



Stone Temple News

July/August 2021

Minister's Message

By Rev. Rebecca Froom

“Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing.” These words are from the book of Thessalonians in the Christian scriptures, written by St. Paul to one of the new “Communities in Christ” that were arising throughout the Mediterranean in the century following the death of Jesus. These words were quoted by Unitarian Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson in one of his first sermons as a young minister in Boston, and they were quoted by our own John Adams in the final years of his life. I love this exhortation that calls us to lift our hearts in joy while also keeping ourselves spiritually grounded. This summer I invite you to consider rejoicing evermore and praying without ceasing – adapted to the language of faith and the spiritual practices most meaningful to you.

As we continue into a summer that is so different than last summer, many of us are filled with joy as we are able to reunite and hug loved ones, travel to beloved places, return to work in-person and reconnect to our coworkers, or go to summer camp to play and learn with peers. Wherever you find joy this summer I invite you to celebrate, savor, and share that joy.

Yet this summer is still a time where joy is mixed with heartache. As our society and economy starts to stabilize our hearts may open to grieve anew the losses that have surrounded us during the Covid era, as well as the new losses that we experience this season. We can rejoice at the low rates of Covid here in Massachusetts even as we grieve the ongoing suffering Covid is causing in other parts of the country and the world. We can celebrate movements of accountability and justice that whittle away at systemic racism in our society even while acknowledging and grieving the ways in which systemic prejudices still takes the lives and livelihoods, the health, safety, and security of people of color and marginalized communities.

And so, we turn to the second part of this ancient exhortation to “Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing.” What is it to pray? This is a complicated question for Unitarian Universalists who draw meaning from many sources and have varying relationships to the faith traditions of our childhoods. Writer Ann Lamott describes prayer as having three basic components – thanks, help, wow. Poet Mary Oliver tells us, “I don't know exactly what a prayer is. I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down into the grass.” In different languages these two wise women remind us that prayer and spiritual practice have a role to play in keeping us GROUNDED.

And so, I encourage you to also use this summer as an opportunity to deepen or discover new and old spiritual practices. To find YOUR way to say, “thanks, help, wow,” to find YOUR way to touch the ground in wonder. Perhaps like Mary Oliver you can cultivate spiritual grounding by sitting down on a summer day in a meadow. Perhaps (like me) you will find your spiritual grounding hiking and camping, renewing your connection to your own body and the body of the earth. Perhaps you will find spiritual grounding by creating intentional time with loved ones to express your gratitude, to offer and/or receive help, to share smiles and join hands in love and wonder at this gift of human connection.

Friends, let us find time for joy this summer, and let us find ways to ground ourselves, so that even in times of heartache and hardship, our spirits can know the renewing power of joy.

In peace and joy,
Rev. Rebecca

Reflections

By Joan McDonald, DRE

We are entering what I think of as the midpoint of summer. My work at College Light Opera Company has moved from the frenetic to the steady pace of a well-oiled machine—with occasional surprising hiccups—a stage director departing unexpectedly—a demanding patron or two or three—the air conditioner not keeping up with the heat and humidity—the power going out six hours before opening curtain and returning with forty minutes to spare. Live theatre is slowly coming back—we have about half our audience back in the seats. Some wear masks, others do not. We randomly test our company members for COVID-19 – so far, we are healthy. Every week our patrons experience the magic of live theatre—hear the beautiful voices of our company members—What they do not see is the behind-the-scenes planning, marketing, directing and construction that goes into each of the nine shows we produce in eleven weeks. It reminds me in a small way of what I am developing for UFPC's religious education program.

Planning for the fall has some big challenges for the UFPC religious education program. I created a survey asking parents how they feel about coming back to in-person worship and religious education programming. If you have not responded, here is the link to the survey: <https://forms.gle/Ez619LufYrxVw7MJ8>. So far there is concern about in person classes for children, unless we have better ventilation, wear masks and are appropriately socially distanced. The largest group of children in our community are the last group to be vaccinated. How and where do we hold classes? What are the capacity limits in our spaces? Some things I can do are continuing to hold a virtual story half hour in the fall—which could be expanded to include more interaction and another idea is to hold class outdoors in good weather.

For our preschool and elementary age children—I plan on creating programming around stories that focus on creativity and anti-racism/anti-oppression, incorporating guided conversations, meditation/mindfulness practice and creative activities. If there is a story book that you think would be great for our class, please let me know.

