



THE UUS NEWS

January 2021

WE ARE A WELCOMING, SPIRITUALLY DIVERSE HOME. WE ACT ON OUR VALUES:

- * HONOR THE EARTH
- * ADVOCATE FOR RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE
- * FOSTER DEEP CONNECTIONS
- * EMBRACE THE ONGOING QUEST FOR MEANING

Upcoming Sunday Services

Join the Virtual Service via Zoom each week at bit.ly/UUSVirtualService. Meeting ID: 422 482 660, Passcode: 006311

Or join via phone: Find your local number: bit.ly/UUSServices [FindZoomNumber](#).

Each week the Zoom meeting will open at 9:50 am, with the service beginning at 10. A time for virtual fellowship will follow.

January 3rd: "Burning Bowl," Dan Gall

The Burning Bowl service is an opportunity to release the past year and find hope as we enter the next. If you would like to participate in the ritual from home, you will need a bowl of water, a scrap of paper and something to write on it with (we will be dissolving the paper in the water), a candle or equivalent (any source of light can represent the internal light we rely on for guidance). The holiday kit many of you received from UUS has the dissolving paper and the Christmas Eve kit includes candles. Single persons received an extra candle to use, and families should have plenty of candle left to use again, but any candle/light and normal paper will work as well. All are welcome to participate in the ritual virtually through service leader and UUS member Dan Gall if you don't want to perform the actions yourself.

January 10th: "Finding a Better Way," Mary McCann

The UUS Racial Justice and Social Justice Teams, along with the African American Museum of Iowa, have been the dear shepherds of a racial equity program called "A Better Way Forward" for the Clear Creek Amana (CCA) Schools. The work that began through simple conversations with CCA students of color has become a convergence point for over 130 parents, community members, teachers, librarians, counselors, and school board members. We have mobilized to create a revised and racially inclusive curriculum, policies, procedures, victim protections, community education opportunities, and the Truth Download BIPOC Student, Allies, and Adult racial justice discussion groups. This Sunday we'll hear how together we managed to find a better way forward. Service leader and UUS member Mary McCann was called to racial justice work by her mom, Anne McCann, a fierce racial justice warrior in the 1950s and 60s.

January 17th: "The Demands of Inner Truth,"

Rev. Diana Smith

January 24th: "Imagining Wholeness for Me, for You, for Them, for All of Us," Rev. Diana Smith

January 31st: "Shifting Our View," Rev. Diana Smith

What's possible when we invite ourselves to imagine together?

January's Social Justice Offerings Benefit the Abbe Center for Community Mental Health

The professional staff of the Abbe Center, located in the Towncrest area of Iowa City, seek to improve lives in our community through the integration of mental health and wellness services. Physician, nurse practitioner, and social work services are available weekdays by appointment.

Cash or check donations can be given [online through Realm \(onrealm.org/uusic/-/give/SJOffering\)](https://onrealm.org/uusic/-/give/SJOffering), or mailed to the office. (Write checks to UUS, with *Abbe Center* on the memo line.)

January Birthdays

Kara Beauchamp	Olivia Headings	Judy Quinn
Marsha Cheyney	Sarah Holmes	Leo Rode
Ron Crawford	Trey Hotsenpiller	Ricardo Sauro
Jo Cunningham	Merle Ihne	Cheryl Tugwell
Jane DeWitt	Connor Jakob	
Donna Friedman	Miriam Kashia	If you would like your birthday listed in the newsletter (or removed), contact dcl@uusic.org .
Keith Friestad	Barbara Laughlin	
Laura Friestad	Halie Lopez	
Meredith Gall	Ron Owings	
Kianna Haslett-Tomova	Wyatt Palmer	
	Pat Pavelich	

Past Sunday Service Attendance

November 29th: ~121 Participating Zoom Accounts

December 6th: ~124 Participating Zoom Accounts

December 13th: ~125 Participating Zoom Accounts

December 20th: ~148 Participating Zoom Accounts



From Your Minister

Dear Ones,

While everything has been different this year, nonetheless it has been a rich, full month. And now, as you read this, we're moving into the quieter liminal space between Christmas and New Year's Day.

