



Stone Temple News

May/June 2021

Minister's Message

By Rev. Rebecca Froom

This spring at United First Parish Church we are in the midst of our Stewardship season – a time when we reflect on our financial commitments while looking to the coming year in the life of our congregation. We've chosen "sowing seeds" as the theme of our Stewardship campaign. At this turning point of living with the Covid-19 pandemic we are making plans to once again gather in our building and grounds for worship, community, religious education, and more. The metaphor of sowing seeds invites us to imagine what we wish for our UFPC and Quincy community in the coming church year, as our society slowly transitions to a "new normal," and what sorts of actions we can take in the spring and summer to nourish that vision.

The leadership of the church is thinking creatively and carefully about how we will safely return to our building and grounds and transition to what the Unitarian Universalist Association is calling "multi-platform ministry." Needing to gather remotely over the last 14 months has been a challenge and utilizing tools like Zoom for us to connect screen to screen has also created new opportunities. Multiplatform ministry means that we can gather in online spaces and in-person spaces in complementary, inclusive, and meaningful ways. For instance, in the coming year we *may* choose to have one online Soul Matters small group and one in-person small group. Committees can choose for themselves if they want to meet in person or over zoom. We are planning to return to in-person worship on September 12th and will continue to have a way to livestream our services and have them posted on YouTube for congregants to view afterwards.

Both the CDC and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have recently made significant changes in their recommendations for how to safely gather as more and more people are vaccinated. What does this mean for our UFPC community? The decreasing rates of Covid-19 in our communities is very good news! And as a multigenerational community we know that our youngest community members are not yet eligible for vaccines, and teens and adults are still in the process of getting vaccinated. Consequently, we will continue to move intentionally and cautiously as we begin to have more in-person gatherings in our building and grounds. The Board of Governors and I have created a taskforce to consider both how to safely gather in person and how we best want to engage in multiplatform ministry in the coming year. Jim Petosa and I are co-chairing this taskforce.

At this time small groups can begin to gather in person at the church. We will continue to require masks inside the building and practice social distancing until the Reopening Taskforce and the Board choose to adjust those recommendations. At the time of this writing, the size of an in-person event is correlated to the size of the room (for instance, up to 20 people can gather in the parish hall and up to seven people in the parlor). The Taskforce, Board, and staff will think together in the coming month about how to adjust our occupancy standards now that the state is lifting most of their restrictions on May 29th and instead empowering individual organizations, business, etc. to set their own safety standards. As group leaders and committee chairs consider meeting in person, we ask that you think about how to be most inclusive to the folks who you hope will attend your event. Ask yourselves, at this transitional time, would our group prefer to meet outside at church, inside at church, or over zoom? As always, please contact David Bousquin in the church office to reserve a physical room or to schedule a zoom meeting.

On May 15th many of us gathered on our south lawn for a "Stewardship in the Garden: Picnic and Seed Sowing." We planted sunflower seeds that we will nourish throughout the summer. As we planted, we talked about how the soil, seeds, sun, water, and our own hands work together to plant and nourish these sunflowers. If we take

good care of our gardens, and have good enough weather, then we will hopefully have beautiful sunflower bouquets in the sanctuary when we gather together on September 12th, reminding us of the work we have done *together* this year to nourish our hopes for UFPC. At the end of this May 15th gathering we distributed wildflower seeds for people to plant in their own gardens, neighborhoods, or another beloved place. In planting these seeds, we invite you to think about what the church means to you, and how you can bring the beauty of our church community into the wider world. We will be mailing wildflower seeds to folks who were not able to attend the May 15th Stewardship in the Garden. May this be a season of planting and nourishment for us all!

Reflections

By Joan McDonald, DRE

I am taking an online writing course this spring—I have not been consistent with my writing practice for quite some time, but the stresses, losses and traumas of the past year have compelled me to begin again. It culminated a few weeks ago when my oldest daughter called to let me know her estranged husband had died from a heart attack most likely induced by his drug dependency. This death along with the litany of other traumas from the past 12 months left me with a need to cry out my sadness and rage.

Since I had been contemplating taking a writing class to kickstart my writing practice, this event guided me to the course I ultimately chose—Writing Our Grief: Channeling Loss into a Personal Essay. What I am learning is the power of the story. Whether you write it down to share with others or just to express what you loved about a person, what annoyed you, what questions remain unanswered—never to be answered—what feeling are churning inside—never to be expressed—except maybe in this journal—telling the stories brings a sort of catharsis. I can recall memories that fill me with—love and melancholy. In the latest prompt we were asked to use our experiences with food to tell the story. I wrote about a common experience I had with my dad, who died on December 27, 2010 of Alzheimer’s disease.

