SERVICES for SEPTEMBER
Sunday Mornings via ZOOM

With our new season, we’re making a few changes:

9:45 - 10:00     Family gathering with Jessica (separate Zoom link)
9:45 - 9:55       Zoom meeting opens for people to greet one another
9:55 - 10:00     Pre-service music that will be accompanied by on-screen, written announcements

10 AM     Service begins with Welcome, Prelude, Chalice Lighting and Opening Song

September 6
Poetry Service
Sarah Metcalf

September 13
Ingathering: Mingled Waters and Mingled Stories
Reverend Janet Bush and Jessica Harwood

Join us to celebrate a new season with music and stories to inspire and sustain us. We will welcome Music Director Lemmy Gurtowsky, and we’ll invite you to participate in an online version of our beloved water ceremony. Check your Sunday Times in September for details.

September 20  SPECIAL SERVICE START- TIME: 10:30 AM
Circle Round
Reverend William Levwood and Reverend Janet Bush

What do Tallahassee, Northampton, the Cambridge Platform (1648) and the UUA report “Widening the Circle” (2020) have in common? Please join us to find out, and to celebrate our partnership with the UU Church of Tallahassee to “UU the Vote.”

NOTE: Service begins at 10:30. (Meet and greet and family time will start at 10:15.)

September 27
Coming Awake
Reverend Janet Bush

Have you ever woken up to the realization that you’ve been mistaken or wrong about something? Realized there are stories or truths you should have learned but didn’t? How do we respond when that happens? We’ll take inspiration from the Yom Kippur tradition of taking stock, asking for and offering forgiveness, and assuming responsibility.
Summer is nearly over. We may be asking, “what’s next?”

What do we do when we don’t know what’s next? What do we do when the old ways of doing things no longer work but a way forward is not yet clear? What do we do, in short, when we don’t have a clue about what it is we really need to do?

How can we face the immense issues of global warming and racism? What will be the continued impact of the continuing specter of COVID-19, which affects nearly every aspect of our daily lives, and causes fear, worry, and financial hardship for many? For parents of children at home and of older teens who want desperately to be away in college, and for those who have lost jobs, the tensions and pressures are enormous.

UU minister Michael Tino writes that “all of us are experiencing a collective trauma—and how we deal with that trauma is filtered through our past experiences, the institutional power we have access to (or don’t), and the communities of care to which we are connected.” Organizational consultant Susan Beaumont calls times of uncertainty like this one liminal seasons, “threshold times when the continuity of tradition disintegrates and uncertainty about the future fuels doubt and chaos.”

She says we need to begin by admitting to ourselves that we don’t know what’s next. We need to help each other manage our pain and anxiety and try to embrace the “freedom of not-knowing, not rushing to so-called solutions.” We need to keep learning and growing as the alive and awake beings that we are.

And we need to keep doing what our hearts and minds tell us is right: giving ourselves permission to be less than perfect; reaching out to one another with calls and notes and offers to take socially-distanced walks; sharing what we’re learning about racial justice and our own blossoming realizations about how much we ourselves need to still learn and change; showing up (safely) at demonstrations; continuing to keep pressure on lawmakers for more effective climate legislation; writing thousands (literally thousands!) of postcards encouraging voters in swing states and voters among people of color who have been disenfranchised to vote early and vote by mail; sharing our financial resources with those who need help.

This year’s overarching theme is the power of stories. We’ll explore stories we learned about our history and stories we didn’t, stories about heroes and heroines of civil rights struggles, stories from our UU heritage, personal stories from members and guests, and more.

I look forward to the time when we will again be able to gather, socialize and worship together. And I am energized and excited about the year in front of us, in whatever forms it takes. I am entering my twelfth year here with you, and it is ever an honor and a joy to be your minister.

To Contact the Minister:  Please email or call for an appointment Mondays, Tuesdays, or Thursdays. revjanetbush@gmail.com; 584-1390 x202 (office); 727-8497 (home – before 9 pm for non-emergencies)
End of summer Greetings! Historically, the board takes July off; this year however, we met throughout the summer to discuss procedures, issues, and topics related to our delayed Annual Meeting, the budget and finances, and COVID-19 related decisions regarding gathering in person and building use.