Our youth programming will occur after worship on Sundays. I am hoping to have an OWL class—Our Whole Lives, sexuality education. I have reached out to other congregations interested in holding OWL as well as finding facilitator training opportunities—I will share information as I learn more about newly available facilitator training and building collaborations with other local congregations. We are also creating a youth group/coming of age class that will alternate with OWL.

In the coming weeks I will be mailing out some pictures that I hope our children and youth will color and return to me to help brighten the walls in the RE hallway. As we get closer to September, I will announce a clean-up schedule to prepare the spaces we will be using.

I hope you all are having a safe and happy summer.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Summer Chalice Circles

During the summer months, we hold weekly Chalice Circles on Sunday mornings from 10:30 am–12:00 pm (in lieu of worship). Chalice Circles are drop-in discussion groups grounded in the tradition of small group ministry which emphasizes personal reflection, authentic sharing, and deep listening. Each Chalice Circle will have a presenter who introduces the topic of the day; throughout the summer we will have a variety of presenters and topics. There will also be a Chalice Circle host each Sunday who will support the presenter and guide us through our small group ministry format. Our Chalice Circles will be on Zoom until August 1 or 8. Then we meet in-person in the parish hall for the rest of the summer.

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

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

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.

UFPC Book Group Schedule 2021-2022

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 are not decided if we will meet in-person or on Zoom in September at this point. We try to select a balance of styles. You are welcome to come even if you have not finished the book. Over the years we have had some practice at avoiding spoilers and it is always fun to have new voices.

September 2

[Behold the Dreamer](#) — *Imbulo Mbue*

October 7

[Holocaust!: The Shocking Story of the Boston Cocoanut Grove Fire](#) — *Paul Benzaquin*

November 4

[While Justice Sleeps](#) — *Stacy Abrams*

January 6

[Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents](#) — *Isabelle Wilkerson*

February 3

[Pride and Prejudice](#) — *Jane Austen*

March 3

[Black Man in a White Coat: A Doctor's Reflections on Race and Medicine](#) — *Damon Tweedy*

April 7

[Of One Blood or the Hidden Self](#) — *Pauline Hawkins*

May 5

[How to be an American](#) — *Silvia Hidalgo*

June 2

[Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee](#) — *Dee Brown*

[Calendar](#)

[Goodreads](#)

Water for Our Water Ceremony

Sunday, September 12, 10:30 am

You are invited to bring water to contribute to our September 12th Water Ceremony during the first Sunday worship of our 2021-2022 church year. The water can be from a place that is meaningful to you (near or far) and/or the water can symbolize your life journey this season – representing a joy, sorrow, change, hope, fear, or dream in your life now.

Updates on Covid-Safe Building Usage

Your Board of Governors has been working alongside our Reopening Taskforce (Jim Petosa, Daphne Souvenir, Bill Westland, David Downs, David Bousquin, Joan McDonald, and Rev. Rebecca Froom) to thoughtfully outline plans and policies to begin to use our building and grounds for regular programs and special events. Our work is grounded in our UU principles that respect the worth and dignity of all people and is guided by science. Though the State of Emergency in Massachusetts has now been lifted, we know the global Covid-19 pandemic is far from over. We are looking at the recommendations coming out of the CDC as we consider how to create safe and welcoming spaces for our multigenerational community and for all of the programs, groups, and renters who use our building and grounds. Our policies assume that we are living in a mixed-vaccination society. Though many of us have been vaccinated, not everyone is eligible and not everyone chooses to get a vaccine. Note, UFPC feels strongly that unvaccinated people have a responsibility to continue to protect themselves through masks and social distancing throughout all aspects of their daily lives.

Here are some highlights of our changing Covid-19 policies and practices:

- Masks are no longer required outside.
- Masks are required inside with two exceptions for staff and speakers and performers at events.
- Indoor events are allowed with capacity limits set for each room, including Sanctuary (200), Parish Hall (40), Parlor (14), Dining Room (30), Kitchen (10).
- Room reservations can be made to David Bousquin in the church office at office@ufpc.org David has a complete list of capacity limits for each room.
- We will use our building in ways that encourage social distancing, such as roping off every-other-pew in the sanctuary, creating a one-way path through the building for our historic tours, having all our restrooms be single-occupancy, etc.
- There are many topics the Reopening Task Force will still be discussing including safe practices around eating together, singing together, and the particular needs of young children and families.

