

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo



MAY 2020 NEWSLETTER

Gather ~ Inspire ~ Transform

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Minister's Column: What Does it Mean to be a People of Thresholds?



What Does it mean to be a People of Thresholds?

Every hero begins their journey in an ordinary time and place. And then something changes. Something happens. The ordinary is no longer possible. The hero is called to adventure – a daring, bold, new way of being full of danger and risks.

Our natural response to such a call is to say “What? Who me? You have got to be kidding. I think I’ll just stay here in my nice warm bed.”

But then some mentor type (think Gandalf, Fairy Godmother, Obi Wan Kenobi, your high school guidance counselor) says, “Oh come on, you can do it. Buck up and seek your fortune!” Then we, heroic fools that we are, say, “Aw, what the heck?” and cross over the threshold; moving from the safety of the known world into a perilous realm where rules and limits are unknown.

Eventually, after a long, scary and unpleasantly exciting time in the unknown world (think *Land of Oz*, *Dusk till Dawn*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, college) the hero returns home, transformed for the better, having found a fortune, or with new wisdom to live happily ever after (or at least until the sequel or prequel comes out).

I cannot imagine that any of us are feeling particularly normal these days. We have left the land of the known and comfortable. We have crossed the threshold and entered the adventure we call pandemic land. We are separated from family, sequestered in our homes, eating what we can find, wondering about financial security, and living in fear. And it feels like we have been in this land of the uncertainty for a long time. It is scary and unpleasantly exciting.

It is important to remember, though, that the threshold from the familiar into this land of uncertainty is only the first threshold on the hero's journey.

Heroes like us cross a second threshold when we leave the terrifying land of dragons, demons, and viruses to return home again. In other words, we have not completed our journey. We are still in the middle of the story. Our quest is to find our transformation, fortune and wisdom before we return to whatever home might be when get there.

The hero does not want to go on the journey. Who wants to risk life and limb? Wouldn't it be nicer to have some friends over for a little dinner party, hug your grandchildren and go to the movies like normal people? Of course it would. But that is not our journey... because today, we are heroes.

Yours in faith and affection, Joan



Sunday Morning Worship

As you may be aware, because we care for your health and the health of all your loved ones, the Unitarian Universalist Church has closed its doors to any physical meetings until the threat of covid-19 is under control. But we will not let a pandemic crush our community. We will still gather and “do church” through Zoom. For the last several weeks we have gone virtual and it has been both a wonderful learning curve and a fabulous success.

In preparation for worship, we want to send the login information and tips for those who have not used Zoom before. It is a simple process, but we want to address any difficulties you may have.

First, if possible, download the Zoom app on your computer, phone, or tablet before Sunday morning. This is a free app. If you haven't downloaded it yet, just download it from your app store and follow the set-up instructions. If you have Gmail or Facebook set up is extremely fast and as easy as a click. If you do not have Gmail or Facebook no worries, it is still a very simple 2-3-minute process.

Things to know:

- Unlike a Zoom meeting, worship will be a Zoom webinar. You will be able to see all those who you normally would see on the chancel, but you won't be able to see or hear anyone else, and they won't see or hear you. This has an upside. You can tune into church with your coffee and in your PJs.
- During the service and during a short online fellowship hour, you can make a comment, say hello, and connect with the whole congregation in the chat box

On Sunday morning just paste <https://uuma.zoom.us/j/367428065> into your (computer, phone or tablet) browser, follow the prompts and you will be in the service.

If you are just using the audio on your phone dial +1 646 876 9923, and when they ask for the meeting ID, dial this number 367 428 065 and you will hear the service, but you won't see it.

Pulpit Previews

May 3: Love and Equity, Rev. Joan Montagnes

Apparently, the coronavirus is not an equal opportunity infectious agent. The most vulnerable and the most oppressed in our society are also the most vulnerable to its effects. Our hope lies in justice and compassion.

May 10: Crossing the Threshold, Rev. Joan Montagnes

Sometimes, when a door stands before you, you have a choice to enter or pass by. Sometimes you have no choice. Choice or not, if you cross the threshold you will be changed forever.

May 17: And Now I See, Rev. Denise Walden

Revelation is what happens when you discover you are not in control. It is in the moments when we surrender to that which is larger than ourselves, when we acknowledge the Divine, when we experience spiritual clarity.

