

June 2021

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## Opening Back Up at UUMAN

Although we're not out of the woods yet, the Covid pandemic seems to be subsiding...for the

time being. We should be prepared for possible resurgences due to many no longer wearing masks or no longer observing social distancing. We also aren't absolutely certain about the effectiveness of the vaccines against the many variants or about how long the vaccines will protect us. We seem to be learning more each and every day, however.

Deprived of meeting in person since March of 2020, many of us are eager to return, open up, meet face to face, sing, dance, celebrate....ANYTHING! ("Can we come and dust inside Discovery Hall?" 😊)

Although I would hazard to guess the most adult members of UUMAN have had both shots and almost all have had at least one, there are segments of our population, our youngest members, who are still unprotected.

UUMAN's Board established a team to assess the situation as it unfolds (based on public health data and science) and that team has posted our full safety guidelines on the front page of our website. (A one-page summary is also posted.) These guidelines outline what can be done inside and outside regarding UUMAN activities. As the situation on the ground continues to evolve day by day, hour by hour, it has been a daunting task for this team to keep up with the nuance and chang-

es. They are doing their very best in an effort to keep us ALL safe.

Although some might feel safe to return, meet indoors without masks or distancing (or whatever), I would ask that you respect the hard work that our all-volunteer team has done on our (& your) behalf.

Although Unitarian Universalists have a strong strain of individualism, we practice this in covenant with one another. How we return safely shouldn't be about how safe we feel individually but about how safe we feel in covenant. From a health perspective and from the perspective of covenant, a trusted advisor put it best, "this is public health, not individual risk."

Let us open back up at the speed of trust – at the speed of covenant.

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

~ Dave



## UUMAN Sharing the Plate—50/50

On the first Sunday of the month, we have 50-50, when a selected nonprofit organization receives half of our undesignated offering. The other half of the money goes to support our congregation.

The nonprofit, Kids to the Country, was chosen by our Earth Ministry Committee and received \$305.00 in April.

June's recipient is Family Promise of North Fulton/DeKalb. The not-for-profit institution partners with local congregations, individuals, families, foundations and corporations to provide emergency shelter and viable solutions for families with children who are facing a housing crisis.

The mission of Family Promise is to engage community and faith-based organizations in ENDING HOMELESSNESS ... one family at a time. To learn more, go to <http://www.familypromisefd.org/>

You can make a 50-50 donation at any time during June through the Givelify app or by writing a check payable to UUMAN and mailing to UUMAN. If you mail a check, make sure to allow time for it to get there by the end of June and that you **write 50-50** on the **memo line**.

~ Michelle Liebergesell



## 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](mailto:membership-tech@uuman.org)

Date	Celebration
6/6	Miriam P. is celebrating a birthday
6/10	Jane S. is celebrating a birthday
	Burk and Merilee H. are celebrating their anniversary of 32 years
6/11	Jane and Marc S. are celebrating their anniversary of 44 years
	Mark and Laurie W. are celebrating their anniversary of 33 years
6/18	Jim S. is celebrating a birthday
6/19	Ken F. is celebrating a birthday
	Phillip S. and Suzanne R. are celebrating their anniversary of 28 years
6/22	Etienne G. of our MCY program is celebrating a birthday
6/23	Judy and Willard J. are celebrating their anniversary of 37 years
6/24	Burk H. is celebrating a birthday
	Marc and Carolyn L. are celebrating their anniversary of 31 years
6/25	Luka K. is celebrating a birthday
6/27	Bob and Rosie P. are celebrating their anniversary of 38 years
6/29	Molly B. of our MCY program is celebrating a birthday

## How one of us has been able to continue going inside UUMAN this year...

Sometime last summer, we sat down with our then-ten-year-old, Olivia, to ask her how she's feeling about beginning her last year of elementary school. What should have been a year of big milestones and "lasts" was looking more like a year of continued unknowns, a bit of anxiety, and a lot of missed traditions. We had discussed how The Premo School might be a good fit for Olivia pre-COVID, but last summer's conversation with her gave us an opportunity to look more seriously at the school. We spoke with Alashia Cody, director of the upper school, and visited shortly before the start of the school year. We were impressed with the steps they were taking to maximize distancing, minimize exposure, and maintain a caring, nurturing environment for the children. They'd been given permission by the UUMAN Board to utilize both Fellowship and Discovery Halls to allow the students more space when they were indoors. I am so happy to say that Olivia is—by the time you are reading this—a rising sixth grader who is thriving, in large part because of her experience at Premo.

