



ITHACA

UUU Connections

2020 / 2021 Issue No. 5

January 1-31, 2021

Ministerial Musings

Sunday Celebrations at 10:30 am
View Sunday worship at www.uuithaca.org

"Finish each day and be done with it. You have done what you could. Some blunders and absurdities no doubt crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day. You shall begin it serenely and with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your old nonsense."
- Ralph Waldo Emerson

We did it! We did it! We made it through 2020, and we are embarking on a fresh new year with new possibilities!

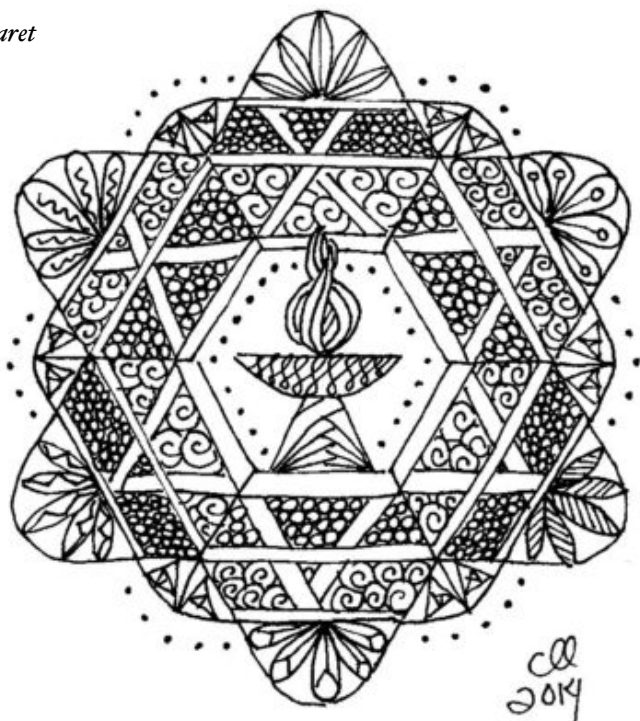
I'm certain that this year, just as all of the years past, will bring with it challenges, heartache, growth, learning, love, and loss. This is what it means to be a human being living a life. And, it is important to reflect on the ways we have grown and overcome challenge in the last year.

What has surprised you?
How have you been challenged in new ways?
What might be different this year as you move forward?

Together as a congregation will be continuing to explore big questions and reflect on big ideas. We will be doing important work to improve our sanctuary, continuing to expand our virtual presence out in the larger community (catch us on channel 13!), and kicking off our Pledge to End Racism work and programming. This is an exciting time!

And, as always, it is vital that we all do what we can to find moments of centering and spiritual practice amidst the busy-ness of life. So, check out this zentangle chalice drawing by my colleague the Rev. Dr. Cynthia Landrum. Perhaps coloring it in, or creating your own, could become a new spiritual practice for you!

Rev. Margaret



***The staff will be on holiday break
until Monday, January 4th, at 9 am.***

Our Mission

Our mission is to create connection, find
inspiration and engage the world.
Connect. Inspire. Engage.

Newsletter of the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca (FUSIT), New York

Religious Exploration News

For information about Religious Exploration, please contact Emily Richards at dre@uuithaca.org.

Greetings from the DRE

Dear FUSIT Community,

The hecticness of the holidays has passed and the bright hope of a new year has arrived. I hope that you were able to experience the magic and stillness of the previous month and that this year brings to all of you an abundance of blessings, good health, and joy.

Helpers will be needed each month to assist with delivering the UU Crate packages to families who are unable to pick them up. Please let me know if this is something you can commit a small amount of your time to helping with.

A special thank you to Scott Grover, Jennifer Streid Mullen, Joan Doria, Brian Heltsely, and Jan Pfeiderer for volunteering their time to help get the December packets out to our families that were unable to pick up their packets. I have been overwhelmed with gratitude the last several months from the support that I have received in this endeavor.

If you have a child or youth you would like to be added to our Religious Exploration program to receive weekly emails and monthly activity boxes, you can contact me at the email address provided above.

Emily Richards, Director of Religious Exploration

Imagination

This month we're exploring the many ways our UU faith invites us to become "A People of Imagination." I am going to invite you all to join me in engaging our imaginations. Imagining together a bright future where we can gather safely with friends and family. Where we care for the earth and one another. In order to build new and fairer worlds, we must first imagine them. So, let the imagining begin!