May 24: Remembering Together, Rev. Joan Montagnes

Although we are physically separated, we will remember our beloved dead together. We are social and spiritually connected even beyond life.

May 31: Passing Through, Sarah Martin, Director of Religious Education

This Religious Education Sunday, we celebrate our volunteers, our children and youth, the changes to which they've adapted this year, and the thresholds they are crossing during uncertain times.

Joys and Sorrows

Our hearts are with Julie Carter and Robbie Butler and their family. Julie's stepmother, Mary Matthews Carter, recently passed away. In many ways, she was a second mother to Julie.

We also send out deepest condolences to Lucy Sloan and her family. Lucy's father, John Roland Ashbrook, died peacefully in his chair last month. He was a lifelong resident of Pennsylvania and a journalist. He leaves an empty place in the heart of many.

We also send birthday wishes to Kathy Taylor and Doug Sherman who are both gifts to the world!

Brown Bag Lunch with the Minister

Every day, 7 days each week, at 12pm, Rev. Joan hosts a lunchtime get together on zoom. Bring a sandwich and a cup of coffee. Visit with old buddies and make new friends. See each other's smiling faces, share your worries, tell your stories, gain insights, and have some laughs. Everyone is very welcome.

To attend, click this link <https://uuma.zoom.us/j/138000249> follow the prompts and you'll be at lunch.

Or if your computer doesn't have a camera or mic, you can just dial in on your phone, +1 646 876 9923, the meeting ID is 138 000 249

It will be great to be with you!

Rev. Joan's Identity Used and Abused!

Many emails that look like they are from Rev. Joan have gone out to church members asking for emergency assistance in the form of gift cards. They are not from Rev. Joan. Rev. Joan will never:

- Ask you for gift cards via an email
- Send you an email on an account ending with gmail.com – **trust only her buffalouu.org account**

If you receive one of these emails, block the sender so they will be unable to send you any more requests. Sadly, there is nothing the church can do to stop the emails because they do not come from the church.

Religious Education & Adult Faith Development News



Sarah Martin, Director of Religious Education

As we begin the month of May, it is clear that in-classroom Religious Education will not return this year. RE Sunday, the annual celebration of our program and volunteers that traditionally ends our Religious Education year, will happen on May 31 and will be in the form of a multigenerational service held over Zoom. But that doesn't mean there aren't many ways for you to connect with our RE program before RE Sunday and after! We have so much going on. To join in any of our Zoom programming, you can find the links in our RE newsletter or on the [RE Facebook group](#). If you would like to get connected with either of those, please email lifespan@buffalouu.org.

Chalice Check In Schedule

All families are welcome! Monday through Friday we meet at 7:30 and most nights have the following themes.

Monday – Let's Make Art! Grab your paints, colored pencils, markers, crayons, or whatever you've got and let's channel our inner Bob Rosses for some story-inspired art.

Tuesday – Lego Build! Bring your Legos, K’Nex, or whatever building materials you like and share your creations with us. Then we’ll make something together.

Wednesday – Show and tell! Each week we have the opportunity to share something new. Sometimes we compile lists of all the cool things we share and send them to the rest of our religious education community.

Thursday – Sing Along and Dance Party! Join us for songs and dancing.

Friday – Pajama Story Time! Put on your favorite PJs, grab your favorite stuffed animal, and snuggle in for some bedtime stories.

Religious Education Online Class Schedule

Spirit Play

Our Spirit Play class will meet at 12 pm for a story and sharing time on the following Sundays:

May 10

May 17

May 24

Dungeons and Dragons



There are two more upcoming D&D sessions this year!

May 3 – Extra long D&D, 12-2 pm

May 17 – 1-2 pm, In DnD, not every monster is evil, and everyone has a story. On 5/17, we're going to learn the 'more to the story' of the Vikings, who traded and raided their way across the oceans in the early Middle Ages. We'll sit down with Dr. Dayanna Knight, archaeologist and Viking specialist, and color our way through the thousand year-old, untold story.

Young UUs Writing Group

All youth in grades 4-8 are invited to join us on Wednesday afternoons at 2 pm over Zoom for our Young UUs Writing Group. We'll explore different forms of writing, participate in shared writing exercises, and discover how our Unitarian Universalist values influence our experience as writers!

