SUMMER WORSHIP SERVICES

All Services* at 10 am via Zoom & YouTube

(*July 5 service starts at 10:30 AM)

July 5 — 10:30 AM
Wizardry and Wonder!
Jessica Harwood & UU Church of Fort Myers, FL
This service is a culmination of a weeklong School of Wizardry Program hosted by USNF and the UU Church of Fort Myers, FL. Hear from the kids and adults about their explorations of magic, creativity, play, and values. Muggles are welcome!

July 12
Inevitable Change: How does faith keep us connected?
Lawson Wulsin

July 19
Climate Action Group

July 26
"The Growth Inside"
Elaine Apthorp
Reflections on what can surface and call to mind and heart when crisis and isolation suddenly mute the pounding anesthesia of an overstuffed life.
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August 2
Pink in the Storm Clouds: Finding Footing in Troubled Times
Laurie Loisel and Joan O’Brien
Reflections on the renewing properties of natural beauty and art

August 9
The American Dream of Democracy – Worth Saving? If So, How?
UU the Vote
Do you know why the democratic process is included in our UU Principles? Is democracy at risk today - and if so, what can we do about it? We’ll consider these questions and others, and we’ll share stories about our own work to “USNF the Vote.”

August 16
The Spiritual Path of the Twelve Steps
Cathy Lilly
The Twelve Steps describe a spiritual program that is practiced by millions of people worldwide, including many of our members. Speaking from her personal experience, Cathy will describe how working these steps can change lives.

August 23
Janet Spongberg

August 30
A World That Will Not Break
Alice Wanamaker

September 6
Sarah Metcalf
“Gaia is my shepherd, I shall not want
She makes me lie down in green meadows
She leads me beside still waters
She restores my soul
She leads me in the paths of righteousness
For the sake of all creation, all humankind, all creatures.

That’s part of my own adaptation of the 23rd psalm. I recite it as a prayer, a chant, or a meditation.

I will be here most of the summer. When not on vacation, I will be focused on preparing for the fall. I will also provide some behind-the-scenes support for summer worship leaders, and work with the Board as we continue to navigate our way through these strange, choppy waters. And I plan to join “USNF the Vote” postcard writing efforts.

Jessica will be first call for pastoral care emergencies during my vacation weeks, and Lisa or one of the members of the Presidents’ team will be able to reach me during the week I am away. Please, please reach out if you would like to speak with me. I look forward to continuing to connect with many of you, before summer services and on other occasions.

May you find moments this summer that restore your soul. May you find your own ways to walk the paths of righteousness, for the sake of what matters, and for love.

I am honored and blessed to be your minister.
Greetings! The board met this June with a full agenda. We spent some time reviewing the preliminary budget and setting up a plan for the annual meeting which will take place on August 16 at 11 AM (after the service). We reviewed the UUA’s gathering in-person guidance, and there is a lot to consider.

The majority of our time was spent listening to each other share our thoughts and concerns about when and how to reopen the building safely. Some of the thoughts and concerns we shared:

- What does gathering “safely” look like?
- If we continue on-line services in tandem with in-person – how do we interact and support without becoming two different communities?
- What will religious education and serving the community look like (AA, building rentals, etc.)?
- Do we have the technology to support long term on-line services?
- Do we have the capacity to take on new procedures without wearing out staff and volunteers?
- Do we re-open all programs at once or phase them in?
- How will we know when we are ready to make decisions to reopen?
- The repercussions are several fold if we open too soon.

We came up with many more questions and only two answers:

- We will keep the building closed this summer, continuing on-line services via Zoom.
- While we continue to consider ever-changing information and circumstances, and communicate and consult with the congregation, as the governing body of the Society, the board will continue to make the ultimate decisions regarding how, when, and where we shall congregate.

The work to determine how and when the building reopens has started. We need to continue to ask ourselves what questions we need to answer, and what information we need to gather in order to make the best decisions we can. We hold everyone’s safety and health as a priority. And we need to be faithful to our mission and purposes. It will be some time before we can join in community in the building to meet, worship and sing together. So in the meantime, we will sing out loud in our bedrooms, living rooms, outside, where ever and whenever we can.
REPORTS & ARTICLES

A BIG THANK YOU!