But this is all just the back story, and not all that I want to convey here. What is most important about our experience at Premo this past year is how much it aligns with our values as Unitarian Universalists. One of the first stories I heard after pickup one day began with a breathless question: "Mom, do we have any twine at home?" When I replied in the affirmative—and I mean VERY affirmative, given that I still had 980 feet of it left after using the mere 20 I needed the year before—she proceeded to tell me how she and several others were planning to build a bamboo platform up in a tree. The kids concocted the idea, provided their own supplies (no standing bamboo was harmed in the creation of said platform), and requested an adult to test it out before they stood on it. The kids worked together, they worked hard, they navigated through disagreements and negotiations, and they felt great pride when it was finished.



This experience reminded me so much of what I see in our children and youth at UUMAN—we make the conscious commitment each day to affirm how critical they are to our church and our faith. We provide a safe space for them to question, to experiment, to fail, to thrive, and this sets them up to be independent, conscientious, critical thinkers our world so desperately needs.

Premo sees their responsibility as needing to educate the whole child, not just their mind. So they spend time outside in all sorts of weather, they include yoga in their weekly curriculum, and they compress the school week into four days to allow more time for kids to do what kids do best—learn through play and engage in the broader community.

When Olivia and I talked about this article, she asked me to be sure to include how welcoming Premo is to all of their students, regardless their gender identity, sexual orientation, or even hair color. She loves that her class size is so small (it ranged between 7-10 students throughout the year), and she

loves that families were able to go back and forth between virtual and in-person learning as they needed to during this pandemic. It meant that she didn't have to miss school if she had a sore throat but felt otherwise ok.

We won't be back at Premo next year—Olivia felt strongly that she wanted to at least start middle school in public school. She also asked if she could return to Premo if, for whatever reason, public school wasn't the best fit for her. We'd send her back in a heartbeat. I will be forever grateful to Premo for providing Olivia this year of stability and compassion in a most unstable year. And I am so proud that UUMAN has continued to offer its beautiful space to the Premo community—these two organizations fit each other so well.

- Miriam and Olivia Patanian

## Book Discussion - You are invited - *The Sum of Us* by Heather McGhee



Please join us for what promises to be a rich discussion of *The Sum of Us* by Heather McGhee on June 26th from 11 am to 12:30 pm moderated by Dirk Bender.

*The Sum of Us* discusses what racism costs everyone and how we can prosper together.

"No one writes about the intersection of race, class, and politics more brilliantly, honestly, and hopefully than Heather McGhee. *The Sum of Us* is a powerful and timely argument for the collective value of multiracial solidarity, told with a humanity and empathy that comes from McGhee's own journey." Jon Favreau, host of Pod Save America.

Please sign up [here](#).

Let us know if you have questions,

Social Justice Committee



### Reflections from the President of the Board

About a year ago in the July 2020 newsletter I wrote about how “we are now living in very turbulent and stressful times”. At that time, the number of deaths from the pandemic was at around 150,000 in the US. We are now at close to 588,000 confirmed deaths from COVID-19. A stunning figure for a country as wealthy and powerful as the US!

That article was also written soon after the murder of George Floyd at the hands of the police. Unfortunately, many other people of color have since died at the hands of police brutality. The good news, if there is any, is that it appears many in the US including white people have woken up to the systematic racism that exists in the US and are fighting for reform and justice. Our own congregation is now reading the book “The Sum of US – What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together” by Heather McGhee, so that we can be better informed to act now.

When I wrote that article last summer it was not clear to anyone whether we would have a change in leadership in the White House and the Senate. Many said our democracy was hanging in the balance and it may very well have been. Are we out of the woods yet? I think not! There continue to be powerful voices in the US and our state that want to hold back change and continue to support racist and non-democratic policies and legislation which benefits the wealthy at the expense of low- and middle-income families of all races and ethnicities. We cannot let that happen.

On July 1 I will hand over the reins of the President of the Board to Jennifer Ratcliffe. I could not be happier as she is the right person at the right time – UUMAN is in good hands. I am also incredibly pleased to have Carla Kapeskas and Miriam Patanian joining the UUMAN Board in July, both bring experiences and gifts that everyone in the congregation will benefit from. I also want to thank the outgoing Board members, Todd Callen and Donna Melcher for their service and commitment to UUMAN. Their time and talent were truly a large gift to UUMAN!