UU Crate for January

December has passed and I hope that you had a chance to make a snow globe, roll your own candle, and test out how long you can hold the stillness of a yoga pose from one of your yoga cards. There will be more fun items and activities to spark your imagination in your packages this January.

January packages will be available for pick up on the FUSIT porch during the following time:

Saturday, January 9th from 11:00am-12:00pm

Stuffy Sleepover

Saturday, January 23rd - Sunday, January 24th

We would like to invite some very special friends into our building this month, your stuffies! Whether you call them a stuffy, plushie, stuffed animal or just by their given names we are thrilled to be able to invite them to FUSIT for a night of fun and imagination.

Stuffies may be dropped off in the bin on the porch at any time on Friday or before noon on Saturday. Please make sure all stuffies are clearly marked with their name as well as the name of the special child to whom they belong.

Facebook Story Time

Weekly story time with Audrey is continuing live on our Facebook page! Please join us **each Tuesday at 7:00 pm** for an opportunity to gather together virtually and enjoy a story that touches on our theme for the month.

Ways to Help

Volunteers are needed to drop off the monthly UU Crate packages to participating families. This typically happens on the **last or first Saturday of each month** (depending on when the first Sunday service falls) and only requires an hour or so of time. Please reach out if you are interested in volunteering for the RE program or joining the RE Team, contact information is provided above.

Joys and Sorrows

Our thoughts and get well wishes are with Fran Barraclough and Judy Scarpella. They are both currently residing at Oak Hill Manor where Judy is recovering from COVID and Fran, after testing negative, has been moved to the non-COVID floor. They would both appreciate cards sent to 602 Hudson Street, Ithaca, NY 14850.

Thank You

Thanks to your generosity with Shared Offerings we collected the following amounts for these important local organizations:

September \$240 Loaves and Fishes
October \$663 Food Bank of the Southern Tier
November \$660 FoodNet Meals on Wheels

Upcoming Meetings in January

—Team Leader Council:

Tuesday, January 5th @ 6-7 pm

—Celebration Associates Meeting:

Tuesday, January 5th @ 7-8:30 pm

—Small Group Facilitators Meeting:

Tuesday, January 19th @ 4-5:30 pm

Soul Matters Material for January on Imagination

Our December worship theme at First Unitarian Society of Ithaca is Imagination. This month's packet includes a few short readings, spiritual exercises, and discussion questions for you to consider. Here is the link: <https://tinyurl.com/Fusit-Imagination>



Green Tip From the Environmental Interests Circle

New York Law prohibits throwing many types of rechargeable batteries in your garbage. They can be dropped off for recycling at the [Tompkins County Recycling and Solid Waste Center](#) or any retail store that sells them. Non-rechargeable batteries can be disposed of in your garbage; Tompkins County does not have a recycling program for them, but many other New York municipalities do.

January Sunday Services

—Sunday, January 3: *Sing Along*

Join Music Director Stephanie Ortolano and Director of Religious Exploration Emily Richards as we sing in the New Year. Favorite songs of the season, songs for kids, hymns old and new.

—Sunday, January 10: *The Threshold Moment*, Rev. Margaret Weis

We are living in the in-between time where little is certain and much of what we've known as "normal" is changed. What can we learn about how we move forward into the new future and how can we imagine a new normal that is more just and more loving, instead of just more of the same?

—Sunday, January 17: *One Wild and Precious Life*, Rev. Margaret Weis

On this first anniversary of the poet Mary Oliver's death, we will reflect together on her poem Summer Day. We will consider the role that imagination plays in our lives and how it helps to shape our futures.

—Sunday, January 24: *Imagining a New Future*, Rev. Margaret Weis

How are we impacted by the stories we've been told about what is possible? What role does our imagination play in how we see our future? How can we imagine the world as a better place than we found it? Join us as we reflect on these things together.

—Sunday, January 31: TBA

Social Justice Council Needs Volunteers

SJC needs three more volunteers to make and deliver lunches to the Day Center in Ithaca on **Tuesday, January 5th.**

Volunteers may be individuals, families, or groups of any kind. You would buy supplies, make the lunches within 24 hours of delivery, and deliver them between 9:30 and 11:30 am to 618 W. State Street. Each lunch will include a sandwich, a piece of soft fruit, and a cookie or other small dessert.

Our congregation provides 60 lunches (usually four volunteers making 15 lunches each) on the **first Tuesday of every month.** SJC can reimburse your expenses, at your request.

To volunteer and/or ask questions, please contact Jackie Jablonski at jackiejab@me.com.