To the congregation, the choir, the staff and the board of USNF for a wonderful two years as your interim music director. I leave with feelings of profound gratitude mixed with both grief and joy as my tenure with you draws to a close. I am so touched by the messages and cards so many of you have sent, and the final service of the spring and all of the appreciations I have received continue to move me. And I am delighted and excited to anticipate fulfilling the commission to write some songs suitable for Unitarian worship, and I thank you, again, ever so much, for this opportunity.

And I am happy to announce that plans are underway for a Summer Online Concert Series in support of the USNF sanctuary program!! The USNF Board is aware that musicians are suffering financially due to the Covid pandemic, and have decided to split donations 50-50 with musicians and the Sanctuary Fund. There will be a mix of classical, jazz, and folk music, featuring a range of performers, from solo piano to small groups that feel safe and comfortable rehearsing and performing together. While there will be no audiences gathered in the Great Hall for these performances, they will be broadcast live via YouTube, and archived for future enjoyment. Many thanks to Brit Albritton, who will be the technical director and the person behind the camera. Please stay tuned for further details, which will be announced in the weekly Sunday Times.

And until we meet again... may the road rise up to meet you! I hope to have the chance to get to know more of you, and to continue friendships that have their roots here at the Unitarian Society. Please feel free to be in touch. I would love to hear from you.

With love, from Dana.

danamaiben.uu@gmail.com

SAVE THE DATE

ANNUAL MEETING (postponed from May 17)
Sunday, August 16, 11 AM (after the online service)

Once a year, members of USNF gather to conduct essential business per our by-laws. A quorum of USNF members is required to vote in our new slate of officers and our budget for the upcoming fiscal year (Sept. 2020 – Aug. 2021). Attend from anywhere with an internet connection via Zoom! The Board is preparing for this meeting thoughtfully, ensuring essential business is conducted as necessary. Official notices will be forthcoming.
Welcoming New Members

Jan Alicia Nettler  
Chair, Newcomer Connections Team

We recognize and extend a congregational welcome to everyone who has joined our Society as a member since the Annual Meeting in 2019.

We welcome:

Amanda Van Lankvelt and Bob Barron  
Austin and Laura Porter (photo at right)  
Bharat Trivedi  
Paula Rapulus  
Linda Sennott-Miller  
Peggy Misch  
Susan and David Roitman

We are very happy they have chosen to become Members and we are proud and excited to have them with us. They have made a public commitment to be part of this community and keep it alive. They have written themselves into the story, the noble history of this congregation and the larger movement of which it is a part.

Our members love its promise and would keep that promise: the promise of community, the promise of a free and pluralistic faith, the promise of contemplative life grounded in pursuing justice and the flourishing of life on our planet.

They have joined our future and have made a commitment to assuring that the thousands of people who come after them will have a religious home. Every new member strengthens our community. Every new member brings new gifts.

The members of the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence pledge to work together to fulfill our mission, to build a welcoming community where all can safely learn and grow, to respect and support one another, follow the call to be our higher selves, and inspire one another to service and to justice-making.

If you haven’t formally joined the Society and would like to do so, please email Lisa in the office (office@uunorthampton.org) and she will connect you with either me or Cathy Lilly.
USNF Summer Auctions

We’re trying out a free on-line auction software this summer as a fundraiser for USNF (replacing our in-person auction).