OWL Sessions



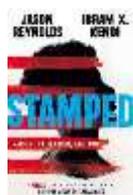
Our Our Whole Lives class has been connecting over Zoom for social time on Sundays at 6 pm. In the month of May, we will meet on the following dates:

May 3

May 17

May 24

Stamped Reading Group



Calling all 4th – 10th graders! We are going to start a reading/discussion group based on the book Stamped: Racism, Anti-Racism, and You by Ibram X. Kendi and Jason Reynolds this May! Chapter by chapter, we’ll read the book together and discuss what we’re learning and how it changes our understanding of race and racism in the United States. Join the group and we’ll send you a copy of the book and our discussion schedule. Email lifespan@buffalouu.org for details!

Youth Group Schedule



High School Youth Group (Grades 9-12) is meeting twice weekly: Sundays at 12 pm and Wednesdays at 8 pm. Even if your youth has never set foot in the youth room before, they are welcome to join our online meetings. For more information on how to connect with our high school youth group, please email lifespan@buffalouu.org.

Parent Support Zooms

Could you use a little adult support and conversation in your day? Our Parent Support Groups are meeting on Sundays at 2:30 pm and Tuesdays at 2 pm.

RE Sunday, May 31 – Passing Through

We will close the month of May with a multigenerational Sunday morning Zoom service titled “Passing Through.” There will be opportunities for all of our classes to participate and we’ll honor our volunteers who have helped us make difficult transitions from classroom to online learning this year as well as our bridging high school seniors who face crossing a major threshold during an uncertain time.

Adult Faith Development

We are working hard to get our new membership classes online. Both UU and You and Pathways to Membership will soon have online options available! We are also looking for ways to bring other programming to our members through online platforms. Please take a moment to fill out the following survey and help us design a program path that works for our congregation! <https://forms.gle/hh14xwaKXgYLmtmK6>

Volunteer Facilitators Wanted!

Would you like to help us bring great programming on UU History, UU Theology, Spirituality, and more to our congregation? We are looking for volunteers who are interested in facilitating these programs. No experience is necessary and we will be using vetted curriculum, so you are not responsible for creating content.

We also are always looking for new original class/discussion group/workshop ideas, and if you have something great percolating, we'd love to hear from you!

Please email lifespan@buffalouu.org if you are interested in facilitating Adult Faith Development opportunities!

Letter from Doug Sherman, Board President

We have each other ...

There is something to be said for being in a place that lifts your soul; for being in a place that has soul. Our sanctuary at UUCB is such a place. It imparts a peace that transcends time. There is feeling of oneness with the generations who passed through the same arched entryway into the same space of wood, stone, glass and light. The very structure of the place holds the complex with the simple, the vibrant with the shadows.

I miss being in that space. I miss being in that space when Daniel is leading the choir with Jessie, Helen, Michael, Matthew, Jonathan sharing pieces of their soul in harmony with all those who let their spirit run free through music.

I miss being in that space when a child lights the chalice. I miss being in that space when it's time to greet your neighbor. I miss being in that space when Chanda shouts out an Amen.

All of you, I'm sure, have parts of our shared home that are precious to you. Maybe it's the kitchen, filled with laughter and joy as food is lovingly prepared. Or the parish hall, where the Old Fogey's are trying to get us to

dance, or where the choir is giving us a song or two with our dinner. The library, the choir loft, the classrooms, the Marge Gardner room, the Alliance room, the basement ... all of them have meaning beyond their physical space.

Not being in that space makes it clear that we need to be good stewards. It's our sanctuary, just as it was a sanctuary for all those who came before us -- generations that lived through pandemics and wars, and fought for human rights while seeking a just and compassionate world. We must do all we can to sustain this space for the next generation.

Keep dreaming about what you want for this place, and how we can use this wonderful asset to live out our values and share our goal of peace, justice and love with a wider world.

We will be together again in the same space. When we are, let it wash over you.

Meanwhile, our church life is thriving, with online services, meetings, lunch-time meetups via Zoom, nightly check-ins. It's inspiring to see how we are all staying connected and how we're making new connections.

