

February 2021

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Thirty Days of Love

For Muslims, the holy month of Ramadan is a time of spiritual reflection, prayer, worship, charity and discipline. Fasting during its observance is

one of the Five Pillars of Islam; the others being Profession of Faith, Almsgiving (charity), Pilgrimage and Prayer (five times per day).

Thirty Days of Love is the annual Unitarian Universalist Side With Love celebration that runs from the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. to Valentine's Day. With the vast majority of Unitarian Universalists coming from various denominations and having different beliefs (we are a covenantal faith rather than a credal one, (i.e we are more concerned with how we are together rather than what we believe together)), UU traditions, holidays and rituals are sometimes difficult to embody and carry forward...though we did Chalica this year!!!

Last year, in an effort to make our UU Thirty Days of Love more meaningful for me personally, I borrowed (ok...I just completely stole ☺) elements of Islam's observance of Ramadan and incorporated that into my observance of Thirty Days of Love.

Throughout the month, I fast during the daylight hours and engage in my meditation practice five times a day. Although Almsgiving is practiced throughout the year, I am also more intentional about almsgiving during this particular month.

Fasting during Ramadan is done as an exercise of discipline to focus one's attention on the stirrings of the spirit. Observers of Ramadan do not eat or drink anything during the daylight hours; yet fasting is not meant to be a punishment or a penalty.

For Thirty Days of Love, I've have had to make some modifications. I allow myself water and coffee.

Along with learning to play a musical instrument and graduating with a chemical engineering degree, meditation, for me, is perhaps the most difficult practice to master...and I most definitely haven't mastered it. Teachers will say that it's not supposed to be difficult, that there's nothing to "master." I'm not convinced. The writer Sparrow best illustrates the dilemma. He writes, "Some books on meditation imply that you'll quickly stumble upon inner peacefulness. Actually, the precise opposite is true. You may think you're a fairly calm, centered person, but the minute you cross your legs and attempt to count your breaths, you'll discover there's an out-of-control 2AM disco inside you - in fact two discos, each playing separate songs at ear-splitting volume, each filled with frantic dancers in mismatched polyester (Sparrow, The Sun, Jan 2020, p26)." Yep!

Thirty Days of Love...may it be a blessing!

Nurture our spirit. Strive for Justice. Transform the world.

~ Dave



Reflections from the Board

UUMAN turns 30 years old this month! Yes, it was 30 years ago in January 1991 that UUMAN held its Charter Sunday at Barnwell Elementary School. Six families signed the “book” that day and UUMAN started on its vision of establishing a liberal UU congregation in the north Fulton. There have been a lot of bumps and changes along the way, but the vision remains intact!

Last year was a tough year for everyone including UUMAN! The pandemic (although we are not out of it yet) caused us to rethink how we do everything from “keeping people connected” to “how to deliver a Sunday worship service”. And without exception our UUMAN staff and volunteers have done an exceptional job again of weathering the storm, overcoming obstacles, and delivering on our Mission and Vision. I could not be prouder!

As I write this article there is much to be hopeful about at UUMAN. With a vaccine being rolled out now in the US we can begin to see the day when we might be able to meet in person again. But will things get back to “normal”? What does that mean anyways? Or do we want things to be different? Better?

You will have several opportunities over the next few months to get involved, voice your ideas, opinions and help determine the path forward for UUMAN. The first is the newly formed Strategic Planning team led by our Special Projects Trustee, Donna Melcher has just kicked off “Planting UUMAN's Future Together”. As part of this process all UUMANites are being asked to join one of six Ministry teams: Faith Development, Justice, Spiritual Arts, Care, Outreach and Connections and Operations. Be looking for communications about it and weigh in when you get it! There is a place for everyone at the table so get involved and make a difference.

Then on Sunday, February 28th, Stewardship Sunday, we will kick off our annual Stewardship Pledge Campaign where we ask you to renew your time, talent, and treasure commitment to UUMAN. The campaign this year, could not be more important and critical to UUMAN's future after the past year of pandemic caused obstacles and financial hardships. When you receive your “pledge packet” this year I ask you to make a pledge commitment commensurate with your belief and dedication to the Mission and Vision of UUMAN!

Nurture our Spirit! Strive for Justice! Transform the World!

~ Bob Popp



UUMAN Sharing the Plate—50/50

Once each month, a non-profit is chosen to receive half of our offering. We are sharing our plate this month with the Fulton County Remembrance Coalition, Roswell Chapter.