It goes something like this: When I'm in the kitchen--preparing quiche--skinning roasted red peppers, grating cheese, sautéing onions, garlic and zucchini--Dad will wander in--bored from watching TV, working on word search puzzles or computer word games or just sitting in his favorite chair. He'll ask me what I'm cooking. "Quiche." I reply. "Oh! Yum, yum, yum," he says. He reaches into the canister of nuts, takes a few in his palm--munches for a while--looks through the mail piled on the counter--turns--looks at me and says, "What are you making?" "Quiche," I reply. "Oh! Yum, yum, yum," he says.

The same surprise of "Oh!" the same sentiment of "yum!". Sometimes he will leave the kitchen only to return a few minutes later--reaching for the nut jar--munch--munch--munch--then turn to ask me "What are you making?" The cycle can repeat itself for a while. If Mom is in the kitchen--the conversation shortens--she has no patience for the repetitions. "Bob, no more nuts, go play a game on the computer or turn on Rumpole or Fawltly Towers." Our oft repeated repartee is over until he forgets he has been banned from the kitchen--returns--reaches into the nut jar--turns to ask me...

Story is the theme for the month of May, sharing our stories helps connect us to others, knowing someone’s story can move us to be more empathetic—perhaps the story you hear resonates with your own experiences or gives you insights into the other person. When I think about my dad in his final years with Alzheimer’s, I remember worrying about the conflicting roles of being the daughter and being the caregiver—how did he experience me at that time? Then I remember what I think of as a sort of playful banter and I worry less about the different roles I played and remember the story of caring for my dad with love.

At the same time, I am not ready to write the story of my son-in-law, to express the heartache and sorrow I feel and how to talk to my grandson about his loss—but at some point, I will.

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.” —Maya Angelou

ANNOUNCEMENTS

StandOut Quincy 4 Black Lives

Thursdays, 3:30–5:30 pm, church front steps

UFPC is partnering with Quincy for Transformative Change for an initiative in support of Black Lives Matter. We meet on the church front steps weekly to bear peaceful witness and to advocate for justice and equity for our fellow citizens of color. You are invited to join our small but dedicated group. Kindly direct your questions to me at my cell 617-272-0274 or artclaire@comcast.net. Thank you, Claire Fitzmaurice.

Fledgling Tales: UFPC Storytime

Thursday, May 20, 7:00–7:30 pm, on Zoom

Every first and third Thursday at 7:00 pm—cozy up in your jammies, with your favorite stuffed animal, blanket and caring adult and join DRE Joan McDonald for a time of ritual and sharing for preschool and elementary school age children. We will share a chalice lighting, Joan will read a story, everyone will check in and a family or guest will share a favorite story. What is better than a couple of stories shared in community? **For everyone's safety a Zoom link will be emailed to our UFPC families weekly and new families may sign up to receive the link.** Contact Joan at dre@ufpc.org.

Annual Congregational Meeting

Sunday, May 23, 11:45 am, on Zoom

Our Annual Congregational Meeting will take place on Sunday, May 23 on Zoom after our worship service at 11:45 am. We hope that you can attend this most democratic component of our Unitarian Universalist faith. We gather together to vote on the budget, to elect members to lead our congregation for the coming year and to acknowledge milestones and accomplishments.

Join by computer: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86170075449>

Join by telephone: 1-646-558-8656, Meeting ID: 861 7007 5449

Children's Chapel

Thursday, May 27, church website

DRE Joan McDonald posts a new children's chapel video for our preschool to early elementary age children on the second and fourth Thursday of the month. The video is posted on the Religious Education page on our website: <https://ufpc.org/religious-education>. The theme for May is Story.

Book Group

Thursday, June 3, 7:00–8:30 pm, on Zoom

The UFPC Book Group meets on the first Thursday of every month from 7:00 to 8:30 pm, with a gap in summer and in December. All members and friends of UFPC are welcome to join us. We will meet on Zoom during the pandemic. We try to select a balance of styles, and this year we ended up with 4 non-fiction works and 5 works of fiction. You are welcome to come if you have not quite finished the book. Over the years we have had some practice at avoiding spoilers and it is always fun to have new voices.

The book this month is *Snow* by Orhan Pamuk. Dread, yearning, identity, intrigue, the lethal chemistry between secular doubt and Islamic fanaticism—these are the elements that Orhan Pamuk anneals in this masterful, disquieting novel. An exiled poet named Ka returns to Turkey and travels to the forlorn city of Kars. His ostensible purpose is to report on a wave of suicides among religious girls forbidden to wear their head-scarves.