Throughout my life I've particularly valued this time. I've usually managed to be scheduled out of work or to be on a school break, so after the

immediate busyness of Christmas passes, I've blessedly been able to relax and rest from the exhaustion of the work or school year, play, reflect, and find some renewed energy and spirit for the beginning of the new year. The years I've needed to work during this liminal time of the year, I've enjoyed the slower, quieter pace. It's also allowed me to reflect, connect, relax, and find renewed energy in its own way.

This year many of us will be missing the opportunities to do some of what we usually do at this time of year, including traditional ways of bringing in the new year. And yet, even with so much that's different, the end of one year and the beginning of the next still invite us to reflection and imagination.

As we reflect in a deeper way on what has happened in this past year and what we wish to carry forward in the next year, here are some questions I've found useful in this work:

- Where, for what, and for whom have I felt gratitude, thankfulness, or appreciation this year? Where haven't I felt it? What does that tell me and how can I grow in this practice?
- Where are connections showing up that are strengthening and challenging me?
- Whose stories have I listened to this year? Whose voices are missing? Who told those stories?

- How have our Soul Matters themes showed up in my life and changed me? (This fall they've been Trust, Renewal, Deep Listening, Healing, and Stillness.)
- How have I lived love into the world with courage? How have I lived my values?
- What has my spiritual practice been this year? How is it feeding my spirit? What are the things I want to continue and what are the things I want to change?
- What has this strange year taught me about what I want to grow in this world? What lessons has it taught me that I don't want to leave my life when the pandemic is over?

We best ask ourselves questions like these with humility, grace, and courage, wishing to be transformed by them. If what we find is difficult, doing the deep work of grappling with these feelings will help tell us about ourselves, humanity, and our relationship with the world. By bringing love, humility, and deepening connection into those spaces we grow. We may also find practices we wish to continue growing into, or things that our love and values ask us to change so that we may grow. We grow, too, by letting Love, a deep, courageous Love, come into our hearts and lives, and following it.

In January, we'll begin 2021 by reflecting on the theme of Imagination. I'll be bringing my own work from these coming weeks into that. I hope you will, too.

May this liminal space bless you and all with its gifts. And go in Peace, Love, and Justice, always. Rev. Diana

P.S.: I'll be on vacation and study leave from December 25th through January 6th. I look forward to beginning to catch up on voicemails and emails on January 7th. If you have a pastoral emergency before January 7th, please contact the Pastoral Care Team through Winnie Ganshaw or another member, or leave a voicemail on my cell phone: 541-4330. Peggy Garrigues will be the staff member on call from December 25th through January 1st, after which Jessica Zimmer and Emma Barnum will return from their vacations. The staff member on call can also help you reach the Pastoral Care Team or me.

From Your Board President, Joe Rasmussen

Planning to Plan

The policy governance structure that UUS has entered into places an emphasis on planning. The Board of Trustees has agreed to hold a planning session on January 30th. We will make this an annual session to look at the broader issues and mission and vision of UUS. That will be followed up by a Board retreat in June involving the retiring Board members and the newly elected members to set three goals for the coming liturgical church year. At this point we are trying to educate ourselves on how to plan, rather than establishing new ground-breaking concepts. Simply saying you are going to plan does not create a process for planning. It's complicated.

I am thinking of this as a health check of UUS. How is the health of our programming? How is our financial health? How is the health of our building and grounds? How is the health of our support staff? How is our health in our outreach to the wider

community? We also have a strategic plan that was formulated in 2012 and adopted in 2013. You can find that on our UUS website under the Board and Governance section. It was done at the time that Reverend Steven was just hired. Now we have Reverend Diana, who has a significant background in planning. Tackling a new strategic plan is something we will work on in the future after Reverend Smith has time to get her new ministry established. I urge you to go to our website and read the existing strategic plan. It is interesting reading, especially when you compare it to all the things UUS has done since 2013.

Speaking of the future, we all share the hope that 2021 will be an improvement over 2020. How can it not be? We have weathered the storms that 2020 threw at us, and emerged a stronger and unified community. If you are a person who makes New Year's resolutions, please keep UUS in mind. Please stay safe, and we will see each other again in our outstanding building during 2021. Peace.

