

UUMAN TIMES

Unitarian Universalist Metro Atlanta North

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Do we want to grow?

Do we want to grow?

We seem to circle back to this question time and time again...year after year. It's as if we are on this merry-go-round

that doesn't always feel so merry. I'd like to approach this question from a direction in which you might not be accustomed.

It can't be denied that throughout history many religious movements/denominations have done considerable harm to their faithful (and their cultures); leaving pain and wreckage in their wake. (I won't elaborate on this harming here. One could fill books with examples.) This harming has alienated many from organized religion; and those alienated have now had children of their own who've never experienced organized religion in any way. These are the "nones." The alienated and the nones, if they have any connection to the Divine, the Mystery of Life, etc., would likely call themselves "spiritual but not religious."

Here's the thing though....

Since the Reagan administration, the United States has celebrated individual and corporate achievement at the expense of all else. And despite advances in communication and social media technologies, our individualism has left us more disconnected from others than ever before.

As a denomination Unitarian Universalism isn't, and hasn't been, perfect, yet we have consistently engaged in self-reflection and in self-examination in the name of justice and in an effort best serve all who walk through our doors. This is difficult work and at times it feels as if we don't know what we're doing...but we are trying.

Yet despite our imperfections and failures, I believe that Unitarian Universalism is a lifesaving faith tradition. We, as Unitarian Universalists, want you to

bring your whole self to this faith....your WHOLE self! You are free to be who you are – leaving nothing out, behind or in a closet. (That alone can be lifesaving!)

We won't tell you what to believe. We won't tell you that your spirituality is wrong. We will encourage you to follow and grow your spiritual path in your own way. Not many religious movements offer that freedom.

Yet there is another way that Unitarian Universalism is a lifesaving faith. I believe it can save our life-in-common. Any perpetrator of injustice will relish individualism. They will celebrate a disconnected populace. Individuals who are spiritual but not religious, are generally not joiners, and they generally do little to serve the cause of justice. The perpetrators of injustice need the spiritual but not religious; they need those who are not joiners; they need us to be disconnected, disorganized. They need people who will stand by.

To me, "do we want to grow?" is the wrong question. (And it may be a very selfish question as well.) Rather, we should be asking ourselves, "How do we nurture the spirit, strive for justice, transform the world?"

I believe in Unitarian Universalism; and if any faith has the potential to nurture the spirits of those who might presently call themselves the "spiritual but not religious;" if any faith has the potential to organize in the cause of justice; if any faith has the potential to be open enough to transform the world – it is this one: Unitarian Universalism.

...more to come on this topic.

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

Dave



Notes from the Board

Re-Imagine Discovery Hall!



UUMAN’s campus is often a visitor’s first introduction to the character and community of our Congregation. But what do newcomers see when they first drive up to UUMAN?

Our gorgeous Sanctuary is impressive, but

what about that little house to the left of our Sanctuary? Does Discovery Hall accurately tell a visitor to our church who we are? Does it bring joy and pride to the people of our Congregation?

Discovery Hall has a beautiful mural, however the rest of the building’s exterior is somewhat dark and overshadowed, with peeling paint, rotting wood, abandoned landscaping, and windows that have been neglected for too long. But we know Discovery Hall has so much potential!

Imagine a bright new Discovery Hall that’s freshly painted, with wood repaired and trim and bricks painted to match our Sanctuary. Imagine a large friendly sign over Discovery Hall’s front porch announcing that it is our “Discovery Hall.” Imagine landscaping that brings visitors from our Sanctuary to Discovery Hall on a walking path surrounded by flowers from door to door. Imagine a covered walkway matching the design of our Sanctuary’s front porch to take visitors, our youth, and our small groups from one part of our campus to another without getting wet in the rain! Imagine large energy efficient windows to let in the light but keep out the weather! What else can you imagine?

We owe this little house our heartfelt thanks for all the years it has provided space to our youth and small groups, for being a comfortable temporary home for our Family Promise visitors, and for the expanded area Premo’s children need now as they attend school. We have a responsibility to this little house of ours to keep it safe and sound, watertight and respectable. And we owe our Congregation and its Youth a place they can be proud to spend time in.

Discovery Hall is an amazing asset to UUMAN and it's time to reclaim it! Plans are just beginning to bring back Discovery Hall to a place of honor on our campus. If you’d like to help in these plans please let us know! It’s up to all of us to take responsibility for Discovery Hall so that when we do come back to UUMAN in person we can return with a celebration of the Grand Re-Opening of Discovery Hall!