Summer On-line Auctions will run every 2 weeks. If you would like to donate items, plants, art, treasures, jewelry, food items, etc., please email Cathie Brown; cathiebrown@comcast.net with the following information: a photo of the item, it’s value, the minimum starting bid, and how the item can be picked up. The first auction runs through July 5 and will feature plants from Cathie’s gardens and a pottery bowl from Diana Krauth. Here’s the link to our first auction: www.32auctions.com/USNF

Announcing The Pioneer Co-Editor — Naomi Klayman

Naomi Klayman has stepped forward to become co-editor of The Pioneer starting with the September 2020 issue. Naomi and Lisa will be working over the summer to review and update the format and publication process. Although much of our tweaking will be tied to the software platforms, we also welcome suggestions for content, now and anytime. Have an idea for an article? Let us know! The Pioneer belongs to all of us. Please contact Naomi and Lisa with your thoughts; pioneer@uunorthampton.org

Grocery Store Gift Cards Available During the Summer

The last few months that the Society building has been closed has affected not only our income from building rentals but also our income from the sale of grocery store gift cards. Please consider doing your grocery shopping with gift cards purchased at the Society and help keep some income coming in. Gift cards can be purchased from the office throughout the summer. Call ahead or send an email and your order will be ready for you at the side door for easy pick up. The office will generally be open Tuesday through Thursday. Please check the Sunday Times and/or the office voice mail for closings.
Looking for a Summer Read?
Members of the Racial Justice Task Force Will Lead Book Discussions in July and August

*Waking Up White* by Debbie Irving – July Book Group
We each have a unique story of our experience learning about race. Even though many of us grew up unaware of whiteness as a racial identity, the pervasive impact that race has had on our personal and collective histories has intensified, often to the point of being the proverbial elephant in the room. *Waking Up White* is a short, engaging memoir of a white woman’s journey toward racial awareness. At the end of each chapter are questions that invite and challenge us to explore, deepen and make meaning of our own racial journey. What personal commitments and actions might this exploration lead us to? Our book group will offer opportunities for participants to share stories and insights as we individually and collectively reflect about our racial identity . . . and reflect on any next steps we may feel called to take. Although the book is written from the perspective of a white woman, participants of all genders and racial identities are welcome; diverse perspectives will enrich everyone’s learning. We will meet on zoom on Wednesdays July 15 and 29, 6:30-8:30 pm. To sign up, email dre@uunorthampton.org.

*White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo
In *White Fragility*, white author and educator Robin DiAngelo invites us to understand how white fragility operates to make racial conversations and any movement towards racial equity difficult, how that hurts us individually and collectively, and what we can do about it. The book also invites us to engage in deep personal reflection and collective change.

We'll meet via Zoom on Thursday July 16, 23, and 30, 7-8:30 pm. Facilitator: Jane Simonds. Please RSVP dre@uunorthampton.org or 4jbsimonds@gmail.com if you're interested!

*Red at the Bone* by Jacqueline Woodson
This is an engaging and moving family story about hope and dreams across the generations, beginning with the coming-of-age/Sweet Sixteen ceremony for Melody. Jacqueline Woodson goes back in time to tell the story of Melody's parents and grandparents, showing how they arrived at this moment, and revealing their ambitions and successes along with the costs and the tolls they've paid. A beautifully written exploration of identity, ambition, gentrification, education, race, class and status, and the life-altering facts of parenthood.

We are offering 2 options for meetings over Zoom (you only need to attend 1):
USNF the Vote: Doing More

Submitted by Dave Roitman

On June 23 I heard former President Obama say “thanks for what you’re doing to win in 2020. It’s great. And – we all need to do more – Michelle, Malia, Sasha, and me, and all of you – we need to hold ourselves to a higher standard.”

USNF has a tradition of activism, and we’ve already done a lot to turn out the 2020 vote. Kim Wolfson and Karl Moore engaged several dozen people who, over 5 weeks, sent 1430 letters reminding folks in swing states to vote. Susie Macrae bought 2,000 postcards to help Florida residents Vote By Mail and in over just 3 weeks, over 30 USNF folks signed up to mail them. Harriet & Bill Diamond recently bought 1500 postcards to encourage North Carolina people of color to vote, and we’re confident our community will achieve the goal to get these all mailed by July 6. (Send an email to harrietd@hotmail.com to get your postcards).

But we can do more. Here’s why we need to.