Leave a message for Jessica or other FUSIT staff by calling the Google voicemail number at (607) 218-2088 and she will pass any information along or call you back.

Minister

Rev. Margaret Weis
minister@uuithaca.org

Religious Exploration
Emily Richards, Director
dre@uuithaca.org

Music Director
Stephanie Ortolano
music@uuithaca.org

Community Engagement
and Outreach
memcoord@uuithaca.org

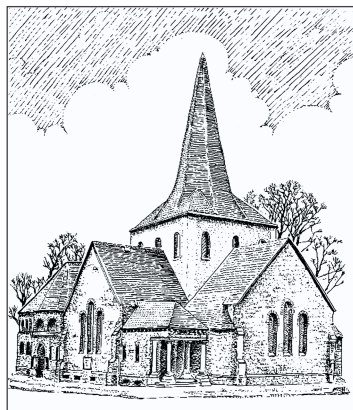
President, Board of Trustees
Andy Turner
ast4@cornell.edu

Congregational Administrator
Jessica English
office@uuithaca.org

Administrative Assistant
Loretta Heimbuch
adminasst@uuithaca.org

Join the FUSIT (internal) Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/171869686459/>

The First Unitarian Society of Ithaca
306 North Aurora Street
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Visit our Website and get
your newsletter:
www.uuithaca.org

Possible Ponderings

The theme for January is Imagination

Possible Ponderings is an offering of ways you might consider engaging more deeply with the theme or reflecting on the ways the idea of Imagination shows up in your life.

January 3-9: How has your imagination shifted or changed throughout your life?

January 10-16: Thoreau once challenged us to “live the life you imagine.” What would that look like for you?

January 17-23: What will you do with your one wild and precious life?

January 24-31: How does imagining the future help you with your goals? How does it impinge upon them?

Did you know
you can text in your donations to
the offering plate on Sundays? Simply
text 607-260-6616 with the amount +
offering (eg: \$5 offering) to donate
by phone. It's super easy!

Pastoral Emergencies

*In case of pastoral need, the Rev. Margaret Weis can be reached at
607-218-4281 (cell) if you need to speak with her.*

Social Media Connections

You can find out about events happening in our congregation, see pictures of past events and connect with other UUs. Like and follow us on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/FUSofI/> Instagram www.instagram.com/ithacauus and Twitter, @IthacaUUs.

Wanted: Treasurer

Are you comfortable using spreadsheets for budgeting? Want to get more involved in FUSIT leadership and get to know what's happening across the church? We need YOU!

We need a new Treasurer for next year, and current Treasurer Jennifer Streid-Mullen is willing to work with you over the first year to ease the transition. We have a bookkeeper, so the position is largely focused on budgeting and communication. If you have any, even marginal, interest, please contact Jennifer, streidmull@gmail.com, or Rev. Margaret.

Board of Trustees December Meeting

The Board of Trustees will hold their monthly meeting on Wednesday, **January 13**, from 6:30-8 pm via Zoom. All interested persons are invited to attend. Contact Andy Turner at ast4@cornell.edu for the link.

January's Side With Love Collection

This month's collection will again be going to The Village At Ithaca. They are dedicated to serving all students and families with school-aged children to help them thrive, providing programs and resources to help students feel confident, intelligent, and connected to their community and learning process.

FUSIT will be collecting computers & computer accessories, specifically new headphones (that will fit elementary and high school aged youth) & earbuds (that come with various size buds) for the spring semester.

Collections will take place on Sunday mornings, at your home, or you may drop them off in the container on the parish house porch any time during the week. If you would like to have your contributed items picked up at your home on Sunday morning, or if you drop something at FUSIT please let Madonna Stallmann know at 607-216-5083, or email madonnaoftheprairie@gmail.com. Also, if anyone would like to help Madonna with pick ups you may contact her at the phone number and email address mentioned above.

Build Your Own Theology - Adult Education Class

Building Your Own Theology (BYOT) is an eight-week series that was developed by our former minister, Dick Gilbert, and has been used across the UUA. BYOT is intended to give participants an opportunity to clarify their own spiritual and theological views in a facilitated, structured group environment. Longtime member Walt Peck will lead our class over the months of January and February. Depending on interest and timing, the class will be offered at 7:00 on Tuesday evenings and/or at 4:00 on Thursday afternoons. If you are interested, please let Jessica know in order to sign-up and to express your scheduling preference.

