



Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo

MAY NEWSLETTER

Gather - Inspire - Transform



Minister's Column: What Does it mean to be a People of Story... Especially in the middle of a Pandemic?



It means making it up as we go along, line by line. Each offering a phrase. All contributing to the narrative. Here's how I see our pandemic story, to date.

Chapter One Once upon a time, a deadly plague crept across the land leaving an oozy swath of grief and isolation in its wake. Lord Cuomo of the Lesser Dutchy of New York decreed that the doors of all the churches in the realm be locked and shuttered. And the church leaders wrung their hands. And the people stayed in their homes. And masks were worn. And all

learned to use zoom for... well... everything. It was a long, scary and lonely time.

Chapter Two The Wizards of Pfizer, the Mages of Moderna, and the Witches of Johnson & Johnson threw eye of newt and toe of frog and messenger RNA together to create a Magic Potion of Protection. And the People rejoiced, Huzzah! And the people, some of the people, over a long time were vaccinated. Spring was on the way! Hope floated down across the land like cherry blossoms.

Chapter Three Some people were ready to gather in person. Some people were afraid to gather in person. Often the people who were ready to gather in person and the people who were afraid to gather in person were the same people. The plague rates in the Even Lesser Dutchy of Western New York were increasing. The church leadership wrung their hands. Hope slowly began to droop like a tired daffodil, while anxiety slunk around every door like a wounded cat.

Chapter Four... ummm... er.

Well, Chapter Four has yet to be written. We know, at the end of this particular section of the epic poem that is our community we will eventually meet in person again. When and how we get to the end remains a question. We don't know what happens next because the story we are telling together is still unfolding. The Rev. Dr. Susan Frederick-Gray, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association, just sent out this message:

Last May, the UUA recommended that congregations plan for a year of virtual operations. **Moving into the coming year, the UUA recommends that congregations plan for multi-platform operations—a flexible combination of in-person and online engagement based on the needs and risks in your community.**

Your church leadership is indeed wringing our hands. How will our congregation find a way through these treacherous days? Difficult decisions need to be made as we sail uncharted waters full of very real dangers. That means we are telling the story and making the maps as we go along. The good news is that we have some good stars by which to navigate.

Our Values As we consider what we need to gather together in safety as a faith community we need to lean heavily on our values of inclusion. We need to remember that we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person. Not everyone is vaccinated. Children are not receiving vaccines. People who are immune compromised are not receiving the vaccine. People who are contra-indicated for the vaccine for any number of reasons or even choose not to be vaccinated are not receiving the vaccine. No one should have to choose between their church and their safety.

Science There is good data out there for us to work with. We will follow the latest CDC guidelines and

local public health regulations to determine the best ways to move forward.

The Tortoise, not the Hare We will not win if we rush to the finish line. We will win if we are lovingly flexible and steady in our determination. Have confidence. Have faith. The goal is not perfection. We never have been perfect, and we never will be perfect. The goal is to create the best church we can to serve the members and the wider community. The finish line isn't going anywhere before you get there. We don't need to rush. In fact, the finish line will be far more lovely if all the ministries and membership pull together for a group win. The finish line will be glorious if we have kind and compassionate expectations of ourselves and others.

Here are some things we know as our story develops:

The Board of Trustees is putting together a new Task Force to develop clear protocols for gathering in person. If you are interested in being part of this Task Force, please contact Board President, Martha Malkiewicz.

The Tech Ministry Team is setting up computers and cameras to capture worship services from the Sanctuary.

Even after we begin gathering in person, we will continue to offer online worship services. You will never have to choose between your church and your safety.

Religious Education will almost certainly remain online and remote in the coming year.

Although the church cautions against it, some small groups are planning to meet in person for the first time this month. These groups are profoundly honest with one another and exquisitely inclusive. If one member feels vaguely uncomfortable, everyone knows that it is not the right time to meet. That is just how love works.

The End Some fine day, gradually and carefully, we will discover that we are a new church. And we will discover that we are able live our mission of gathering, inspiring and transforming more fully and more lovingly than ever before. We will discover a deeper sense of justice and more compassionate way to be people of faith.

Yours in faith and affection, Rev. Joan Montagnes

Joys and Sorrows

We hold Donata Ahern in our hearts. She has had a month of mixed blessings. Donata is both a new great grandmother to baby Josephine Shea; and she is recovering from a fall.

We send healing wishes to Beck Brown who recently underwent shoulder surgery this week. May the surgery and his recovery be speedy and uneventful.