First of all, thanks to everyone who helped make our virtual Annual Meeting a positive and productive event. We had over 100 participants and were able to complete our objectives: passing the budget, approving the new slate of candidates, and hearing annual reports from the Board and the Minister. There are so many people to recognize and appreciate who contributed to the amazing success of this meeting- including all of you who joined us; the fantastic tech team who facilitated; the new slate of board members and board leadership, coordinating council leadership, and nominating committee members; and of course, Janet and the USNF staff. We would also like to express our appreciation for everyone who led our 2020 summer services.

We have continued our work to evaluate when and how to reopen the building safely. As always, we are mindful of our mission, purposes, and of course the health and well-being of our members, visitors, and staff. We have made the decision to keep the building closed for congregational activities (Janet and the staff are working in the building) and to continue virtual Sunday services until the risk of exposure is much lower and public health officials advise it. It is very possible that we’ll continue to live-stream our services even after a return to in-person gatherings. We know that uncertainty stressful for everyone, and will do our best to keep the congregation informed. We will continue to make recorded services available on our YouTube Channel. Our primary goal during this challenging time is to support our connectedness and community as a congregation while we are physically apart.

The Board has also organized and empowered a new Pandemic Advisory Group to address congregational concerns, needs, and next steps regarding the impact of COVID-19 on USNF. The Pandemic Advisory Group will have representation from relevant committees and will be led by Laurie Loisel. In addition, we are looking forward with much excitement to the start of our new music director, Lemmy Gurtowsky, and to beginning a new season together.

Note From the New Co-Editor of The Pioneer

Hi everyone, I am happy to announce that with this issue, I have come on board as co-editor of The Pioneer. Right now, Lisa and I are working as a team: I’ll be editing articles and content, with Lisa continuing to do layout and formatting. Over the next few months, as I learn the ropes, I’ll be assuming Lisa’s duties as well.

Questions? Ideas for articles? Want to help out? Contact me via the Pioneer email address: pioneer@uunorthampton.org. This is the address you should use for ALL articles submitted.

Finally, to do their job well, an editor needs to enter into a collaboration with the author. I look forward to collaborating with many of you!

Naomi Klayman
USNF COordinating COUNCIL

Cathie Brown, Council Co-Moderator

You are invited to attend the USNF Coordinating Council meetings, held from 6:30-8 pm the first Monday of every month, via zoom. The Coordinating Council helps coordinate and support all programing at the Society, a place where new ideas are raised, current programs share successes and challenges, and events and initiatives are shared. Representatives from each committee and other programs such as Safety, Sanctuary, Religious Education, Climate Justice, UU The Vote, and many others participate regularly. All are welcome!

Our work also includes educational workshops on topics of interest to USNF, collaborative work on any issues a group or committee may have, listening to committee reports and keeping up with what is going on, and vetting and voting on where our monthly plate collections are donated. For plate donations, October will be the month we hear suggestions for the first half of the year.

If you are a new or tenured member of the congregation you are welcome to attend, even if you do not represent a specific group or committee. Come and learn more about what happens outside our Sunday Services and Religious Education.

This year, we welcome newly elected co-moderator Mary Price and clerk Betsy Potter to the council. Cathie Brown continues her second year as co-moderator. Jessica Harwood meets with the co-coordinators and helps plan the meetings and assists with workshop leadership.

Our 1st meeting will be Tuesday*, Sept 8 (*due to the Labor Day Holiday)

Join Zoom Meeting

https://zoom.us/j/93676522803, Meeting ID: 936 7652 2803, One tap mobile +13017158592,,93676522803# US (Germantown) 13126266799,,93676522803# US +(Chicago)

GATHERINGS AT HOME OCTOBER 25, 2020

Michael Holroyde, Stewardship Committee

Members and friends, please mark your calendars for Sunday, October 25 and participate in A Gathering at Home…yes, your home no less. This year our House Gatherings will be coming to you – Zoom like!

Our annual home gathering, like all our congregational gatherings, will be taking place remotely. Every year the Stewardship Committee works with a different program or service: this year the partnership is with the Religious Education Council, focused on the following question: “How are we living our values during these tumultuous times?” We will use some favorite activities for children and youth to spark thinking and conversation, giving everyone a chance to connect to lifelong faith formation and our search for truth and meaning.