January Book Discussion Group

The next Book Discussion Group meeting is scheduled for Friday, **January 15**, at 12:30 pm via Zoom. The book is *The Night Watchman* by Louise Erdrich

Upcoming books for 2021 are as follows:

February 5: *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson

March 5: *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett

April 2: *Life of a Klansman* by Edward Ball

Contact Jennifer Streid-Mullen at streidmull@gmail.com.

Sunday Services Online

We joined YouTube over 280 days ago and during that time we've been busy supplying so much content to our congregants near and far. We uploaded 1934 minutes of content to our channel and have gained 253 subscribers. We've received 229 likes, 996 comments, and 69 video shares! We know this year has been tough - and we are so happy that you are all sticking with us as we continue to make church more than a physical space we gather in.

Website Updates

If you see any info on the website that you believe is incorrect or out of date, please send the url and the incorrect info in an email to Jessica at office@uuithaca.org. We could use all eyes on the website to make sure it's current. Thank you for your help!

Upcoming Events



Common Read Book Group: *Breathe: A Letter to My Sons* by Imani Perry (moved from November)
Wednesday, January 6, 6-7:30 pm

Join Rev. Margaret for our monthly Common Read book group where we will be discussing *Breathe: A Letter to My Sons* by Imani Perry. Please email minister@uuithaca.org to sign up and receive the zoom information. For a copy of the book, visit Skinner House Books, Inspirit (UUA bookstore), or contact Rev. Margaret if you need assistance. Information about the January Common Read Book, *Justice on Earth*, can be found here: <https://www.uua.org/read/justice-on-earth>

Living the Pledge Leaders Cohort Workshop, Saturdays, January 9, 16, 23 and February 6, 13, 20 @ 9:30-11:30 am

Pub Theology - Wednesday, January 20th, at 6:30-8:00 pm

Join us for an evening of good fellowship and conversation. We will gather at 6:30 on Zoom and reflect together on the monthly theme of IMAGINATION. Invite your friends! Pub Theology usually takes place the **3rd Wednesday of the month**.

Update from the FUSIT Board of Trustees

The FUSIT Board of Trustees will be providing a brief "Sense of the Board Meeting" report and sharing it through the newsletter and the weekly announcements the week after a Board of Trustees meeting. The full meeting minutes will continue to be made available but this brief meeting summary is intended to keep the congregation tuned in to the activities and priorities of the Board.

Here is the "Sense of the Meeting" from the December 9 meeting, held on Zoom from 6:30-8:06pm.

Rev. Margaret opened the meeting by lighting a chalice.

Recognition: The Board extends congratulations to Rev. Margaret, who has been elected to serve as the Vice President for the St. Lawrence District UU Ministers Association (UUMA) chapter!

Healthy Congregation: Rev. Margaret has been putting together a Healthy Congregations Team, and the current members include Betsy East, Walt Peck, Angela Zhang with two others considering the "ask."

Vision of Ministry: The Board will hold a Balcony meeting in early January, prior to the regular monthly business meeting, to work on the 2021-22 Vision of Ministry. Input from the congregation about our direction for the coming year is appreciated! Please send ideas to Diana Nier (FUSIT Board Clerk) at diana.nier@gmail.com.

Financial Matters: Jennifer Streid-Mullen, our Treasurer, has determined what portion of our PPP loan will need to be repaid. Thank you to Jennifer for her work!

Sanctuary and Organ Repairs: The Board approved funding for repairs and improvements to the Sanctuary, including additional insulation, new plaster, new paint, and updated LED bulbs in the three pendant lights.

FUSIT Service Auction: The ad hoc committee has chosen BiddingOwl as the software for the Auction. The committee will soon publish a list of specific volunteer opportunities. Help us grow into this new method of fundraising and community reinforcement, and remember: this year's auction theme is LOVE!

The Board is also considering a raffle as a supplemental fundraiser. Please contact Matt Hare (FUSIT Board Vice President) at mph75@cornell.edu if you would like to participate in raffle planning.

Countering Structural Racism: The Board has scheduled a January retreat for the Board, Minister and Staff, and the Ministry Anti-Racism team, with the assistance of the Rev. Sunshine Wolfe.

Nominating Committee: There are currently two vacancies on the Nominating Committee, which were not filled at the June 2020 annual meeting. The Board will appoint candidates to those positions for a two-year pro-rated term from June 2020 to June 2022. If you would like to volunteer for the Nominating Committee, or would like to nominate someone (who is willing!), please contact Andy Turner (FUSIT Board President) at ast4@cornell.edu.