Parent/Caregiver Group, January 8th

Due to the New Year's Holiday, January's Parent/Caregiver group will meet via Zoom on Friday, January 8th, at 7:30 pm. The parent/caregiver is open to all UUS families with school-aged children. It is an opportunity to share our parenting joys and concerns with fellow UUS families, and you do not have to have attended previous sessions to join us. (Zoom Link: <https://bit.ly/UUSParentConvo>, Meeting ID: 854 0755 714, email education@uusic.org for the passcode.)

From the COVID Task Force Team

The COVID Task Force Team last met on December 17th. There is hope on the horizon! We are seeing our first persons receive the COVID vaccine in Iowa. This is incredibly good news.

For those of you tracking the numbers in Johnson County, the COVID Task Force Team continues to use <https://iowacovid19tracker.org/johnson-county/> for tracking. After researching the various tracking sites for Iowa, we still feel this is the best tracker we have available. The site numbers are a little higher than what you will see on the state because of how and when they are reported. The Iowa State Education Association also uses this group for their state tracking.

The COVID Task Force Team has been researching our HVAC system and how COVID spreads inside buildings. While air cleaners, HVAC filters, and our stellar green building can help reduce airborne viruses such as COVID, it is not enough to protect people from exposure to COVID even with masks. We will continue to see what we can do to optimize our system to reduce viral load as much as possible, as this will be important once we are back in our building. There are other factors to consider when it comes to our risk for exposure to COVID when gathering indoors such as length of time gathering, how close people are to one another, and aerosol spray when a person coughs, sneezes, or talks loudly.

Some people have asked how long it will be before we can gather in the building now that people are getting vaccinations. The phases for reopening are based on the positivity rate in Johnson County. This is still the best indicator of how safe it is to reopen. As people receive the vaccine this number should go down in time.

Our 2nd principle is justice, equity, and compassion in human relations and our 7th principle is respect for the independent web of all existence. Both speak to how we are committed to each other and the welfare of all. None of us are going to be okay if one person gets COVID while being at UUS. This is about caring for each other and our community enough to take a stand and say we will not spread COVID at UUS.

We are currently in Phase 1 of our Reopening Plan. The UUS building is closed to all besides staff and essential volunteers. The labyrinth and trails are open for visitors in the same household/pandemic pod. Everyone over 2 years of age is required to wear masks, use hand sanitizer, and keep at least six feet away from others who aren't in their household/pod. Group meetings on the grounds are not allowed in Phase 1. Contact a staff member if you have a necessary task inside the building. Incidental access to the building (such as using the bathroom or for other unessential purposes) is discouraged as much as possible and requires following all safety protocols and signing in and out. As a reminder: If you are meeting off site as part of a UUS group, you need to follow all the guidelines for the current phase.

Winter Connections, January through March

You are invited to join us for a new UUS program, Winter Connections! This program connects your family (whether you have children at home, not at home, or not at all) with a UUS member for regular, weekly, safe (no contact) communication.

In our beloved multigenerational community, we can all benefit from creating more time to share our stories, our challenges, our perspectives, and our wisdom with one another. We hope you will consider joining us for an opportunity to ward off winter blahs and pandemic seclusion with a weekly connection to another member of our congregation.

Winter Connections is an informal way of enhancing your own life journey and the journey of others during this unique time of doing "connections" differently. The program begins in January and ends March 30th.

Weekly connections can happen through letters, phone, or video chatting. The method for connecting is up to you and your Winter Connections participant. Wondering what you would talk about? The possibilities could include sharing or reading favorite books, enhancing skills like cooking or caring for plants; sharing a childhood memory or giving oral histories; helping to explore career interests or discussing family traditions; exchanging food experiences or stories about hobbies. We hope these have encouraged you to begin to see even more possibilities.

To be paired with a member/family in the congregation, please complete the sign-up: bit.ly/UUSWinterConnections. If you need further information or a paper copy of the sign-up, please call Nancy Noyer at 400-8068 or Monique DiCarlo at 624-8021.