After the October 25 service, we will take a short break and then from approximately 11:00-12:30 we will form into groups of 8-10 people with a moderator and Zoom tech assistant. Details are still being fine-tuned – as we get closer to the date more information will be available. All are invited – members, friends, neocomers and visitors. We know of some people who have attended in the past without knowing anyone and found it a deep and beneficial introduction to USNF.

Please stay safe and be well - Michael Holroyde (on behalf of the Stewardship Committee and the RE Council)
MINI-AUCTION FUNDRAISERS

Have some fun, discover some great deals, and support USNF

*Cathie Brown*

Mini-Auctions are up and rolling! Using a site called **32auction**, we are now able to run small, silent auctions on-line every few weeks.

Our next auction will be starting August 31. Check it out at **www.32auctions.com/USNF3**. It’s easy to use and to bid. Donated items include: pottery; jewelry; art; T-shirts; handmade food; and plants. As more items come in, we plan to organize them around different themes. Several auctions can run at a time as needed.

To see what’s on offer, scroll down to the *view all auction items* green bar on the bottom of the page. To place a bid, you will be asked to create a login using an email address and password. Verify your email and you’re all set. Scroll through all the offerings and place your bids!

Once the bid is submitted, you will get email updates so you don’t miss out on your favorite item. You can use your cell phone or computer to browse and bid. Using the link above (there is no App), you can do everything online, including making a payment with a credit card. One final note, as is usually the case with free sites, there are ads on the site, which you can certainly ignore.

Thanks to the tireless Cathie Brown for organizing all of this, as well as to everyone who has reached out with donations. We are always seeking additional items, services, experiences, etc, so please consider what you could contribute. Let your attics and basements be lightened and your creative juices flow! Since we don’t have storage space, tangible items will be picked up after purchase, a process which Cathie will facilitate. Questions, donations, ideas, and support are all welcome, please contact Cathie Brown; **cathiebrown@comcast.net** or 413 575-1736.

Call for Social Action Project Proposals

*Jessica Harwood*

The Unitarian Society of Northampton & Florence sets aside funding in our operating budget each year to support USNF-connected programs and activities that promote social justice and/or community engagement. The money is meant to support existing USNF groups as well as to encourage new projects initiated by members and friends of the congregation. Last year, grants were awarded to the UU the Vote group for their astounding postcarding efforts and to the Youth Group for their upcoming public compost project. Grants are generally $150 to $300.

All proposals/requests should be ideas which are supported by a group of members and come from that group’s chair or leaders. Apply with this Social Action Fund Application or by emailing **dre@uunorthampton.org** for an application.
REPORTS & ARTICLES

RACIAL JUSTICE TEAM REPORT

Jessica Harwood for the Racial Justice Team

"Nothing can stop the power of a committed and determined people to make a difference in our society. Why? Because human beings are the most dynamic link to the divine on this planet."

John Lewis on political change in Across That Bridge: Life Lessons and a Vision for Change

Who and What We Are

How do we live our values of justice and equity during this time? What is the role of a largely white Unitarian Universalist congregation in the work to dismantle white supremacy in the United States?

Our racial justice leadership team includes Maryanne Bernini Caughlin; Joanna Brown; Sheri Hall-Smith; Corky Klimczak; Chris Mohn; Andrea Reber; Nancy Sardeson; Jane Simonds; Jessica Harwood; and Rev. Janet Bush. Last year, we began to offer learning opportunities to help us confront our own biases and to raise awareness about institutional and systemic racism. We learned a lot and are encouraged to continue.

Learning Programs

In religious education, there will be a weekly story time with books about social justice, the history of race and racism in the United States, and activism. For older children, there will be family book clubs with chapter books along similar themes.

Adult offerings will include book groups, interactive workshops, group viewings of films, and other discussion forums. We will also offer workshops with tools and practice time to build our skills around talking to white people who have expressed racist points of view.

Social Action and Collaboration

Through early November, we will work with “USNF the Vote” to prioritize voting rights. We will offer a workshop on defunding the police - what this means and ways to be involved.