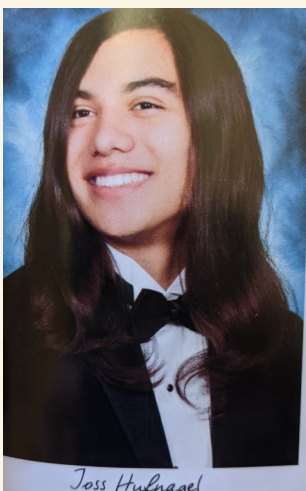
In closing I would like to say that now is the time to double down on getting involved in our Mission and Vision! There are plenty of opportunities whether that is participating in Adult Education, helping with Religious Exploration, supporting our Family Promise commitment, or just pulling weeds in one our gardens, get engaged and help make a difference in our Congregation, Community and World. We can be successful in facing the challenges ahead if we stay focused and committed to our Mission and Vision. Let's get busy!

~ Bob Popp

## Graduating Seniors

Let's pay tribute once more to our graduating seniors **Lucia Bralley** and **Joss Hufnagel**.

Lucia, who is the daughter of Amanda and Krishan Bralley, graduated from Alpharetta High School. She will be attending Louisiana State University (LSU) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She plans on studying journalism & mass communications as well as enjoying the great fun of attending a big SEC school. With her charm, generosity and positive attitude Lucia will surely be successful in all she tackles in life.



Joss Hufnagel, the son of Merilee and Burt Hufnagel graduated from Johns Creek High School. Joss is a National Merit Finalist and plans to study computer science at Kennesaw State University. During our recent Rites of Passage service Joss demonstrated his ability to communicate openly and honestly with people and to invite others to do the same. With this quality and his keen intelligence, Joss is sure to make an indelible mark on our world.

UUMAN should be extremely proud of these two remarkable young people who have been shaped by the values and teachings of this community. They ARE the change we dream of in the world.

Their leaders this year were Amanda Bralley, Randy Blasch, Stephen Shanahan and Sam Friedman. Without these dedicated teachers we could not keep our older teens involved all through high school. We thank them profusely.

~ Melinda Mischik

## A Note of Gratitude

It has been a true pleasure to serve you for the past 18 months. I might not have said that in April of 2020 when I was trying to navigate zoom and google meets and questioning what on earth I could possibly offer to children and youth that was of any value without being in-person. This old dog had to learn some new tricks.



But, of course, by pulling together as a community, we figured it out -together. This community is brilliant at that actually- the pulling together part. UUMAN is special. Of course, it is full of messy humans like every other institution but the humans here are able to regularly put their differences aside for the greater good. What is better than that? This is the behavior that we want to model for our children. And by the looks of your children and youth, you have done it well.

Even with the lessening of the pandemic, things will still keep changing at UUMAN. They must! Change is the constant. And it can be hard and good at the same time.

So this is my observation: all will be fine as long as you keep doing what you have always done: lean in closer, listen intently to one another and just keep loving each other no matter what.

You have wonderful leadership on your board, giving and talented members, a minister who wants only the best for each of you and now a superstar DRE & Membership Coordinator. You are poised for great things. You've got this!

Thank you for allowing me to be part of your world.

With all my love,

Melinda

Sunday Worship Service and many other activities are available online for the health and safety of all our members and guests.

We are now at PHASE YELLOW and certain inside events are allowed starting June 5.

Read [the following update](#) for further information.

## June 2021: A Month of Sundays

Date	Topic	Service Leaders
6/6	<b>Gratitude for Volunteers</b> In the first lay-led summer service, we will explore the importance of the laity's voice in achieving UUMAN's mission. Amanda Bralley will share her story of lifting her voice at UUMAN.  Welcoming Day of Observance: LGBTQ Pride Month	Amanda Bralley  Shelley Nagrani
6/13	<b>Living our UU Principles</b> TBA  Welcoming Day of Observance: Pulse Night of Remembrance	Ann Bender  Elizabeth Norris  Jennifer Ratcliffe
6/20	<b>Light/Darkness</b> TBA  Welcoming Day of Observance: Marriage Equality Day	Bruce Langston  Jennifer Ratcliffe
6/27	<b>What we have learned this year?</b> TBA  Welcoming Day of Observance: Stonewall Riots Anniversary	Amanda Bralley  Melinda Mischik

**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](mailto:newsletter@uuman.org)