January Covenant Groups

As 2020 came to a close, covenant groups asked themselves, "What does it mean to be a people of stillness?" Perhaps no question was more pertinent in a year when so much normal activity was interrupted and "socially isolating" became a thing. But true stillness involves much more. It is not the same as inaction. It's not retreat from the world. It is, however, a momentary uncoupling from our surroundings, a state of quiet in which we can breathe, pay attention to what's happening inside us, and perhaps achieve greater clarity in our thinking. As Tara Brach has written, "Through the sacred art of pausing, we develop the capacity to stop hiding, to stop running away from our own experience. We begin to trust in our natural intelligence, in our naturally wise heart, in our capacity to open to what arises."

In what ways do you pause and experience stillness? Do you meditate, walk in the outdoors, listen to music? What effect do these times of stillness have on you? Do they give you greater understanding, restore your strength and sense of commitment? Perhaps there are other ways of pausing and renewing that you could share with others.

If questions like these intrigue you, you may be ready to join a covenant group. The covenant group program offers its members the opportunity to their views and deepen their understanding of a wide range of issues while creating closer ties with other UUs. You can learn more about the program and how to join a group by contacting Jan Locher (354- 6260, locherj@mchsi.com).

UUS Free Lunch Program Report

Friday, December 11th, marked the last second Friday of 2020 for UUS Free Lunch volunteers and the ninth month of the “new normal” due to the pandemic. On this rainy Friday, five dedicated Free Lunch volunteers—Vicki Siefers, Linda Rice, Gary Lawrenson, Sherry Dolash, and Bonnie Penno (pictured below)—assembled and served 68 meals to diners via the side door at 1108 South Gilbert. Bonnie reports that the Free Lunch guests really enjoyed the hot meal and hot coffee. Our volunteers then packed up an additional 25 meals which were taken to the day shelter at Robert A. Lee Center downtown. Shortly before noon, Gay Mikelson stopped by and brought a special thank-you message to volunteers and to Star Wojciak whose donation generously purchased the main dish and the dessert. Thanks also to Lee and Sue Eberly for purchasing fresh fruit and to the many UUS Free Lunch volunteers, members, and friends whose generous donations once again purchased side dishes. As we end this challenging year, we celebrate the generosity of our UUS community, the dedication of UUS volunteers, and the creativity of the Free Lunch Program staff in continuing to provide meals to community members six days a week.



Green Sanctuary Team Report

Use January to rethink some of your less-than-ecological habits. Shuck your addiction to plastic with substitutions! Biodegradable garbage bags are now available at many local stores. Remember bar soap? No plastic! You can order bar shampoo from Lemongrass Spa or the Earthling Company. Those huge plastic bottles of laundry detergent could be replaced by laundry strips from TruEarth.

Winter is also a good time to address energy issues in your home. To reduce greenhouse gases, unplug electronics when not in use, screw in all LED light bulbs, take short showers, and check for leaks around doors and windows. If you are replacing a dryer or stove, think about buying electric. Consider an energy audit for your house or apartment. Green Iowa AmeriCorps offers free energy audits in Iowa City: www.icgov.org/files/iowa-city-update-free-energy-audits.

Young children everywhere will thank you for your attention to the environment now.

Immigration Action Team Report

A cavalcade of caring showered our Circle of Friends families with gifts and gift cards for the holidays. The dolls and soccer ball, warm clothing, gift cards and gas cards will go a long way for these families hit hard by a decrease in income. Thank you to all who contributed and to those who sent caring thoughts.



Labyrinth Complete

With the installation of several bronze plaques last month, the UUS labyrinth (pictured above) is now completed. The smaller sign is next to the public sidewalk and includes the symbol for handicapped access. There are already indications that non-UUs feel welcome to use the space. We are excited to have this unique and meditative space on our grounds! Contact Virginia Melroy (virginia-melroy@uiowa.edu) or Deb Schoelerman (dschoelerman@gmail.com) if you would like to know more information about our labyrinth.

IUUWAN Report

Unitarian Universalist networking occurs in Iowa thanks to the Iowa UU Witness and Action Network (IUUWAN). Eight board members (from UU congregations large and tiny) plan conferences, offer support to small congregations, and champion social justice causes. In addition, IUUWAN has been coordinating presentations of Drawdown by UUS members, and so far 9 of the 14 UU congregations in Iowa have participated or will this month. IUUWAN thanks the UUS Social Justice Team for their support.