There are many local actions taking place, often led by people of color. We will share these opportunities and continue to seek out ways to follow the leadership of people of color in dismantling white supremacy in our communities and ourselves. We are also working with Congregation B’nai Israel and other local organizations to share opportunities and co-sponsor programs and events.

Worship

The overall worship theme for 2020-2021 is The Power of Stories. We’ll explore the stories we learned about our history and the ones we did not. We’ll hear stories about heroes and heroines of civil rights struggles, and personal stories from members and guests. Our first guest, on October 4th, is folksinger Reggie Harris. Reggie has been a lifetime champion for racial understanding and has had a long relationship with Unitarian Universalism. He’ll offer an online concert from the Great Hall and lead a multi-generational service sponsored by the family and friends of Karen Shelley. Learn more at reggieharrismusic.com.

Communication

We will inform people about local actions and educational resources, including congregational and community offerings via an email list serve. To receive these emails, send a message to dre@uunorthampton.org.
USNF the VOTE: AMERICAN DEMOCRACY – THE TIME for REBIRTH is NOW!

Submitted by Dave Roitman

“It’s impossible to say whether we are on the brink of catastrophe or democratic rebirth…. millions of Americans who never protested in their lives have taken to the streets, with over 20,000 demonstrations between 2016 and 2018 [and many more by today!]… Citizens are debating the antidemocratic structure of our political system…Ruling ourselves is not a predictable enterprise, but this is as much a cause for jubilation as despair…This seemingly fatal flaw is also the source of democracy’s strength… Instead of founding fathers let us aspire to be perennial midwives, helping always to deliver democracy anew.” (From Democracy May Not Exist, But We’ll Miss It When It’s Gone, by Astra Taylor pages 308-312.)

The voting rights train is moving fast down the line, but there’s still time to Get On Board! Between June 8 and August 8, the USNF community filled out 7,000 postcards… and as of today we have another 2,000 spoken for, with more on order! We’ve participated in five swing-state postcard campaigns – to help disenfranchised voters re-register, to invite people to pledge to vote and encourage their friends, and to help people vote early and vote by mail. Soon we will help restore the voting rights of returning Florida citizens – individuals who have served time in prison and who deserve the opportunity to fulfill their right to vote.

While we’re waiting for postcards to arrive, here are critical actions you can take now:

Help recruit poll workers in swing states: The people you call are friendly; most people you call thank you for calling! Here’s the sign-up link: Protect voting rights.

Have meaningful conversations with voters: National UUA / UU the Vote is running National Call-in Days to Voters in Wisconsin and Florida. Every other week until Election Day, UU’s from across the country are making calls together to register, mobilize, and persuade voters in 2020. Although you may only speak with 5%-20% of the people you call, when someone does pick up chances are good you’ll have a conversation you won’t forget. And if Phonebanking is outside your comfort zone, here’s an article that may help you learn to enjoy it: https://politicalcharge.org/2020/08/14/the-best-way-to-do-voter-outreach-in-a-pandemic.

Fight voter suppression in Florida: The U.S. Supreme Court recently denied FL returning citizens the right to vote. This decision overruled a recently passed ballot initiative that overturned the Jim Crow era law requiring returning citizens to pay all debts before voting. Fortunately, there is an excellent group led by returning citizens called the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition raising money to repay these debts. To get these folks registered to vote in time, their debts need to be paid ASAP! You can help by donating here.

Movement Voter Project: A generous donor has offered to match an additional $250,000 for the Big 5 Fund if MVP can raise $1 million by the end of August! MVP has a brilliant strategy – to support the most effective grass-roots organizations in their work to get out the vote. These are groups who are trusted in their communities because they are there 365 days a year working on the issues that matter in their neighborhoods. Their credibility is very high when it comes to getting out the vote – which is so important now, when there is justifiable cynicism in communities of color about the value of voting, and when turn-out in 2020 will be the key to success. So, if you haven’t contributed to this great organization, please consider doing so NOW!

Join Us! And if you haven’t already, please send an email to me at droitman6@gmail.com so you can receive weekly emails updating these kinds of actions. In the current fast-paced, rapidly-changing political environment, actions change week-to-week, so this is a good way to stay informed and stay engaged. Thank you!
Small Group Circles, Here We Go!