But Ka is also drawn by his memories of the radiant Ipek, now recently divorced. Amid blanketing snowfall and universal suspicion, Ka finds himself pursued by figures ranging from Ipek's ex-husband to a charismatic terrorist. A lost gift returns with ecstatic suddenness. A theatrical evening climaxes in a massacre. And finding god may be the prelude to losing everything else. Touching, slyly comic, and humming with cerebral suspense, *Snow* is of immense relevance to our present moment.

Join by computer: <https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/86564868177>

Join by telephone: 1-646-558-8656, Meeting ID: 865 6486 8177

QPride Festival

Sunday, June 6, 12:00–4:00 pm, Pageant Field

Join our UFPC and Quincy community to celebrate Pride! QPride will have fun for the whole family. The event will include an interfaith opening, guest speakers, drag performances, food and beer vendors, local and LGBTQ vendors, Prideful puppy contest, puppeteer story time, DJs and more. You can find more information at <https://www.qprideday.com>. We hope to have a UFPC table at QPride and if so, we will be looking for volunteers to staff the table. More details to follow.

Virtual General Assembly

Wednesday, June 23–Sunday, June 27

This year the annual General Assembly (GA) of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) will be happening online and all UUs are welcome to attend. The Wednesday - Sunday event includes workshops, worship services, a Ware Lecture from Stacey Abrams, and the General Sessions (business meetings) of the UUA. Registration is \$200 and includes online access to most of the programs following GA, so even if your schedule doesn't allow you to attend GA live, you can still participate after the fact. Some events, such as the Sunday morning worship service are open to the general public free of charge. If you are hoping to attend GA, please let Rev. Rebecca know so UFPC can participate in GA as a team when appropriate. Scholarships for Rev. Rebecca to request a scholarship. You can learn more about General Assembly and register at www.uua.org/ga. or the full \$200 registration fee are also available through the Ministerial Discretionary Fund; please contact Rev. Rebecca to request a scholarship. You can learn more about General Assembly and register at www.uua.org/ga.

Chalice Lighters Wanted

Rev. Rebecca and I would like to invite members and friends to volunteer to read a chalice lighting during our Sunday services. The theme for April is Becoming. Please let Joan McDonald know if you are interested at dre@ufpc.org.

Visitor Program Vignettes

By Bill Westland

I am writing this on April 19th, Patriots Day, usually the day of the reenactment of the battle of Lexington and Concord and the ride of Paul Revere, a holiday here in Massachusetts. It is also usually the day of the Boston Marathon. Unfortunately, because of the pandemic all of these events have been cancelled this year. Although, they did hang the lantern in the bell tower of Old North Church in Boston. Normally it is the beginning of the tour season as well for United First Parish Church. We first started giving tours of the Church and the Presidential Crypts back in 1976, the Bicentennial Year of the United States, and except for last year and of course this year, have never missed a year. It doesn't seem possible, but assuming that we can be open this year at least part time, this will be my 36th year giving tours. I have been writing these Vignettes for twenty some odd years and wrote about the turbulent times when the church was gathered back in the 17th century. Once again, we are facing turbulent times with the pandemic, the bitter political disputes, the terrorism threat, the racial discriminations, the economic disparities, the climate changes, the gun violence, police reform and the flooding of social media with both domestic and foreign disinformation. I thought that it would be a good time to look back and reread

some of the comments that UFPC members John, John Quincy and Abigail Adams made. They are particularly valid and applicable in today's turbulent world.

John Adams summed up what should be the role of government. "The happiness of society is the end of government. The form of government which communicates ease, comfort, security, or in one word happiness to the greatest number of persons to the greatest degree is the best." He would have been horrified by the wrangling of today's political parties and warned about extreme partisanship and once wrote: "The essence of free government consists of the effective control of rivalries." He also wrote: "I fear that in every elected office, members will obtain influence by noise not sense, by meanness not greatness, by ignorance not learning. There must be decency and respect."

John Quincy Adams also had a strong opinion of what should be the role of government. "The greatest object of government is the improvement of the condition of those who are subject to its authority, and to foster the moral, political and intellectual improvement of society. The end of government is the progressive improvement of the condition of the governed." He also defined what should be the role of the United States in the world. "Whenever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will be America's heart, her benedictions and her prayers. She does not go abroad to seek monsters to destroy. Americans do not go abroad to slay dragons they do not understand in the name of spreading democracy." He never could abide partisanship and wrote: "Always vote for principles. Though you may vote alone, you may cherish the reflection that your vote is never lost."