First, in our current system, an incumbent president has enormous advantages: automatic news coverage; a huge fundraising engine; use of the government for political advantage (often illegal but still often done); to name just a few. Second, as we’ve seen in the Gore and Clinton defeats, winning the popular vote doesn’t mean winning the election – the vote has to be won in swing states. Third, many districts are gerrymandered, providing the party currently in power a big advantage. Fourth, there are many ways elections can be influenced outside the election itself, ranging from an “October surprise” to use of social media to sway the vote. Fifth, winning the presidency and failing to win the Senate will mean that the changes we need to make will be impossible. Sixth, many efforts are already underway to suppress the vote, ranging from purging voters from the rolls to closing polling places to portraying Vote by Mail as fraudulent.

This all means that to win in 2020, we need the kind of turnout that will dwarf 2008. That’s the only way to counter these powerful advantages.

So – want to do more? Great! If you haven’t already, please send an email to droitman6@gmail.com and receive weekly updates on the actions we’re taking to protect and turn out the vote in swing states. And if you want to help plan and lead these actions, let us know. We can, and will, do more!
Small Group Circles

Sign up for the new year, the same, yet different.

Submitted by Katie Olmstead

No getting around it. Everything has changed. Still, we’re here, you’re here, and we would like to be together. In these times of isolation, it is all the more imperative that we connect in meaningful ways. With that aim, last year’s groups will go through the summer but new groups will form in October, per usual.

Have you been in Small Group Circles before? Have you attended House Meetings or tuned into the USNF Connections groups in recent months and would like more of that? Or is this all new to you? All are welcome! Our facilitated groups of 5-9 members meet once a month, October through June, for 2 hours. Traditionally we have met in the facilitators’ home or the home of a participant. Well, there’s this pandemic.

The groups follow a set format, creating a ritual for how we meet, opening space for deep listening and when you speak, you have the floor. No one will interrupt you or give advice or tell you that the same thing happened to their neighbor. There is power in just listening. Just speaking. After everyone has had a chance to speak, then the floor is opened up for non-judgmental back and forth.

We provide the topic for each session. These are always topics that draw you into a heart-space, aim to get you out of your head. As we are thinking about the pandemic, we’ll be choosing topics that support us as we may feel isolated or anxious, and help focus us on the ways that love and a good heart is also emerging. I think of protesters all wearing masks. To me, that is what love looks like. We have inner strengths that need to be drawn out. We can do this together.

I don’t know about you, but I had never heard of Zoom before March. Now, while it can be tiring, especially if you are on it all day for work, and maybe doing home schooling as well, it is also a great blessing. Our Small Groups last year slipped right into Zoom immediately when things shut down. I am sad that we have lost a few people for personal reasons but we also gained a few, like the man who moved to CA during the year. You may be wondering if SGC’s will move to our living rooms when the Society opens for in-person services again. No. We can’t. The Society building is spacious and people can physically distance and be safe. We can’t do that in our homes. So, we have a two prong approach to this coming year. On the sign up form, we will ask you 2 questions about Zoom use. Do you prefer to use Zoom all the time? Maybe you have issues with night driving, or live far from your group, or have kids at home that you can’t leave alone. Zoom might be preferred, for always; it might be liberating to be able to be in a group from the ease of your own home. Or, do you understand that all groups are starting out on Zoom and we will move to in person meetings if and when we can? Personally, I find the flexibility that Zoom lends to be amazing. I am thinking of the times that we had postponed a group because of a blizzard. Now we can just stay home but still meet with the help of technology. If you need help setting up Zoom, I can give you a private tutorial (both of us on the phone and computer at the same time, talking it through). If you don’t have a smart phone or a computer with a camera at home, we’ll try to connect you via a phone line.

Our sign up flyer isn’t quite ready. No brochures this year. You have until September 27 to sign up so no hurry! We’ll post it all over the place; you’ll see it (Sunday Times, Facebook, etc.) If you have questions now, please email me at KDOlmstead@aol.com or call 413 585-0564.
How Do We Stay Connected to Unitarian Universalism This Summer?

This summer, USNF will be offering all sorts of ways for kids and youth to stay connected to each other and to our congregation. We are kicking off the summer with the School of Wizardry, with 38 kids enrolled in our North Campus! I am so grateful to all the youth and adults in the congregation who have volunteered to make this program possible; we have 20 “faculty members”!