Congregational Administrator's November Financial Report Excerpt

November's pledge income continues a trend of under-budgeted giving. Year-to-date we have received 74.46% of our pledge goal, about \$80,371.69 behind budget). Our Endowment Accounts mostly rose in November, with only the UUA-held funds reporting losses (as of 11/20/20).

In November, UUs raised \$2,027 for our various social justice agencies, including \$1,507 for November's agency, the Free Lunch Program, \$95 extra for the Emma Goldman Clinic (October's agency), \$50 extra for the Shelter House (September), and \$50 for the Free Dental Clinic (December). \$325 had been donated at month's end for the Project Holiday initiative.

I will be making some aesthetic changes to the order of the 2021 budget lines to facilitate better tracking of staff-controlled funds. For example, instead of a general Supplies line with sub-accounts for office supplies, programming supplies, etc., instead we'll have an Office Expenses section with subaccounts for all office-related general expenses, including Supplies, Refreshments, etc., and so on for the other staff areas. This will allow staff to better track their overall spending. No budget totals will change and all other budget lines should keep their name and account numbers from 2020. —Emma Barnum

Unitarian Universalist Society Board of Trustees Meeting Highlights

December 16th, 2020 (virtual via Zoom)

Board meeting minutes are available on the website or can be requested from the UUS administrator.

PRESENT: Joe Rasmussen (President), Alan Swanson (Vice-President), Amy Fretz (Past-President), Mike Pavelich (Treasurer), Carol Adamson (Secretary), John Raley (Financial Trustee), Colleen Higgins (Trustee), Paul Pomrehn (Trustee), Julia Audlehelm (Trustee), and Rev. Diana Smith (Minister, Ex-Officio). **GUESTS:** Deb Schoelerman, Vicki Siefers

Board President Joe Rasmussen called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

CONSENT AGENDA: The Board voted and received the consent agenda and approved the November Board minutes, December Executive Committee minutes, staff report, Treasurer report and financial summary, and Executive Committee approval of fundraising requests (Project Holiday, Circle of Friends Gift Giving, and Griselda's Weavings Publication).

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Committee Procedures and Lay Member Appointments effective January 1st, 2021:

- Rasmussen made a motion, seconded by Pavelich, to appoint lay members Tom Larkin and Mary McMurray to the Governance Committee. The motion carried.
- Rasmussen made a motion, seconded by Pavelich, to appoint lay members Mary McMurray, Carmen Griggs, and Sheri Zastrow to the Personnel Committee. The motion carried.
- Rasmussen made a motion, seconded by Pavelich, to appoint lay members Jane DeWitt, Sharon Booker, and Jim Olson to the Right Relations Committee. The motion carried.
- Rasmussen made a motion, seconded by Raley, to appoint lay members Winnie Ganshaw and Kelly O'Berry to the Mission and Vision Committee. The motion carried.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- **Group Read:** *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times* by Peter Steinke. Board members discussed section three.
- **Building Re-opening: Benchmarks and Phases:** Due to the surge in COVID-19 community transmission in Johnson County, UUS continues to be in Phase One with the building closed. Rev. Smith said the COVID Team continues to discuss metrics related to vaccination rates and will look at building HVAC system meeting air circulation needs.
- **Mortgage Refinance:** Pavelich reported that he and Rasmussen met with bank officers on December 4th, but there is an error in the documents, so the bank is re-drafting for signatures. Pavelich will make sure the error is corrected.
- **Internet Connection and audio-visual equipment purchase:** Mediacom sub-contractors have installed new coax cable from the street to the building. An installer inspected the site on December 10th. AV equipment has been ordered and a new laptop will be needed to handle live streaming requirements. Rev. Smith and Emma continue to work on the position description and hope to have it ready for the January Board meeting for review and approval.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Spending Guidance for 2021:** The Executive Committee reviewed the spending position at its meeting in October as team leaders were asking for guidance on using unspent budget funds for actions before the end of the year. It was agreed for Reverend Smith and Treasurer Pavelich to send a

joint email that it was acceptable to use funds for expenses required to maintain the health of a team's mission. Otherwise, they should hold off on spending through the end of the fiscal year. Pavelich made a motion, to continue the current spending guidance into 2021 until further notice. The motion was seconded by Pomrehn. No further discussion. The motion carried.