The next Board meeting will take place on **January 13, 2021**, from 6:30-8:00 pm on Zoom.

LOVE, LOVE, LOVE FUSIT's First February Service Auction

What do you love to do-- bake? read? knit? garden? play? You will have a chance to share your passions and bid in hopes of finding new ones!

Volunteers

We are looking for high energy volunteers to join our service auction ad hoc committee. This is a quick start-to-finish two month commitment from early January to the end of February with a goal of raising \$4,000 (to toss a number out there). If any of these sound like you, email us: board@uuithaca.org

—**Bidding Owl Parliament** (that's a group of owls, btw) people willing to learn about Bidding Owl and how to use it for online auctions – everything from how to use the Bidding Owl platform, create our website, enter services, track bids, finalize winners, and complete payment transactions. This team will work with Bidding Owl's tech support staff and to guide us all through this process.

—**Creative Sparks** to go back through our past service auction catalogs (or their memories) for winning items we want to revisit and to brainstorm new ones. A plus if you know FUSIT members and are comfortable asking them for COVID-safe service items that reflect our UUniqueness. Our goal is a selective list of 20-25 services and/or experiences that can not be found (nevermind bought) anywhere else.

—**Cheerleaders** to focus on marketing and building interest in the auction and our items, inspiring people to look at the catalog of items and to bid!

Donations

Hosted dinners have been hot ticket items-- if you have hosted one of these famed meals, maybe this winter you will teach a zoom cooking class. Do you have a cabin that can be offered for a weekend getaway (following COVID safety guidelines of course)? Are you willing to run errands, do yard work, pet sit? Can you host a private pond skating party? Let's get creative and think about fun ways we can share our time and talents with each other!

First Unitarian is a UUA-recognized (LGBTQ) Welcoming Congregation

Anti-Racism Moment *The Law and Slavery**

Essay: Mass Incarceration by Bryan Stevenson

After the Civil War, in the southern states, “the laws governing slavery were replaced with Black Codes – making the criminal-justice system central to new strategies of racial control.” Each state had its own set of codes, and the crimes included: vagrancy, bearing arms, gathering as a group after dark, adultery between races, and seeking employment without a note from a former enslaver. “Anything that challenged the racial hierarchy could be seen as a crime, punished either by the law or by lynching that stretched from Mississippi to Minnesota.”

Today, the injustice of the Black Codes has been replaced by racial profiling, police brutality, mandatory minimum sentencing rules, three-strikes laws, and the war on drugs. Our prisons are filled with the descendants of African slaves.

Activity: visit the website of the Equal Justice Initiative, an organization formed by Bryan Stevenson dedicated to ending mass incarceration and excessive punishment in the United States. <https://eji.org/about/> Donate if you can!

Link to essay: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/prison-industrial-complex-slavery-racism.html>

*All quotes are from the New York Times 1619 Project Essays

Two Red Cross Blood Drives

Thursday, January 9, 1-6 pm and
Wednesday, January 27, 10 am-3 pm
in the Parlor

Help fuel our community!
Walk-ins
welcome.

Sanctuary Repair Project, Winter 20-21

For a long time, we've been wanting to make our Sanctuary look better. To do so and to take advantage of being unable to use the Sanctuary during the pandemic, we have put together a construction project to fix the plaster cracks and repaint the Sanctuary. Several experts have concluded that the steeple is sound and the cracks are not growing. Buildings and Grounds has been working to develop the scope and details of the project which will also include completing the upgrade of Sanctuary lighting to LED's. In addition, some additional areas of the Sanctuary could use more insulation. These efforts will require a significant amount of scaffolding in the Sanctuary this winter. At the same time, we need to do some major maintenance work to preserve and protect the organ.

The whole project – organ maintenance, insulation, plaster repair, repainting, and LED lighting - will come to about \$150,000. Work should begin in January, with organ work completing after Easter.

Despite the financial hardships of these times for many people, a few generous members have contributed over \$85,000 to this project. The balance will be financed by a loan from our Endowment, at payments that will remain constant with current levels for the next 5-10 years. If you would like to contribute to this project, please contact Jennifer Streid-Mullen at streidmull@gmail.com or Jessica at office@uuithaca.org.

Small Group Facilitator Training



Saturday, January 9th

Noon-2:00 pm

The new year is a great time to expand your small group program and to get some new groups off the ground. As you prepare your new facilitators for these new groups, our new facilitator training is here to help.