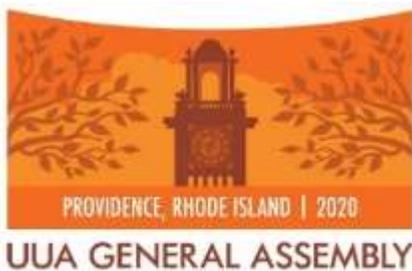
There is no quitting here. There is a physical shut down, but we're still working together. The board is meeting and discussing the effects of the pandemic on our budget, looking for solutions and making decisions. The Capital Campaign is quietly gaining steam as ideas begin to take shape.

Advisory committees are still working on ideas and strategies. We're always looking for more help so if you can't do what you do, maybe you can do what you can. You can take your pick on what interests you: Oversight, Finance, Fixed Assets, Stewardship, Endowment, Personnel, Governance, or Strategy. There are many ministry teams that can use your help, too.

I miss being in church. I miss stepping through the garden entrance, it's like walking into a giant hug from a loving relative -- and I could use one of those right about now. But I also know we are staying together through all of this and that we will be together in our shared space again.

Beyond the Hedge: Denomination and Interfaith Connections

Sharon Walker, uucb.wny.specevents@gmail.com



Every year members from all the Unitarian Universalist congregations in North America and around the world gather in spirit. We worship together, we set our goals for the future, make statements about social justice, and meet kindred spirits on the journey. There is nothing like getting together with 4,000 – 10,000 UUs to inspire a person's faith.

This year General Assembly will be held entirely online. It won't be the same as other years, but there are added benefits to this new format:

- Participants won't have to pay for expensive lodging, food and travel
- The carbon footprint will be practically non-existent, and
- Everybody will be physically separated, yet spiritually together during this year of coronavirus.

Continued...

Registration for General Assembly is \$150. **Our social Justice Ministry Team has enough funds set aside for eight full registration scholarships.** If you would like a scholarship or if you know of someone who would like a scholarship, please contact Rev. Joan minister@buffalouu.org Preference will be given to those in financial need and Youths.

For more information, go to <https://www.uua.org/ga>

UAIM – Accessibility and Inclusion Ministry News

The UAIM Members hope everyone is doing okay as we all quarantine. Many of us are experiencing more anxiety or stress during this time of unknowns-When is this going to end? When can I go back to my normal activities? Or maybe you are just asking, like me - When can I get my hair cut?

One of UAIM members suggest that you make a call list of 5 people that you could call and check in on every day, or every week (you decide how often). She recommends just a brief check-in to see how they are doing or to give a word of encouragement or just listen, so they know they are not alone.

Some suggestions for this time from the Erie County Website are:

- 1) Keep to a routine-get enough sleep, set a regular time to eat your meals. Look for new ways to occupy yourself or your family members-do puzzles, read out loud or to others, go for a walk or a bike ride on a regular basis, play board games or cards.
- 2) EXERCISE-Exercise regularly boots energy, helps you to remain calmer and more focused and lowers the symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- 3) Do things you love-Listen to music, watch favorite movies, paint, garden or just spend fun time with your dog or cat.
- 4) Pay attention to your BODY, FEELINGS and SPIRIT- A) recognize and heed early warning of stress; B) know that feelings of stressed, depression, guilty or angry is common during this quarantine time.
- 5) Take time to renew your spirit through meditation, prayer or helping others in need.

To receive more assistance or support during this time call 211 or go to

<https://www.eriemha.org./Community-Resource-Guide.pdf>

Social Justice Ministry

Social Action Needed Now!

Our April Share the Plate recipient was Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement, CAIC. CAIC is supporting the Humane Alternatives to Long Term {# HALT} Solitary Confinement Act. This Bill has majority support in both the State Senate and the State Assembly but Leaders in both Houses have not brought the Bill to the floor for a vote. This is a matter of Human Rights for the incarcerated.

Call NY's political leaders to demand they pass #HALT solidarity! This is the message to give.

Senate Majority Leader Stewart Cousins 518-455-2585

Assembly Speaker Hastie 518-455-3791

Governor Cuomo: 518-474-8390

Continued ...