Katie Olmstead

I recently typed up the list of all the topics we have offered in our previous 18 years. I looked at the titles and saw everything that mattered to me as a questing human being. Forgiveness, joy, abundance, cultivating an open heart. It was all there. It’s what I think about and like to talk about with others. I think about two concepts, kindness and community, and how the intersection is Small Group Circles. We come together, with kindness and care, to support each other in community. Many of you have been in a group over the years, or many groups, or have been in similar groups, like the House Meetings and the UU Connection Circles that were pulled together during the pandemic. I hope you’ll join us this year in Small Group Circles.

Our groups start in October and run through June, meeting once a month for 2 hours. Obviously, you won’t be in the facilitator’s living room with a cup of tea. You’ll be at your computer, bring your own tea, supply your own candle. We don’t have to worry about inclement weather or driving at night. Maybe you have kids at home who can be self-sufficient for 2 hours while you are in another room, meeting with your group. If you live an hour away, hey! No driving time at all. Geography is meaningless all of a sudden. We get to see each other, in our own settings, perhaps with our pets (even pet allergies are unimportant). You may get to meet my junior panthers. Especially now, we need to connect in any and all ways that we can. Thank goodness for Zoom.

Our topics for this year are: Insight, Wobbling, Kindness, Vulnerability, What Love Looks Like, Waking Up, Mindfulness, Embracing Change, and Care of the Soul.

You will deepen your ability to listen without jumping in. You will experience being heard fully. You will get to know a handful of people, between 5 and 10 in a group, in a meaningful way. It’s good for the soul.

We have a simple new way to sign up, www.uunorthampton.org, under Quick Links, brings you to a description and a form to fill out. It will come right to my computer. Easy! To be assured a spot in the group of your choice, please send in the form by September 27. Here’s the link:

https://uunorthampton.org/quick-links/2020-small-group-circles

If you have any questions, please email me at Katie@KatieOlmstead.com or call me at 413 585-0564.
WHAT WILL RE LOOK LIKE THIS YEAR?

Jessica Harwood, Director of Faith Development and Community Engagement

We are still learning how to help meet the needs of families in this very uncertain year, but we do know that we all need opportunities to take a break, to ground and renew ourselves, to feel supported and seen, and to play. These concepts are already core goals of our RE programs overall.

"In the midst of it all, we wrap ourselves in the warm light of a familiar flame, a reminder of the strength that emerges when we come together in community."

Alice Anacheka-Nasemann

My hope is that we will provide programs, resources, and connections for families that help everyone cope. Different things will work for different families. There will be online opportunities for kids, families, and parents/caregivers. AND we have options for engaging as a family away from a screen, including occasional small group, socially distanced outdoor activities. Find out more here: https://uunorthampton.org/education/curricula

Each month, we are putting together UU Care Packages with projects to do at home together, mindfulness activities, social justice actions, and more. For the September Worth and Dignity packages, you will receive supplies for making a chalice, a battery operated candle, a 7 Principles wall hanging, hymns related to the monthly theme, coloring pages, a notebook for keeping everything from the year, and 2 service projects to do, including a UU the Vote project, among other things. The packages will be available from September 1 on for pick up at USNF or for contactless delivery. For everyone who shares their homemade chalice on our Facebook group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/178853209387121/, we will provide a gift!

For parents and caregivers, we are offering programs to discuss your role as spiritual guides, sexuality educators, and antiracist parents. Registration is available at: https://uunorthampton.org/education/welcome-1

2020-2021 RE Programs

To register for these programs go to https://forms.gle/mBUwiZh5qHoA5ix59 or for more information email dre@uunorthampton.org. Programs start after September 13.

Monthly UU Care Packages
Activities, social justice projects, songs, rituals, and other Unitarian Universalist explorations for families.

Family Worship. Sundays 9:45-10 (except for multigenerational services), all ages
Come together with Jessica and Emma to sing, reflect, and engage in spiritual practices before the service.