Best wishes to all, and I look forward to the New Year and all its possibilities.

- Elizabeth Norris



UUMAN Sharing the Plate—50/50

We are sharing our plate this month with Project South. Project South was founded as the Institute to Eliminate Poverty & Genocide in 1986. Their work is rooted in the legacy of the Southern Freedom Movement, and their mission of cultivating strong social movements in the South powerful enough to contend with some of the most pressing and complicated social, economic, and political problems we face today.

Three Strategic Directions guide Project South’s work:

1. Neighborhood Organizing to Grow Community Power
2. Movement Organizing to Grow Regional Power
3. Movement Support to Grow Grassroots Leadership

For more information, go to projectsouth.org

- Michelle Liebergesell

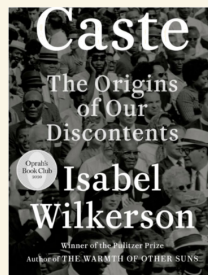
Our 50/50 Donations

In the pandemic era, UUMAN has been receiving unspecified 50/50 donations throughout the month in the forms of checks and through Givify. We have been sending all funds collected during a particular month to the monthly 50/50 recipient. For this reason, beginning in January, we will move the 50/50 Sunday to the first Sunday of the month to make it clearer and easier for all to understand. All should know where the 50/50 donations will be headed. This may change in the post-pandemic era....if we can get to that point! (Fingers crossed.)

Thanks,

Dave

Social Justice Discussion - Caste: The Origins of our Discontent



Join Us!

January 23rd @ 2 pm
via Zoom

In this book Isabel Wilkerson documents how the Nazis studied racial systems in America to plan their debasement of the Jews; she discusses why the cruel logic of caste requires that there be a bottom rung for those in the middle to measure themselves against; she writes about the surprising health costs of caste, in depression and life ...

UUMAN's Social Justice Committee invites you to plan to join us on January 23rd at 2pm to discuss *Caste: The Origins of our Discontent*.

Online meeting signup link:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C094DA8A92BA13-book>

- Carla Kapeskas

A- Tisket, A- Tasket, What is in this Basket? Planning for POST-COVID



How will we “be together” when we come back after COVID? What changes will we intentionally make in our programs and how do we need technology to support them? How will our new realities as a society and as a community impact and redefine ‘church’?

These are some of the questions we need to answer for ourselves to be ready for the time we can regroup. We need a POST-COVID plan.

The basket above represents our Mission, Covenant and Vision. These concepts hold us safely while we have respectful, some might even say holy conversations about the future of our Beloved Community.

Our plan will be developed by 6 brainstorming groups/teams (shown by the circles below). These teams will meet virtually as needed from mid-February through April to develop detailed recommendations. Some will be simple and much like it was before COVID. Some will be extensive and require outside the box thinking. Some will be quite insular and others will interconnect. Each team will be co-led by a group leader and a Strategic Planning Team member.

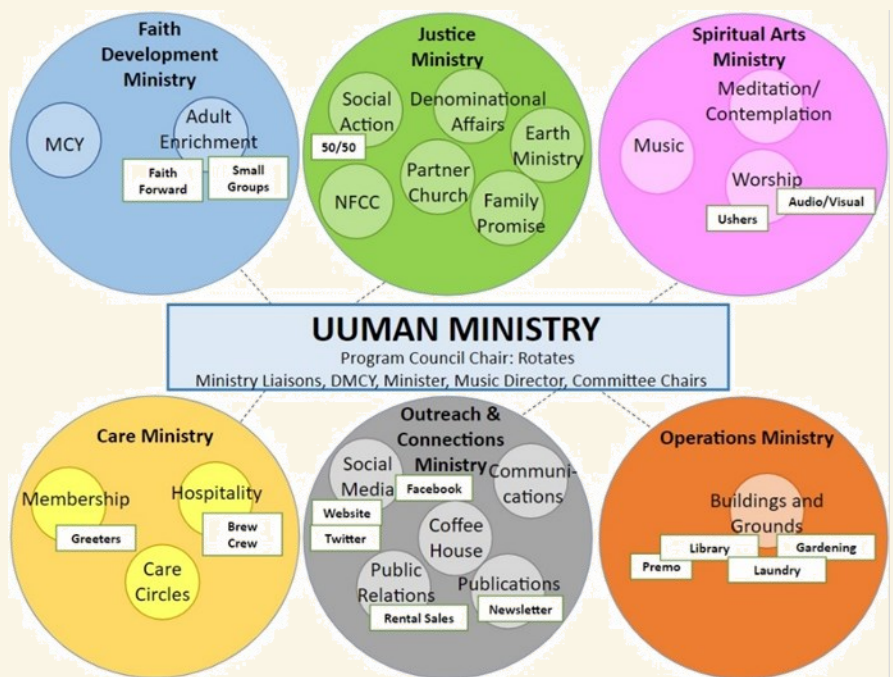
The Strategic Planning Team are the BLUE people jumping in and out of the basket. We will enable and support process of creating the 6 plans and then meld them together into one cohesive strategy to present at our May congregational meeting. We may need to provide education, tools and other support to help the process along.

