

8/18/2020

To the members and friends of FUSIT,

In coffee hour this past Sunday, there was a report shared of racist comments addressed to a person of color during previous coffee hour conversations. We as a Board want to say in the strongest possible way that racism will not be tolerated. Racist comments, actions, and implications break the covenant we share. They make our spaces, whether virtual or in person, unsafe for people of color and other marginalized groups. We are deeply saddened that people of color have not been able to feel safe and welcome in our congregation. We are committed to working to improve this institution. To assist in immediately creating a safer space for all members, friends, and staff of our congregation, several Board members will be present at the remaining summer coffee hours.

Additionally, as we transition from summer hiatus to regular services this Fall, we will be honoring our Spring commitment to work toward being a more anti-racist institution. As outlined in the “Widening the Circle” document recently released by the UUA, this issue goes beyond motivations from a specific incident, and requires sustained action within our congregation and in our larger faith community. We highly recommend all members and friends explore this report, which can be found here:

https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/widening_the_circle-text_with_covers.pdf

We have a lot of work to do as a faith community. We hear the many voices wanting FUSIT to move from education and reflection to action, and we agree. Some of this action will be aimed outward as advocacy, and as Andrew Quagliata so eloquently suggested in his 8/9/20 sermon (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9831BI2c5V4>), it must exist in a cycle with the learning, listening, and dialog we need to do internally.

Throughout the past few years, our congregation has engaged with ideas around anti-racism through sermon topics, book groups, and small group discussions. We are planning to do more. In the letter we sent this Spring we committed to working to dismantle “the systems of oppression, white supremacy, and racism within ourselves as individuals, our congregation, and our community” through the ideas listed here:

- Engage in a year-long study process of race and racism to include consideration of adopting an 8th principle (<https://www.8thprincipleuu.org/>) of UUism that states: “journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”
- Participate in local and state-level conversations about police brutality and reformation of our policing practices and strategies.
- Evaluate our policies (safety policy, in particular) and consider alternative procedures to replace any policies that involve police in congregational matters.

- Engage in spiritual development and education, as it pertains to our personal and congregational ideas about race, bias, justice as a spiritual practice, and systems of oppression and white supremacy.
- Explore the ways we can, as an organization and as individuals, understand and leverage our privilege and power toward the establishment of a more just and equitable society

We are currently working on creating specific goals related to these items and beginning plans for how to honor these commitments. As part of that work, the Board will host a congregational conversation devoted to exploring action items related to anti-racism following the in-gathering service on September 13th.

Additionally, the Board will be considering a proposal put forth for a new staff position devoted to social justice and anti-racism work at the September Board meeting. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please watch the newsletter for further details.

With gratitude, humility, and hope,

Rev. Margaret Weis, Minister
Andy Turner, President of Board of Trustees
Matt Hare, Vice President of Board of Trustees
Diana Nier, Clerk of Board of Trustees
Kim Wilkinson, Board of Trustees
Lyn Staack, Board of Trustees
Elton Hall, Board of Trustees
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