Visitor Program Vignettes

By Bill Westland

Seeing as we opened the Visitors Program on July 1st after being closed for a year because of the pandemic, I thought that I would once again give you a brief history of it. Back in 1976, the Bicentennial Year, church member, Dorothy Wrigley, started the Visitors Program. The church was open for tours from July 4th to Labor Day, seven days a week. All the guides during the week were volunteers, some church members and some not, and Dorothy and her husband, Walter, did the weekends. This was an amazing undertaking. Some of our guides were public school teachers so this fit into their school year. There was not any admission charge and only a voluntary donation box. The premise was that the church was performing an important community service after being declared a National Historic Landmark in 1970 and was not trying to make a profit. Whatever money that came in from donations was used for printing up handouts etc. and was never part of the church budget.

In 1989 Dorothy “retired” from running the program, and for one year, 1989, former State Treasurer Tim Cahill, who at the time was a City Council member, ran the program. Tim also owned what is now Craig’s restaurant back then, so was always close by. He gave up running the Visitors Program after that one year, and from 1990 through 1992 I tried to keep it going. Most of the volunteers now were quite elderly and the best I could do was to stay open three days a week. I thought that we had a duty to stay open to the public, plus the only way to get grant money for building maintenance etc. was to emphasize UFPC’s historical importance. I still feel the same

way. In 1993 Mayor Sheets, who was trying to create tourism in Quincy, made us a proposal. If we would stay open from April 19 to November 11 like the National Park Service, he would get us \$20,000 in corporate donations in order to hire a director of the program, and the National Park Service would provide rangers to conduct tours along with our volunteers. We would also have to start charging admission in order to pay the director and cover other expenses. This worked out well for a couple of years until the corporate funding dried up and we started to run a sizable deficit. The city ran a concert by the Irish tenor, John McDermott, in 1997 to eliminate the deficit, and then the Quincy Patriot Ledger in 1999 ran a public subscription campaign to keep the program going. Our debt at that point was \$26,281. That same year the National Park Service pulled out its rangers without warning and we were completely on our own. We survived.

Things turned around in the early 2000's as tourism picked up when the Adams HBO series and the David McCullough book about John Adam created a tremendous interest in the Adams family. Also, thanks to Kirt Switzer we started to get support money from the Massachusetts Secretary of State. It has varied from \$4000 to \$10,000 a year. I figured out last year that from the year 2002 to the present the tour program has shown a profit of close to \$8000 a year. Now the program is part of the church budget, and the proceeds go to the church, which pays the salary of the director and other expenses of the program. Incidentally, the last time we tried to get corporate sponsorship was back in 2007, so perhaps now is a good time to try again. I was hoping for more income over the years, but at least we are not losing money, and to my way of thinking it is important that we be open to the public.

We have had four directors since 1993. Soon after the last director, Bob Damon, left to work for the City of Quincy two years ago, the pandemic set in, so he was not replaced. We weren't open for tours last year at all and decided to wait to see what happened this year before hiring a replacement for Bob. We hoped to get through this year without a replacement and hire one for next year. We couldn't do this without the outstanding and loyal group of volunteer guides that we have, both church and non-church members. This is my 34th year being involved in the program, and in all that time I cannot remember a single complaint about any of our volunteers. This is really remarkable. The only complaints that we receive once in a while are from people who think that the tour should be free. They don't realize that even though we are considered to be part of the Adams Historic National Park, we are completely independent and do not receive any money from the Federal government. I wish that we did, but we don't.

This is the first time that the Adams National Historic Park has not been open, so we don't have any idea of how this will affect us. We will be open as usual except we will be closed on Wednesdays. Time will tell if visitors will come to Quincy without the Adams' houses being open. We are also requiring visitors to wear masks in the church. So far there have not been any refusals. We have disposable masks for those visitors who don't have their own. If you have out of town visitors this summer, bring them in for a visit. After being cancelled last year because of the pandemic, both the John Adams and John Quincy Adams Presidential Wreath Laying ceremonies will be held as usual. Things are slowly getting back to normal.

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: Jim Petosa (President), Juan Ramos (Vice-President), Clyde Cortright (Treasurer), Erwin Schaareman, (Assistant Treasurer), April Bargout (Clerk), Kim Dangora (Stewardship), Jamie Grassmann (Worship), Sarah Belfort (Social Justice Action), Elizabeth Black (Communications), Brenda Reed (Congregational Life)

Committee on Ministry: David Downs (Chair), Frances Spillane, Ann Marie Willer

Nominating Committee: Jacqueline Rodriguez (Chair), Fiona Sankey, Pat Sullivan

Contact Us

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