This **January 9th** two-hour online training covers the Soul Matters facilitation model, our unique approach to deep and disciplined listening, tips for handling facilitation challenges and start up strategies.

Designed for new facilitators but also serves as a great tune-up training for long-time facilitators!

Reserve your spot now on our Webinars Page: <https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/webinars.html>

Looking for a meeting with Rev. Margaret?

Please visit this link to see availability and set up a time.
<https://calendly.com/weis-rev>

Women's Circle Monday, January 25, at 7 pm

Women's Circle will meet via Zoom on Monday, **January 25**, from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm. We are now generally meeting the 4th Monday of the month. All who identify as women are welcome. This is a drop-in group, so no need to sign up; just come. For information or questions contact Nancy Miller at ananda7733@gmail.com or 607 539 7733.

Zoom link is:

Meeting ID: 819 4014 1421

Passcode: 874536

Babies First Appeal

Babies First is an all volunteer organization, in its 27th year at FUSIT, that provides tangible help to babies, young children, and their families in need within Tompkins County by offering free baby equipment.

Referrals are received directly from individuals or from 18 plus non-profit public agencies throughout the county. Babies First accepts "like new" baby equipment including pack 'n plays, strollers, high chairs, baby carriers etc. BF also provides new unused car seats for infants and toddlers. Covid 19 shut down Babies First in March. We began serving the needs of the community again in June and since then have given away lots of equipment and 13 car seats. We have worked with Tompkins County Action, DSS, The Day Care Council, The Village at Ithaca, refugee programs and others as they opened up.

We missed our Spring fundraiser and the future of Babies First looks bleak unless we can raise some funds to buy car seats. We currently do not have enough car seats to meet the need. Donations of equipment or financial contributions are always welcome. Please consider this and if you chose to help out with Babies First, make your check out to FUSIT Babies First.

Living the Pledge Leaders Cohort Training

After a two-day facilitators workshop in early December, we are holding our first Living the Pledge Leaders Cohort Training. For six sessions in January and February, fourteen of our leaders will experience the workshop, led virtually by Rev. Margaret and four of our own FUSIT leaders, setting the stage for a full FUSIT workshop this spring. Stay tuned for sign-up information!

You've Been Flocked! Join in the FUN!

A new way of bringing joy to each other, and raising some money for our congregation in the process! Interested in having the yard of one of your friends, neighbors, or co-workers "flocked" this winter?

Send an email to the office to find out more information, and we will deliver a flock of rainbow-colored lawn flamingos to their yard and stick them in the snow for the day - completely out of the blue!

What's the point? To have fun!

What's the cost? Sliding scale between \$20-\$100

Coffee Hour Hosts

Coffee hour hosts are in charge of starting the zoom coffee hour, welcoming people to the session, opening the space for the sharing of joys and sorrows (which is facilitated by another assigned person), and creating breakout groups for the remainder of the session. Please email Rev. Margaret and let her know if you are interested in helping to create this important time in the life of our congregation.

New Day Rising National Coming February 27

Want to learn what your fellow congregations are working on, and how you might apply it at home? Join a continent of UUs as we explore next steps in creating Beloved UU Communities.

—**On Your Own:** Watch compelling video TED-talk style testimonials from selected congregations around the continent sharing their learnings, hopes and next steps in their quest for racial equity in their congregations

—**Together: Worship:** Workshops/Caucusing. With plenty of breaks on Saturday, **February 27th**, 12:00 noon-9:00 pm.

Registration opens **January 2021**. Brought to you by the Unitarian Universalist Association. Contact [Rev. Margaret](#) if you are interested in attending.

General Assembly 2021 - Circle 'Round for Justice - Healing - Courage

General Assembly (GA) is the annual gathering of Unitarian Universalists, where we conduct business of the Association, explore the theological underpinnings of our faith, and lean fully into our mission and principles. The UUA Board of Trustees has passed a resolution making the 2021 UUA General Assembly a 100% virtual event. All details can be found at the UUA GA website.

Registration opened December 1, 2020.
Registration for virtual GA 2021 is \$200 per person.
Learn about registration details.

The Mark Pedersen Fund may be able to help pay registration fees for General Assembly. Email the office for further information.

Volunteer Applications also opened on December 1 for those who want to volunteer to lower their costs to attend.

Program Proposals are being accepted in 2 phases - **January 15 and January 29** are the deadlines. There are a number of ways to contribute to GA, such as being a musician, and presenting a poster. Learn more about ways to contribute.

www.uua.org