- **Music Director and/or Accompanist position(s) authorization:** Rasmussen made a motion, seconded by Swanson, to authorize Rev. Smith to create a search committee and hire the new Music Director. There was no further discussion. The motion carried.
- **Compensation related to home office expenses:** Full-time staff have found it necessary to upgrade their personal phone and internet services to work from home. At the same time, utilities at the UUS building have decreased. Rev. Smith asked if the Board needs to approve this, or just be notified. Raley feels this should be in the form of a reimbursement or flat amount, and therefore does not need to be a Board policy. After discussion, the Board decided that this is a decision that can be made by Rev. Smith as chief of staff.
- **Date for January Planning Meeting:** The date and format of the planning meeting was discussed.
- **Holiday Season recognition by UUS Board:** Rasmussen made a motion, seconded by Swanson, to recognize staff with an end-of-the-year monetary holiday gift, funded through the discretionary and the scholarship line items of the Board budget. The motion carried.

Rasmussen adjourned the meeting at 9:14 pm. The next meeting is Wednesday, January 20th, at 7 pm.

—Carol Adamson, Secretary

Treasurer's November Financial Report Excerpt

Overall, our bank and stock accounts remain stable. We are not overspending; it was a good stocks rebound month. The end-of-month total for our various Operating Bank Accounts equals \$396,300. Endowment Funds end-of-month totals equal \$1,445,000.

Ken Atkinson and I initiated transfers between the bank accounts and endowment stocks to cover all the decisions and donations/earnings that were made in 2020. We also implemented a 5% transfer from the General Endowment to the Operating Account during 2021, to be paid in monthly installments. The Finance Committee approved these transfers and the idea of rectifying funds between the Endowment and bank each December.

Other highlights: the Stewardship Team reports that they have obtained a total of 188 Pledges for 2021 amounting to \$370,000. We signed a 5-year loan extension with CSB at 3.55% interest on December 4th. Fees were \$500. First payment will be January 1st, 2021. Finally, an ad hoc Finance subcommittee has been formed to develop drafts of new Gift and Giving policies and procedures.

—Mike Pavelich

The UUS News

The Unitarian Universalist Society
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UUS Staff

Minister: Rev. Diana Smith (minister@uusic.org)
Congregational Administrator: Emma Barnum (admin@uusic.org)
Director of Lifespan Religious Education:
Jessica Zimmer (education@uusic.org)
Director of Congregational Life: Peggy Garrigues (dcl@uusic.org)
Publicity Coordinator: Jeff Walberg (publicity@uusic.org)
Administrative Assistant: Nik Jakob (admin.assistant@uusic.org)
Religious Education Assistant: Anna Rode (re.assistant@uusic.org)
Building Steward: Ron Wright (contact the office)
Online Music Leader: Dave Rowe (info@daverowemusic.com)
Community Minister: Rev. Lois Cole (community.minister@uusic.org)

UUS Board of Trustees, 2020-2021

President: Joe Rasmussen (721-7777, uusicc.joe@gmail.com)
Vice President: Alan Swanson (321-3129, alan-swanson@mchsi.com)
Past President: Amy Fretz (720-207-4513, amymhere@gmail.com)
Secretary: Carol Adamson (855-8625, cadamson2@zoho.com)
Treasurer: Mike Pavelich (338-5168, treasurer@uusic.org)
Finance Trustee: John Raley (321-5437, jraley@amfam.com)
Trustee: Colleen Higgins (646-6564, colleeniris9@gmail.com)
Trustee: Paul Pomrehn (594-2371, paulpomrehn@gmail.com)
Trustee: Julia Audlehelm (530-4471, juliasdrawings11@gmail.com)

Our Mission: We are a welcoming, spiritually diverse home. We act on our values: Honor the Earth; Advocate for racial and social justice; Foster deep connections; Embrace the ongoing quest for meaning.

Our Vision: We aspire to be a more inclusive, loving, diverse congregation that welcomes all people. We will defend and celebrate the Earth, confront racial and social injustice, and nurture deep connections.

Our Seven Principles

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person.
2. Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.