For more information, go to <https://fultonremembrance.org/>

~ Michelle Liebergesell

Social Justice: The unveiling of the Mack Brown Historic Marker

The Social Justice Committee would like to invite you for the unveiling of the Mack Brown Historic Marker in Roswell. As you might recall, we have been working with the Fulton County Remembrance Coalition for almost 2 years. Members of UUMAN have participated in soil collection for victims of lynching in GA. It is rewarding to see some results of the work we have been doing with members of our community to find healing and reconciliation. For more details you can visit <https://fultonremembrance.org/>



Virtual Event! Historic Marker Unveiling, in partnership with Fulton County Remembrance Coalition

Sunday, February 28
4:00 PM

Join the Mack Henry Brown committee of the Fulton County Remembrance Coalition, a community partner of the Equal Justice Initiative, for the unveiling of a historical marker dedicated to Mack Henry Brown, a Black man lynched in Fulton County in 1936. This marker, located at Roswell's Riverside Park, is meant to open a dialogue about our history of racial terror violence and to bring about an era of truth telling, healing, and reconciliation.

~ Carla Kapeskas

UUMAN Announcements - Special Delivery?

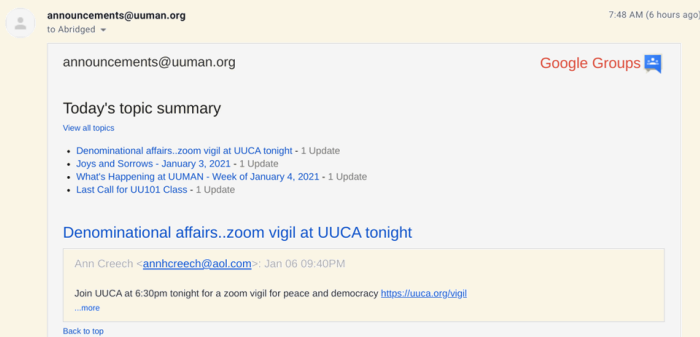
If you're reading this article, chances are you're also among the 350 members and friends of UUMAN who have chosen to receive regular updates from the church in email form.

About the only complaint about the delivery of these messages has been from those who've not been happy about receiving too many individual messages. To address this, we've tended to recommend that these people choose the "Digest" version instead, and view the past day's messages in a single email.

Most of the time these messages appear exactly as one would hope, with the original email's links and formatting largely intact.

However, due to formatting glitches that Google can't seem to fix (and we have tried to find a workaround, to no avail) there are problems displaying certain types of messages—particularly heavily formatted emails that have been forwarded—resulting in unreadable text.

There is a third option that we've not promoted, but it might be a good one for people with Gmail accounts (and for members with UUMAN.org accounts) that are used to receive these messages. It is the "Abridged Summary" version. Like the Digest, it provides only one email with all the day's messages combined into one. Unlike the Digest, it does not attempt to display the message in its entirety on the same page; instead, it provides just a short summary of the message's first few lines, with a direct link to the Google Groups page that contains the original message, formatted correctly.



Again, this option will only function correctly if you use a Gmail account (or a UUMAN.org account) to receive your UUMAN Announcements. Otherwise, the Google Groups links will, in all likelihood, produce an error message when clicked.

If you're experiencing delivery problems, or just have any questions, feel free to contact the Committee at Communications@uuman.org or contact me directly at Communications-Deputy@uuman.org

Dirk Bender

Communications Committee Deputy
Outreach Committee Member



Life Celebrations

We want to commemorate the happy occasions in the lives of our UUMAN members and other friends of UUMAN. We are looking for Naming Ceremonies, Graduations, Marriages, Anniversaries, Retirements, and Birthdays. Please submit the information about your special day, in the month prior to the event, to membership-tech@uuman.org

Date	Celebration
2/1	Kyra P. of our MCY program is celebrating a birthday
2/2	Elizabeth S. of our MCY program is celebrating a birthday
2/4	Phillip Seaver is celebrating a birthday
2/5	Carolina Patlis-Friedman is celebrating a birthday
2/12	Jacob C. of our MCY program is celebrating a birthday
2/14	Mike and Michelle L. are celebrating their anniversary
2/15	Dan Cipperly is celebrating a birthday Maud vdB. of our MCY program is celebrating a birthday
2/22	Riahna Lee is celebrating a birthday
2/28	Raffaella S. of our MCY program is celebrating a birthday

Humans at UUMAN...let's get to know each other even better



Ayanna Kafi Stringer, She/Her/Hers, lives right outside of Atlanta on occupied Creek Land. As a religious professional she serves both the UU Congregation of Atlanta as the Youth Ministries Coordinator and UUMAN as the Membership Coordinator. As a volunteer, she serves as a member of the Mountain Retreat and

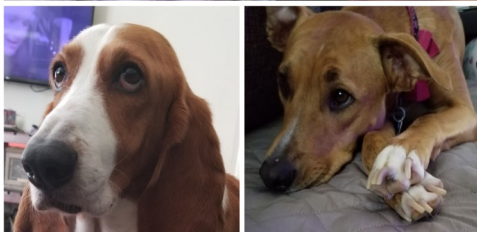
Learning Center's Board of Trustees as well as the President of the Diverse Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM). Ayanna Kafi is a Black, southern, yogi, dancer, writer, meditator, lifelong UU, and mom. Ayanna places high value on art, joy, equity, and community.