We send condolences to Chanda Ramirez O'Donnell. Chanda's uncle recently passed away. This is such a difficult, isolating year for those who mourn. Our hearts are with you.

PLEASE NOTE!

The Noonday Zoom (brown bag lunch) meeting will henceforward be held Monday-Friday.

Pulpit Previews, Zoom Webinar Worship

(click <https://www.buffalouu.org/zoom-info.html> for Zoom Webinar instructions).



May 2: World Made of Stories, Rev. Joan Montagnes

The mysterious space where science and religion meet. Creation, evolution, the Big Bang! This is a Service Auction Sermon purchased by Kathy Kubala. Let's find out how Rev. Joan deals with her questions about Life, the Universe, and Everything.

May 9: Tell Your Truth, Rev. Joan Montagnes

What's your story? It matters. Poet William E. Stafford reminds us "If you don't know the kind of person I am/and I don't know the kind of person you are/a pattern that others made may prevail in the world/and following the wrong god home we may miss our star."

May 16: The Storyteller, Rev. Joan Montagnes

It's all about the narrative. From Homer to Arlo Guthrie, the stories we tell and how we tell them create meaning. Enjoy an epic musical story by percussionist Michelle Purdy.

May 23: Once Upon a Time, Rev. Joan Montagnes

Unleash the power of story – traditional, fairy tales, surprises. Imagine how dry the world would be if we confused the facts with the Truth.

May 30: Our Stories of Memory, Rev. Joan Montagnes

It has been a difficult year permeated with death, often without the usual rituals of mourning. This Memorial Day we hold each other close as we remember all our departed loved ones. Our memories give our beloveds immortality. We lift up our losses with a special musical presentation by our own Music Director, Daniel Bassin and percussionist Michelle Purdy.

Vespers

Vespers services are short casual worship gatherings. Come for candlelight, music, poetry and reflections. Here's the musical line-up for May. May 7, Martha Malkiewicz; May 14, Bruce Pfeffer; May 21, Phil Nicolai; May 28, Kevin Doyle. Every Friday night, 7-7:30pm, outside the Garden Entrance of the church. We observe safe distancing and mask wearing. Chairs available.

Your Loved ones of Blessed Memory



Every year on Memorial Day Sunday we take a moment to remember our beloved dead – those who have died in our church this year, our friends and families who have died while serving their country, and all our loved ones who have died over years. This year we will celebrate those who have passed on with a beautiful slide show. Please send one or many electronic photos with the names of your loved ones to Karen Streech at karenstreech@buffalouu.org by

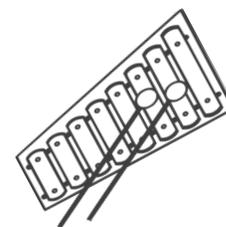
May 25 and your loved ones will be included in our worshipful remembrances.

Music Notes – April 2021

Daniel Bassin, Music Director



During our upcoming month of *Story*-inspired worship, your storied UUCB Music Ministry will offer up an unforgettable celebration of song and story through an eclectic mix of vocal and instrumental pieces, alternately new and familiar masterpieces, and some very special musical collaborations.



It all begins on May 2nd with *A World Made of Stories*. We lead off the month with a popular Disney tune, played by Music Director, Dr. Daniel Bassin, accompanied by local phenom and UUCB Youth Group alumni, Ben Havey – who will soon be off to pursue his Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Missouri Kansas City. Ben will also bring the service to a close with Franz Liszt’s dramatically-narrative keyboard ‘setting’ of Petrarch’s 47th Sonnet. He joins forces with Bass Soloist, Michael Harris, in a classic by Buffalo native, Harold Arlen, *I’ve Got the World on a String*, and Alto Soloist, Helen Lowry, will perform her rendition of Joni Mitchell’s *Big Yellow Taxi*, collaborating with Paul Zanolli.

On May 9th, we gather on Zoom for Rev. Montagnes’s sermon, *Tell Your Truth*. This service features a reprise of Jessie Downs and Helen Lowry’s digital mix duo version of Queen and David Bowie’s *Under Pressure*. Ben Havey will return for a pair of evocative contemporary keyboard works which, in their own ways tell a profound musical narrative through kaleidoscopic prisms of harmony and hypnotic grooves: the opening movement of Tristan Murail’s *Les Travaux et les Jours* will serve as our Prelude, and leading American composer, Sarah Kirkland Snider’s 2013 piano ballad, *The Currents* will provide our Musical Reflection. An additional service highlight will be Jessie Downs and Jonathan Vogtle’s performance of a beloved aria from *La bohème*, “Si, mi chiamano Mimì.”