All UUMAN members will be given a chance to be on a team for the area of their choosing. If you do not choose a team, you will be assigned to one which will give everyone a chance to be heard. If you would like to give input in more than one group, you may certainly do so.

This plan is our near term future and will set in motion many necessary new activities.

Consider this our opportunity to come back together as an energized ‘new church’ focused on our Beloved Community and bringing our mission and vision into reality.

- Donna Melcher



The Little Church That Could—and Does!

This past December, just 14 days before Christmas, Mel Fortin, the NFCC Food Pantry Director, came to me with an urgent request. She needed volunteers to help with a couple of big food pantry projects on three different days. The first project was making extra food bags. The food pantry was going to be closed for 11 days during the holidays. Mel was concerned that the families would not have enough food to get by during those 11 days. She wanted us to make bags of extra food that each family could get and use until the pantry opened again on January 4th. Each bag consisted of a box of oatmeal, two “meals in a can” (chili, pasta, or hash), two boxes of macaroni and cheese, a jar of peanut butter, a pack of fruit cups, a pound of pasta and a jar of pasta sauce. Thanks to UUMAN’s members, hundreds of these bags were made and handed out to food pantry clients.

Mel had a second project for us. This year the food pantry was literally inundated with food donations. They had more food donations this year than in any other year. This crazy year motivated people and organizations to donate more than ever to families in need. Most of these donations were set down on the driveway near Mel’s storage “She Shed”. They received dozens of boxes and bags of food which each night were piled in huge bins in the shed.

For the second project, Mel asked us to organize the food. For two afternoons, UUMAN volunteers, crated up cans and boxes of food. As soon as the pile became manageable, an SUV, truck or van would pull up with more boxes and bags of food. UUMAN volunteers kept organizing food into crates and lifting the crates into stacks in the She Shed. At the end of the project, the She Shed was almost completely full with tall stacks of crates of food and just a small path leading through the stacks to the back. The driveway was clear, the boxes all recycled. Well done UUMAN!

Do you realize how many churches NFCC partners with? Dozens! Some of the big mega churches are their partners. So why us, why UUMAN? Why our little congregation? Mel knows that UUMAN cares. She knows we will show up and that we will do an excellent job.

Thank You UUMAN NFCC Volunteers! Seventeen volunteers worked over 60 hours helping the Food Pantry serve needy families. Thank you to Mary M, Tom M, Marjorie P, Susan W, Michelle L, Jennifer M, Bug M, Maren M, Doris M, Donna G, Laura K, Joel S, Raffaella S, Elizabeth R, Dave D, Bob P, Rosie P.

- Rosie Popp



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](#).

January 2021: A Month of Sundays

Date	Topic	Service Leaders
1/3	Friedman's Fables Through story, parable and fable, rabbi and family therapist Edwin Friedman portrays a "systems theory" of human behavior. How does this theory govern behavior in our families, workplaces and congregations?	Rev. Dave Dunn
1/10	Beyond Our Limits What limits do we place upon ourselves? Do we search for truth, meaning, love, etc., in "all the wrong places?" What new dreams must we dream?	Rev. Dave Dunn
1/17	Free and Clear? We all want things "free and clear" ...free from encumbrances, ties and restrictions. When we reflect upon who we are, what we possess, what we have, how much of that do we view as free and clear?	Rev. Dave Dunn
1/24	Do We Want to Grow? We seem to circle back to this question time and time again...year after year. I'd like to approach this question from a direction in which you might not be accustomed.	Rev. Dave Dunn
1/31	TBA	Lay Lead



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
1/4	Jamie Hagood is celebrating a birthday
1/15	Randy Jue is celebrating a birthday
1/21	Nelson Hagood is celebrating a birthday Dharma H. is celebrating a birthday
1/23	Tammy Dunn is celebrating a birthday
1/24	Donna Melcher is celebrating a birthday
1/29	Dave Dunn is celebrating a birthday

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 preceding the issue date.

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