The Alexander Family



Tina, you have recently joined UUMAN and we would love to know more about you.

Could you introduce us to your family?



I'm Tina Alexander, Dave is my husband of 17 years, and Callum is our nine year old son. We have two dogs: Otis, our

basset hound, also nine years old and Amari, our 3-legged mixed breed who is around two years old. We adopted her during the pandemic. I'm originally from Macon, GA, Dave is from Pittsburgh, PA, and we live in south Forsyth county.

What is your faith background?

I was raised in the black Baptist church. My grandmother and her sister, especially, were very involved with the church. From a young age I would spend weekends at their house, which meant getting up and going to church every Sunday morning. In my senior year of high school, I took a World Religions class and was exposed to different beliefs. I fell in love with learning about the complex variety of spiritual beliefs and practices and I've considered myself a "seeker" ever since.

So why UUMAN now?

I missed having a spiritual community and I wanted our son to be able to experience what it's like to have a spiritual home without being indoctrinated into a rigid set of beliefs.

What is your day job and what do you do for fun?

I'm a Licensed Practical Nurse and I work with adults with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities who attend a day program in Cumming as well as on an individual basis.

For fun, I love to do crafts and make things with my hands. I've crocheted on and off since I was about 9 or 10, and I can knit but I usually don't have the patience for it. I like to read, doodle, and spend time with my family doing whatever. I'm also a huge Star Trek fan.

What is the #1 thing you want to do when this pandemic is over and we have more choices?

Take a grand family vacation!

Humans at UUMAN...let's get to know each other even better.

Lansdowne Family

Please introduce the members of your family to us.

I'm Cathy, and my family includes my husband Rob and our kids Lucy (17) and Eli (7). Lucy is a senior at Walton High School, and Eli is a first grader at Mt. Bethel Elementary (although both have been attending school virtually since last March at what I like to call Lansdowne Preparatory Academy J). I also have two adult stepsons, Harrison and Griffin.



Where are you from?

I was born in Oklahoma City, but I moved all over the place because I was an Army brat. I've lived in California, Texas, DC, Missouri (for school in St. Louis) and Nevada (Lucy was born in Las Vegas). Rob was born and raised in Wisconsin but has been in Georgia since his 20s. (Rob is Methodist and attends another church, but he shows up at UUMAN on occasion.)

How long have you been involved at UUMAN and why did you pick us?

I've been coming to UUMAN off and on since 2019. I tried to join a local UU congregation when Lucy was little, but it just didn't quite stick, and I've regretted not trying harder. It can be tough living in the Bible Belt and being something other than Christian—and even tougher when you're raising children and aren't a part of the majority religion. I was hoping that UUMAN could help! And it has. As I watch Eli in his virtual Sunday school sessions (shout out to Canedy and Carolyn!), I have noticed that they don't shy away from tough questions and topics. I've discovered that when it comes to the kids, it's not always about saying exactly the right thing in the right way...it's the fact that you're talking about these topics at all. Canedy and Carolyn have brought up belief in God and lack of belief in God, racism, ableism, you name it. And I'm grateful that they've started these conversations with our children. In addition, I live in a very conservative suburb in East Cobb, and it's such a relief to walk into a place where so many people value the same things I do.

What do you and your spouse do for day jobs?

I am an editor at the CDC, and I work for a journal with the cheerful title Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, and Rob is an accountant. We're loads of fun. Seriously.

What's been your greatest challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Like everyone, I'm sure, I can't pick just one challenge. I chose this family photo intentionally, and with a lump in my throat, because it was taken on March 6, 2020, at Eli's kindergarten Storybook Character Day last year. (He's Dogman, for those who aren't up on fine children's literature.) Little did we know that day that it would be the last time we'd step foot in Mt Bethel Elementary School for the foreseeable future. It seems impossible that this photo was taken almost a year ago and that my two children have only seen their classmates through a screen since that time. That they have not hugged their friends, grandparents, or cousins since that time. That said, they've both done exceptionally well, under the circumstances, which probably shocks anyone who knows the very sociable Eli (who has earned the nickname "The Mayor" in my neighborhood). And even though Lucy, as a teenager and now senior, has missed out on much of the traditional last 2 years of high school, she has not only managed, she helps take care of Eli when I'm overwhelmed with work and tries not to complain about being forced to use her family as her main source of entertainment. Plus she's learned to make some seriously terrific homemade bread (like 99% of America in the past year).