May 16th is a service all about narration. Keyboardist, Jonathan Vogtle, will sing his (abridged) rendition of Arlo Guthrie’s *Alice’s Restaurant*, to Matthew Spaulding’s guitar accompaniment, and he’ll take up the keys in duo with our Cornette-playing Music Director in the jazz classic, *Body and Soul*. This service also features another remarkable month of May guest musician, Percussionist/Storyteller, Shelly Purdy – whose instrumental talents we first heard on our Christmas Eve service. Shelly will perform Frederick Rzewski’s modern setting of a Homeric hymn, *To the Earth* – a piece written for a speaking percussionist, who also plays flower pots with knitting needles. The service begins with Shelly’s performance of J.S. Bach’s Cello Suite No. 1 Prelude, on Marimba.

Once Upon a Time is our virtual service focusing on fairy tales. Michael Harris and Jonathan Vogtle will share Frank Loesser’s show tune, *I’m Hans Christian Anderson* on a service that also features instrumental dances and meditations from romantic-era musical settings of *Sleeping Beauty*, *Hansel and Gretel*, and *Blue Beard*.

Finally, our Memorial Day service features your UUCB Choir’s monthly recording project, Eleanor Daley’s *In Remembrance* – a choir repertoire staple. Matthew Spaulding will present his new arrangement of the opening piece from *Six Songs from “A Shropshire Lad”* by George Butterworth, an English composer who died on the battlefields of The Great War. Shelly Purdy will perform my setting of the opening chapter of Walter Benjamin’s *The Story Teller*, and the sounds of J.S. Bach, again performed on her marimba, will close out the month through the chorale, *Komm, süßer Tod, komm selge Ruh*. We look forward to sharing this music – and the *stories* they speak so eloquently – with each of you this month!

The world premiere of Jessie Downs' new opera 'The Second Sight' is coming to our church - [June 26th & January 27th, 2021](#)



The world premiere of 'The Second Sight' an opera in three acts with words and music by Jessie Downs, our soprano soloist since 2017, will be premiered Saturday June 26th at 7:00pm and Sunday June 27th 2021 at 2:00pm in our church sanctuary! Composed for her PhD in Music Composition at the University of Buffalo, the opera is a very personal project for Jessie that has been 4 years in the making. After having to postpone the production last year due to COVID-19, we are thrilled to finally be able to help bring this special event to life.

'The Second Sight' is a mythic tale exploring the spiritual connections between generations of women. The music conjures mystical spaces and psychological dramas utilizing a sound palette inspired by a combination of bel canto, folk, and experimental music. The story centers around Diskana, a young woman with a clairvoyant ability called "second sight" who foresees the death of a young child (Sashatya) feeling the pain of the child's grieving mother (Freyaria). Diskana vows to defy fate and attempt to intervene to prevent the child's death. Supernatural forces ultimately weave together the lives of mystic, mother, and child in unexpected ways.

The production features world-renowned mezzo-soprano Ola Rafalo as Diskana, director of UB choirs soprano Claudia Brown as Freyaria, Jessie as Sashatya, and members of her ensemble Sotto Voce Vocal Collective as meddling Spirits - including church member Beth White as the Water Spirit.

Jessie's personal story was the catalyst for creating 'The Second Sight,' as a few years ago her family experienced two great losses: her half sister Sasha at 2 years old from an undetected brain malfunction, and her maternal grandmother after years of health struggles. She wanted to write a work in response to these experiences that attempted to grapple with the strangeness of losing a child, and the different but just as profound mourning of a family matriarch. Although the subject matter may seem heavy, Jessie says that the opera is ultimately hopeful. "I want people to walk away from the experience thinking about death in a new light - as a transition into some new state we don't quite understand. While grief can be terrible, it can also teach us about our deep connections to one another and the earth. The love we have for someone never dies, and so I think our loved ones live on through us. After a year of so much loss, I think this is a message we all need to hear."

Tickets for the shows are available at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-second-sight-a-new-opera-tickets-139116183249>. Seating will be limited, so get yours today!

To donate to the project, you can go to <https://www.asiwny.org/donate/>, scroll down to "Donate to a Fiscal Sponsor Client" and write "for Sotto Voce" in the NOTES section of your payment. To learn more about donating goods or time, contact Jessie at jessiedowns311@gmail.com.