“Thousands of New Yorkers are suffering in solitary confinement, for months, years, & decades. The HALT Solitary Confinement Act (S1623/A2500) has majority support in both houses of the legislature. I urge the legislature to pass, & the governor to sign, HALT Bill now!”

Share-the-Plate

This month we are sharing our Sunday morning offerings with the Minister’s Discretionary Fund. People who are traditionally marginalized and oppressed in our community are suffering disproportionately from the effects of COVID-19. Your gifts will help by purchasing food, masks, gloves, utilities, shelter, and other necessities for those in need.

Call for Photos!

We have a wonderful sharing opportunity during this time of isolation! Send me your photos! Photos of the church, the congregation, church activities, coffee hour, anything that shows us together doing our thing!! We’ll share these during our weekly online services.

Please feel free to include who took the photo, where it was taken, what is the event or situation, who is in the photo, etc. Whatever you feel comfortable sharing.

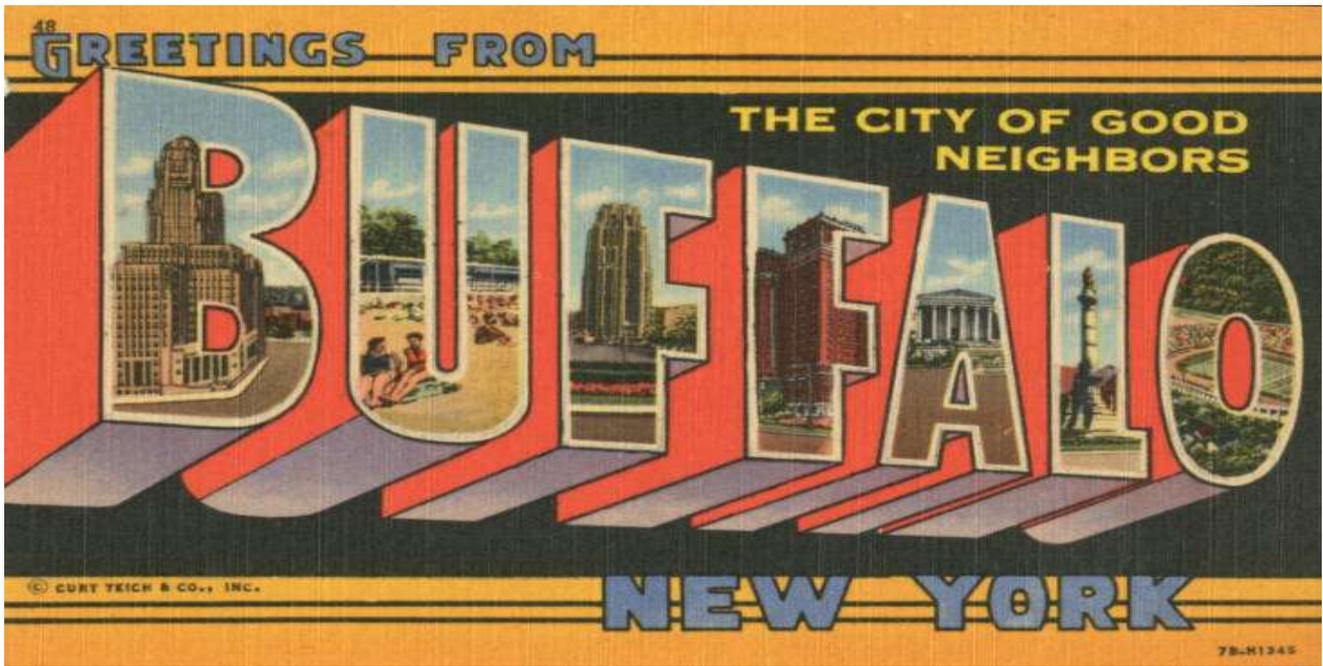


For May we would especially love to get pictures of our R.E. kids and teachers, together, separate, in classes, on field trips, etc., to be used in our R.E. Sunday service on May 31. Again, include any information you feel comfortable sharing.

Send photos to karenstreech@buffalouu.org. If your photo is too large, email me and I’ll send you a link to my Dropbox to upload your photos (you don’t need to have Dropbox to do this). Looking forward to this!

Thank you kindly!
Karen Streech





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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A chalice alit since 1831
A sanctuary on the National Registry of Historic Places