Wizardry & Wonder, Sundays 10:30-11:30, Grades 2-4
Elementary students will meet to connect and explore their values and Unitarian Universalism with games, activities, and magical opportunities.
2020-2021 RE Programs cont.

Junior Youth Group, Sundays 10:30-11:30, Grades 5-8

This year, the junior youth group will focus on faith: what faith means to them; Unitarian Universalist history, identity, and theology; and what other faiths believe.

Antiracism & Social Justice

On Wednesdays at 4 pm, we will offer a social justice story time to read and discuss picture books. For older students, we will have family book clubs with books on themes about race and racial justice.

Zoom Buddies and Other Social Activities

In the spring, we had a lot of fun social opportunities over Zoom. This is a way for kids to connect and play and for parents to have a chance to focus on other things. Activities include art club, D & D, stories, and Zoom buddies for academic support or games.

Adult Education

Young Adults

For 18-40 year olds, we are hoping to provide opportunities for connection, support, and spiritual practice. We will be offering a monthly spiritual practice circle. There will be some socially distanced outdoor meetups.

We are also hoping to offer a small group circle for young adults to deepen their spirituality. Young adults are also strongly encouraged to join any small group circle. The intergenerational groups are very meaningful!

Connection Circles

Connection Circles began in March to provide meaningful connections in this time of social distancing. Circles meet every other week over Zoom for an hour and a half to explore various spiritual themes and values as group members support each other in this challenging time of covid19.

Our Whole Lives Offerings

Each month we will offer a Parents and Caregivers as Sexuality Educators group to contemplate topics and themes that will inevitably come up for young people, including relationships, sexual orientation, gender identity, decision making, and social media & integrity. Additional adult OWL programs may be added over the course of the year.
Youth Group More Important Than Ever!

Annie Doran, Youth Director

USNF Youth Group is a unique experience giving youth ages 14-18 safe space outside of the high school social structure. Youth group allows each member to be their authentic selves, encouraging spiritual and personal self-exploration with the gentle guidance of sympathetic adults who validate and support them.

USNF Youth programs are firmly rooted in youth capacity building, youth empowerment, and youth leadership development. These larger, far-reaching goals are achieved through actions both big and small: cooking dinners for the local cot shelter (pre and post covid!), playing games together, planning a worship service, planning a meeting, verbally affirming each other, sharing and listening during a Touch Group, watching a movie during a Lock-In, or simply sharing a bag of Doritos. (Snacks are a big part of Youth Group, even now when we are meeting remotely!)

The advisors, youth leaders, and the youth director work hard to nurture a community-focused environment where youth learn to both lead and follow, where they feel seen and are affirmed as themselves and are safe to explore who they are as emerging adults, and members of the USNF community. Oh, and we like to have a lot of fun while we’re at it!

Kurt Vonnegut Jr said: “What should young people do with their lives today? Many things, obviously. But the most daring thing is to create stable communities in which the terrible disease of loneliness can be cured.” This is especially true in light of the covid19 pandemic – and our youth need to help create this community more than ever. In the transition to remote meetings, we are finding creative ways to support each other to be kind to ourselves, step up at home, learn together, and tell our authentic stories.

We meet every Sunday from 4-6 pm, starting September 20. Since we began remote meetings, a new youth member has joined with gusto and we would be happy to have more! Youth must be 14-18 years old, but do not have to be a part of the USNF congregation. Please contact Annie at youthfulUSNF@gmail.com if you would like to know more.
THE PIONEER
THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF
THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF NORTHAMPTON AND FLORENCE

USNF STAFF
MINISTER  The Rev. Janet C. Bush
DIRECTOR OF FAITH DEVELOPMENT  Jessica Harwood
and COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  Lemuel Gurtowsky
MUSIC DIRECTOR  Lisa Britland
CONGREGATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR  Annie Doran
YOUTH DIRECTOR  Emma Gaudreau
EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER  Frank Taillon
CUSTODIAN

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WEB MANAGER  Julie Kurose
COORDINATOR  Lisa Britland
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  Ellen Dickinson

OCTOBER PIONEER DATES
Deadline: September 24
Publication: September 29
Articles should be 350 words or less. Send submissions to pioneer@uunorthampton.org. Include the word “PIONEER” in the subject line.