Stay tuned for more about the production at www.sottovocevocalcollective.com or follow the ensemble on FB <https://www.facebook.com/sottovocevocalcollective>.

Universal Access & Inclusion—News Composed by Ginny Vaughan



At our last UAIM meeting, we discussed the appropriate language for people with disabilities. The quandary is, when speaking about a person with a disability, do you identify the person first or do you identify the disability before the person.

Person First Language (Person 1st): Person has a disability

Identity Person (Identity 1st): Disabled person

I have always preferred and was taught in the 1970's that you put the person before the disability. Person 1st language acknowledges the person before the disability. Advocates of Person 1st Language believe that the disability is not the primary aspect of the person. The person has many characteristics, and being disabled is just one of them. The person has many attributes and the disability is just one aspect.

Currently, many disability groups are preferring that their disability become a descriptor distinction. The deaf community have for many years preferred Identity 1st. Deaf people think being deaf is not a deficit but a culture. Many people who are on the autistic spectrum prefer Identify 1st as an autistic person. The autistic community finds identifying the disability first as affirming and validates his/her identity. Lydia Brown, a disabled activist believes that when she is identified as a person with autism 'demeans who she is because it denies who she is.'

Shelly Rohe, the administrator of the UUA Accessibility and Inclusion Ministry Program says the word 'Disabled' is being taken back by people in the disability community. Much like the word, 'queer'. It is a title of pride, "Disabled and Proud." She also says the AIM Program and EqUual Access use both Identity 1st and Person.

If in doubt, it is better to ask the person how they wish to be identified.

UAIM Members are: Tony Keller, Janie Kustreba, Lynn Mancuso, Susan Mann-Dolce, Sophia Roberts, Beryl Smith, Ginny Vaughan, and Steve Wixson

May Share-the-Plate: [Literacy Buffalo-Niagara](#)



Refugees and immigrants who need help learning English to navigate their everyday lives in America.

People who graduated from high school but lack reading skills to thrive in their lives or go after promotions at work. People without a diploma looking for help so they can return to a classroom or simply become less dependent on others to decipher the daily written words they struggle with on utility bills, rental agreements, and medical instructions.

These are the people who come to Literacy Buffalo Niagara.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only heightened awareness of the disparity in our neighborhoods that is fed, in large part, by a lack of reading skills.

Literacy Buffalo Niagara's mission is to develop literacy skills by providing free tutoring in Erie and Niagara counties through engagement and training of diverse community volunteers. Our vision is that all people in Erie and Niagara counties are literate. Financial donations directly support our programs, which train volunteers and support students through their literacy journey. Donations of time come to us from our volunteer tutors who commit to training and working with an individual student on their goals.

We invite you to learn more by visiting our website literacybuffalo.org and by following us on social media.

UUCB: The Place I Needed to Be

I have a confession to make. While I have had a lengthy and satisfying career as a fundraiser, the essence of the work for me was not in dollars raised, but in the stories donors shared about their lives – reflecting on lessons learned, mistakes made, evolved thinking resulting from their lived experiences, the influence of people they met, and aspirations for the world they would leave behind. And I learned from them that our talks spurred their own reflective thinking about how they could continue to make an impact over time.

Recently, three longtime UUCB members who have made commitments to UUCB's endowment, Sally Metzger, Diane Bockrath, and Don Behr, talked with me about their respective paths, how UUCB has been central to their lives, and hopes they have for UUCB's future. Several common themes emerged. Each:

- was an explorer, willing to venture into uncharted territory to find the best spiritual "fit" for themselves
- appreciated the value of diversity and its ability to bring about change that results in more equitable and just practices

- recognized the alignment between values espoused at UUCB and practices in daily life of its members
- relished the sense of nourishment (and enjoyment) that comes with reinforcing communal activities such as covenant groups, the choir, book club and sale, Women's Society, committee work, VOICE, Family Promise, and more

- acknowledged UUCB's role in providing a sense of purpose to one's life

Civil rights have always been important to Sally, a 65 year UUCB member, who was engaged for many years with HOME (Housing Opportunities Made Equal), and values UUCB's attentiveness to community problems and solutions. She has participated in many committees and programs over the years, including the Endowment Committee and Women's Society and has been the backbone of the annual book sale for 20 years. Sally and her late husband, Ernie, who was also heavily involved with UUCB, serving as chair of the Board twice (and in other capacities), decided together to put UUCB in their wills. Both thought it important to support what UUCB involves and Sally also pointed out that a healthy endowment is a great recruitment tool for future ministers and wants UUCB to always be in a position to attract ministers as accomplished as Rev. Joan.