As you probably surmise, Abigail Adams always got right to the heart of the matter. She would have been shocked at today's extreme partisanship and refusal to compromise because she wrote: "I've always felt that a person's intelligence is directly reflected by the number of conflicting points of view that he can entertain simultaneously on the same topic." She also said: "We have too many high-sounding words and few actions to correspond to them." Some of Abigail's thoughts are still worth repeating in our turbulent world. "Great difficulties may be surmounted by patience and perseverance." "Let no person say what they would or would not do, since we are not judges for ourselves until circumstances call us to act." "To be good and do good is the whole duty of man compounded into a few words."

I am sure that many of you remember September 11th, 2001 and the terrorist plane crash attacks on the Twin Towers in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. This was not supposed to happen in the United States, and we were shocked. We were not a "banana republic", we were the leaders of the free world. Soon after that we had the so-called "shoe bomber" who wanted to blow up an airliner while in flight with a full load of passengers. Incidentally, Nancy and I had a river cruise on the Rhine scheduled that week after September 11th which was called off. We also were scheduled to bring our daughter and two grandsons out to California to visit our other daughter and family the day after the "shoe bomber" incident. Security was so tight and the lines so long at Logan Airport that we couldn't make the flight. The month after September 11th we had the John Adams Presidential Wreath Laying Ceremony at the church and never before had the police gone through the building before the ceremony and provided security during the ceremony. Everybody was on edge. Historian, David McCollough, was the speaker and I still remember what he said. "We will get through this because Americans are a brave people." Here we are in this turbulent, tumultuous, challenging and unpredictable year of 2021 and we should again think about what David McCullough said. We should also remember the words of John Adams in describing his fellow church members when he was the American representative in London in 1785. He said: "The virtues and talents of the people there are formed by their temperance, patience, fortitude, prudence and justice, as well as their sagacity, knowledge, judgement, taste, skill, ingenuity, dexterity and industry." There is hope that we will all get our collective acts together and instead of blaming each other will actually start to solve some of our problems.

WORSHIP SERVICES

Sunday morning worship services are held at 10:30 am on Zoom. An email will be sent to the congregation on Saturday with the order of service and the link to the Zoom worship. The link is also posted on Facebook and our website.

[May 23]
“Examined on Love”
Rev. Rebecca Froom

So many of us live with high expectations for ourselves and perhaps for one another and our communities. Our Universalist heritage teaches us that each of us is worthy of love and each of us is able to love. In this service we reflect on how we can understand the unfolding of our own life story from a perspective that is grounded in love.

[May 30]
“Wild and Precious Life”
Rev. Rebecca Froom and congregants

On this Sunday members of the congregation from different generations will reflect on Mary Oliver’s poem “The Summer Day,” answering the poet’s question, “Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”

[June 6]
Pride Sunday
Rev. Rebecca Froom

[June 13]
Bridging Sunday
Rev. Rebecca Froom, Joan McDonald, Will Cook and Sam Hurley

It is the tradition of our congregation to honor our youth in a Bridging Ceremony as they graduate high school and transition from youth to young adulthood. This day we honor Sam Hurley and Will Cook. In the service Will and Sam will reflect on what the UFPC community has meant to them and how their personal beliefs have developed and changed during their high school years.

[June 20]
Flower Communion Sunday
Rev. Rebecca Froom

In this final service of our church-year, we will (virtually) celebrate our annual Flower Communion. We invite you to decorate your Zoom background with flowers or pictures of flowers, and to have a flower you can hold in-hand (if you are able). The service will include a slideshow of pictures of flowers in our homes, neighborhoods, or beloved places - please email pictures to Rev. Rebecca at rev.rebecca.froom@gmail.com by June 21st.

Church Staff and Lay Leaders

Staff: Rev. Rebecca Froom (Senior Minister), Rev. Dr. Sheldon Bennett (Minister Emeritus), Rev. Dr. Michelle Walsh (Affiliate Community Minister), Nan Moore (Affiliate Lay Community Minister), Joan McDonald (Religious Education Director), David Bousquin (Office and Property Manager), Norman Corey (Music Director).

Board of Governors: Lisa Howe (President), Jim Petosa (Vice-President), Erwin Schaareman (Treasurer), Clyde Cortright (Assistant Treasurer), April Bargout (Clerk), Jamie Grassmann (Worship), Marie-Louise Jackson-Miller (Religious Education), Susan Curran and Sarah Belfort (Social Justice Action), Elizabeth Black (Communications), Brenda Reed (Congregational Life)

Committee on Ministry: Kate Hurley (Chair), David Downs, Frances Spillane

Nominating Committee: Marie-Louise Jackson-Miller (Chair), Jacqueline Rodriguez, Fiona Sankey

Contact Us

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