a check for \$1,809 to support The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) work helping Syrian refugees in Croatia. We are grateful to those who attended the Anne Feeny benefit concert in May and others who subsequently made donations.

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee has partnered with The Center for Peace Studies (CPS) in Croatia to support Syrian refugees. The CPS provides immediate humanitarian support for refugees and engages in advocacy for changes in Croatian and European Union asylum policy.

The focal point of the initiative is building a Refugee Support Center in Zagreb to provide an array of direct services to transiting and long-term refugees — including legal aid, humanitarian support, psychosocial support, employment counseling, a Croatian language program, and special empowerment programs focused on women and families, children, and young men.

To read more about the UUSC refugee program visit: <http://www.uusc.org/initiatives/syrian-refugee-response/>

—Kari Reynolds for UUSO Social Action Team



EVERY PENNY COUNTS THANKS TO CYNTHIA SQUIRES

When you put your coins in the collection plate on Sunday to support the Social Action Team's (SAT) Change for Change program, someone must count them, wrap them, deposit them in the bank and request the check to be sent to the charity at the end of the month—that wonderful volunteer is Cindy Squires. The Finance Committee and SAT are so grateful for her service in this weekly time-consuming process. Cindy is one of our long-time members and throughout the years she has served the UUSO in many ways, among them; Board of Trustees President, a leader of the capital campaign that raised funds to buy OBH, and a member of the then name Social Responsibility Committee which became SAT.

Thank you, Cindy, for your ongoing service to our beloved community. You are a treasure.

GRATITUDE TO OUR SOUP SAINT AND FRUITCAKE FAIRY—PAM STROTHER

As you sip your coffee or tea each Sunday during coffee hour, you can thank Pam Strother for coordinating the volunteers who provide the service each week. Pam is also the chair of the Worship Committee which plans each service and arranges for speakers and musicians. For many years Pam has been a vital part of the Stewardship Committee and is the society's brain trust for the comings and goings of members and friends in our database.

Pam has generously donated her fabulous fruit cakes to the Cookies and Crafts sale each year. This year she is co-chairing Cookies and Crafts, which as always, will feature her famous Corn Chowder. Pam makes gallons of soup year-round to fulfill subscriptions from the auction and for those in the society who could use a little extra help. She had also led a meditation group and can always be counted on the pitch in at events.

A health alarm this summer reminded us how much we count on Pam's service to our community and we rejoice in the good news of negative test results. We celebrate Pam's service to the UUSO and deeply appreciate all that she does for our community.

UUSO UPCOMING WORSHIP SERVICES

SUNDAY MORNINGS AT 10:30AM

Order, Disorder, Reorder

REV. SAM TRUMBORE

AUGUST 26 • 10:30 AM • UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY



We tend to prefer order to disorder.
Yet life has a way of messing
with our organization.

The cycle of change moves through three phases:
breakdown, disorder, new order.

How can we honor each phase of change
rather than fight them?

**No RE — Summer Break*

With music provided by Michael & Dorothy Frye-Hunt
Worship Associate: Rich Stelling

Coffee Hour Host: Kim Yousey-Elsener
Ushers: Ben Friedell & Meghan Ainsworth
Chancel Table: Alice Siegfried
Sound System: Scott Segar



Invited to visit this "second home,"
the opportunity to remember countless,
varied reunions arose.

Let's explore other reunions that surprise,
challenge, and delight us.

**No RE—Summer Break*

With Music provided by Michael & Dorothy Frye-Hunt
Worship Associate: Keith Willcox

Coffee Hour Host: Patricia Engel LaFata & Jesse Schwabe
Usher: Kim Yousey-Elsener & Sue Troost
Chancel Table: Suzanne Miller
Sound System: TBA

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UUSO DEADLINES:

UU News Articles: Deadline for the week of September 5th
issue is September 3rd, by 9AM.

Order of Service Announcements:

Wednesday a.m. before the Sunday Service

Verbal Announcements:

Contact Worship Associate by Friday before Service



Green Sanctuary Corner

SAVE THE DATE

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

September 23 following the Service

Climate Change Presentation by Professor Kevin Schultz

Possible Solstice Presentation by Jackie Burke