Overall though, we're very lucky, and I try to remember that when it feels like the walls are closing in. Don't get me wrong, we've had some very, very difficult days and weeks (and I MISS PEOPLE!!), but remembering what we have helps me keep my head above water in those moments. My husband and I have been able to work from home since March 2020, and we've remained healthy and employed...those are not small things. I'm a knitter, so I'd also love to say I've made numerous beautiful sweaters, lovely blankets, and other works of art, but no, just a hat, and it is too small.

What are you looking forward to the most when we can come together at UUMAN once again?

Like everyone, I'll be glad to just be with people ! But that said, I have to say that getting to hear the choir every Sunday is something that's at the top of my list. I just love our small, but mighty, choir! I love Alex's introductions on the piano, I love watching all the choir members get swept up in the songs, and I adore the music itself, no matter what it is, each and every Sunday. I'll also enjoy watching Dave call up all the kids before the service, as we all wait to hear exactly how they'll answer the questions he comes up with after his story. You never quite know exactly what's going to come out of their mouths!



A small gesture of kindness for our kids



♥ Hello UUMANITES,

This past year has been tough on everyone but none more so than our children and youth. So I was wondering whether you would assist with spreading a little extra love to our kids by sending them a valentine surprise by February 14th. This can simply be a card or it could be a small package with sweets, stickers, a joke book or something else age appropriate. I know they would appreciate whatever you do. And please include your name, a pic and something about yourself so that ,when we are once together in person, they will recognize you.

If you are interested just email me and I will send you their name, age and address along with their parent's name and email so you can alert them that you will be sending their child a valentine.

What the mental health experts are saying is that it seems that small things can really be triggers for depression these days in kids. If that is true then maybe small gestures of kindness can have the opposite effect.

In love,

Melinda



Planting a new future at UUMAN

Dear UUMAN member, things are changing rapidly in our world today and we know at some point, we will come back together in our building, What do we want to see in our future? It's not just about coming back together safely. It's about coming back to a new UUMAN, with new possibilities and challenges. How will we do this together?

You have an opportunity to be a part of this dream in motion by joining one of our brainstorming groups that will come together in March and April. We are asking for your preference in where you would like to contribute.

Please fill out [this form](#). It's only three questions and we are looking for 100% response from members.

Sincerely, your POST COVID Planning Team:

Donna Melcher, Elizabeth Rohan, Leslie Wolfe, Rimas Kapeskas, Laura Keck, Dave Dunn (advising), Yassine Fahri, Garry Loveless

Feel the change in the air? It's exciting!

UUMAN has accommodated the massive shifts in the way UUs are living and connecting with each other in this new age. So of course you can expect big changes in the 2021-2022 UUMAN Stewardship Campaign kicking off the end of February!



The Universe has entered the Age of Aquarius which is all about expanding connections to each other and all of humanity. A key initiative to accomplish this is through expanding our virtual and technological capabilities. Think about how you can play an important part in this effort to reach more and more people who want to experience greater equality and live in more harmony with each other and the Earth.

More kickoff information including an online zoom gala themed costume party will be coming soon!

~ Jill Brooks

All in-person Sunday services and any meetings or groups at UUMAN are canceled until further notice. See [this page](#) for more details.

We plan to continue live-streaming Sunday services on [YouTube](#).

February 2021: A Month of Sundays

Date	Topic	Service Leaders
2/7	<p>The Implications of our 7th Principle</p> <p>Our 7th Principle: Respect for the Interdependent Web of All Existence of Which We are a Part. For us to respect this interdependent web we must first believe in it. Do we? What are the implications?</p>	Rev. Dave Dunn
2/14	<p>Sociodicy: The Goodness of Who We Are</p> <p>Channeling Theodore Parker, sociologist Nicholas Christakis says, "The arc of our evolutionary history is long, but it bends towards goodness." Might this be true? How could that possibly be?</p>	Rev. Dave Dunn
2/21	TBA	Lay Lead
2/28	<p>It's a Wonderful Church</p> <p>In the movie "It's a Wonderful Life", the angel Clarence tries to "earn his wings" by showing George Bailey, the character played by Jimmy Stewart, what the world would look like had he not been born. What might the world look like without UUMAN?</p>	Rev. Dave Dunn

ABOUT THE UUMANTimes: The UUMANTimes is the newsletter of Unitarian Universalist Metro Atlanta North (UUMAN). We go live with each issue by the first Sunday of the month; deadline for submissions is typically on the 22nd of the month proceeding the issue date.

Please email your news articles and artwork to Becky at newsletter@uuman.org