Starting the week of July 6, we will be offering a weekly story time, philosophy for children, art club, and D & D games group. (More information on these offerings in the weekly Sunday Times). While these are all important ways for kids to stay engaged with our community and their values, we are also hoping that families will carve out some time together to connect with Unitarian Universalism. We have prepared a list of hymns, book lists, and activities: Summer Family Activity Resources. Here is a taste of what you could do together:

Listen and Sing Together!
Music is a powerful way to connect with each other and to change your mindset. The resource list has a variety of options, including Come Sing a Song with Me sung by Emma Gaudreau (photo at right), our new early childhood educator, or We’ll Build A Land by Ruby Kules, one of our Junior Youth RE teachers. Make it a habit of listening to these songs and hymns.

Family Activities
The Summer Family Activity List includes 15 suggestions for activities to do together, from simple things, like lighting a chalice, to actions you can take for racial justice. There are rituals you could try out regularly over the summer, like creating wish cards with words like love, hope, joy that you can choose or gift to each other every morning. You will find activities that you might choose to do just once, like art activities related to the UU principles. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Jessica with questions, ideas, or feedback: dre@uunorthampton.org.
SUMMER: WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Summer offerings will start on the week on July 6. RSVP for Zoom links. Please note that the following virtual programs will have only one adult facilitator (our in person education program policy calls for two adult facilitators). For this format, we request that parents and caregivers remain accessible and within earshot.

Story Time, Monday at 10 am. Story Time with Vicki Baum-Hommes. Start your week with story time! Participants will have a chance to connect, check in, and hear a story. RSVP to Vicki for the Zoom link: vbaum-hommes@comcast.net. https://www.facebook.com/events/592426168070404/

Philosophy for Children, Wednesdays at 4 pm. Discussing Big Ideas through Picture Books with Tom Wartenberg. RSVP to wartenberg@gmail.com for Zoom information. Children of all ages are invited to a series of Zoom discussions of big ideas based on picture books. After Tom reads a picture book to everyone, he will facilitate a discussion about important questions such as:

- Can you be brave even if you are scared?
- Should all members of a community contribute equally to the group’s well-being?
- Are there objective criteria for judging art works?
- Can discrimination ever be eliminated?

No previous experience is expected. The sessions will last approximately one hour and it is recommended but not required that children attend all 4 sessions. https://www.facebook.com/events/256812875747044/

Art Club, Friday at 3 pm. Come together for a check in and art activity, facilitated by youth and a young adult in our congregation. For an hour, participants will get to hang out, chat, and work on an art project. RSVP to Annika Johnson, annikajohnsonr@gmail.com. https://www.facebook.com/events/674754269742487/

K-3 Introduction to D & D (Schedule to be determined). Play together in this game led by a junior youth student. Email Kate Kruckemeyer, kakrucke@me.com, for schedule and links.
What will next year look like?

Like so many things, we aren’t sure! However, we want to provide community, support, play, connection, and inspiration for kids, youth, and families.

Please weigh in with your interests and ideas for the upcoming year: USNF Fall 2020 Brainstorm. We want to make sure to help your family stay engaged and connected if we continue to be virtual. We have had some great ideas already about what would help engage families, from monthly packets to family-based activities that happen over Zoom (but interactions happen within the family -- off Zoom), to parent and child book clubs.

Grades 5-8 will likely participate in a Neighboring Faiths curriculum to explore different denominations, virtually visit houses of worship, and learn more about UUism as a faith.

However, we would love to offer a variety of programs that would interest students of all ages. We would also love to make sure that you, as parents & caregivers, are getting what you need.

Gail Herman and her husband Steve.
THE PIONEER
THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF
THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF NORTHAMPTON AND FLORENCE

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SEPTEMBER PIONEER DATES
Deadline: August 20
Publication: August 27

Articles should be 350 words or less.
Send submissions to pioneer@uunorthampton.org.
Include the word “PIONEER” in the subject line.