Diane described UUCB as a literal and figurative sanctuary in the 1970s and experienced a music program that reinforced that sensibility. In the choir and church at large, she found a safe, nonjudgmental, nonhierarchical community that accepted people as they were and she enjoyed the diversity of experiences, cultures, and interests of the people she met and befriended. She values the respect for individuality as well as for differences and different approaches. With an interest in social issues, Diane decided early-on that "this was the place I needed to be," and joined the Women's Society and served on its Board, worked for 10 years with School 18, and now heads the Endowment Committee. Diane decided to make an endowment commitment as a way to protect things that matter and to express gratitude, saying that "The old way of doing things, isolating people, doesn't work. A blend of different people is best. I can do my part to make UUCB stronger for others coming along."

Don is approaching his 29th year as a UUCB member. He and his then future husband, Sam Loliger, were introduced to UUCB's services during a 1991 Music Sunday and Don joined the following year. He sees UUCB's role as "serving as a beacon of hope on the corner of Elmwood and West Ferry, and reaching out from there." In addition to being a longtime choir member, Don has engaged with his covenant group, book club, served on and chaired the Board, co-chaired the Oversight Committee and is now [Click here to continue ...](#)

BOARD REPORT

The Board has been busy even though the church building has not. First and foremost, we appointed a wonderful committee of congregants who are working towards the safest way to open the doors again. Some of the members attended a Zoom session with other UU churches to discuss possibilities for opening or improving Zoom services while remaining closed. It is good to know we are not in this alone.

Remember the Capital Campaign? Jane Armbruster, with the help from 18 church members and 2 committees, handled the daunting task of applying for a grant from the National Fund For Sacred Places. We are still waiting for an answer so keep your fingers crossed!

Guided by the Fixed Assets Committee, work continues to happen in the building. You can see a new hatch on the Alliance Room roof that was installed during the needed replacement of the roof, that will improve access to the roof. And check out the Ferry St. Doors. They now have a better alignment and repaired locking mechanisms.

We'll share more in next month's newsletter. If you have something you would like to know about this church, feel free to contact any one of us.

Martha Malkiewicz, Tracey Kassman, Kathleen Powers, Michael Hill, Bridget Evans, John Petrocelli, Lynn Mancuso

Memorial Pathway Pavers - Orders due May 2nd—don't delay

Orders for paver inscriptions in the Memorial Pathway are processed only once a year, so don't miss your opportunity. Inscriptions may be one, two, or three lines long. Each line may have up to 14 letters and spaces. One or two l's allows one more letter per l. The cost of the paver is \$150 each. Ashes may be submitted for placement in the Memorial Garden at no cost, or for an offering of \$100 directly under the inscribed paver. Submit text and checks to the office made out to UUCB and the word paver in the For or Memo line. Any questions call Tony Keller at 838-3716 or kelleranthony290@gmail.com.

Thanks to our Generous Congregation!

In February, we raised \$493 for Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers to help them continue their mission of providing programs and services that uplift and empower community members to create a pathway to their success. We also collected two boxes of personal care supplies to give to them. Thank you.

Widow and Widowers Circle



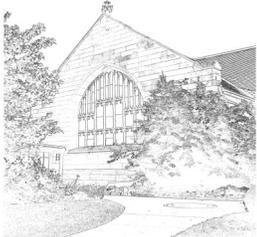
At this point we are not meeting at all but I am available by email (collinsb@buffalo.edu) or by phone (648 4455) or text (867 9628). Rev. Joan has offered the church zoom for a meeting if there is enough interest. Let me know by email, phone, or text if you want such a meeting. Stay safe! Namaste, Bonnie



**We gather in loving community, inspiring one another,
to transform ourselves, to create a more just and
compassionate world**

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo

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| <p>Care Network: Ginny Vaughan 716-768-1077 wixsonsg@gmail.com</p> | <p>Gatekeeper: Sara Kirkland office@buffalouu.org</p> | <p>Administrator for Finance: Donna Sentz donnasentz@buffalouu.org</p> | <p>Organist/ Accompanist: Jonathan Vogtle</p> |
| <p>Nursery Care Coordinator: Morgan Silver</p> |  | <p>Newsletter (submissions due by the 15th) newsletter@buffalouu.org</p> <p>Weekly Announcements (submissions due by NOON Wednesday) announcements@buffalouu.org</p> | |



A chalice alit since 1831

A sanctuary on the National Registry of Historic Places

