

Minister's Message By Rev. Rebecca Froom

On Sunday September 12th we will return to our sanctuary for in-person weekly worship. For this special Ingathering Sunday, we will gather in front of the church between 10:00 and 10:25 am to reconnect with one another and listen to beautiful violin and cello music. Then at 10:30 am we will enter the sanctuary together for worship and the celebration of our annual Water Ceremony. Please bring a mask to wear in the sanctuary as well as water from a place that is meaningful to you for our Water Ceremony (masks and water will also be provided for folks who have not brought their own). I hope you will join us as you are able! The service itself will also be live-streamed – details forthcoming.

When we began planning for this special Ingathering Worship last May our spirits were full of optimism paired with caution — Covid case numbers were falling, teenagers had become eligible for vaccinations, and the trees around our building were in full leaf. Surrounded as we were with so much embodied hope, we nonetheless knew that the global Covid-19 pandemic was far from over. Your Reopening Task Force (Jim Petosa, David Downs, Daphne Souvenir, Bill Westland, Joan McDonald, David Bousquin, and Rev. Rebecca Froom), decided that we would base our covid safety plans off of CDC recommendations, using a cautious approach when guidance was ambiguous. We knew in the spring that in-person worship in the fall would be different than when we last gathered in the sanctuary for Sunday worship in March 2020. We knew we would likely still be wearing masks; we weren't sure if we would be able to sing together in worship, or eat together following service. We knew that we would be live streaming our worship service so people could experience the worship services off-site and that we would be offering some church programs online, some church programs inside, and some church programs outside.

Now that we are in September our spirts are full of caution paired with optimism. The Delta variants have led to a rise in Covid-19 cases, we still do not know when young children will be eligible for vaccines, and a summer of earthquakes, forest fires, and hurricanes once again reminds us that the earth can be a fiercely dangerous and fragile place. During this time, we have also witnessed the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, and we wonder and worry what the future of that country will be. All around us the famed American optimism is being challenged.

The theme for September is "embracing possibility." (Further in this newsletter you can read a reflection on the monthly theme authored by the Soul Matters team.) Approached from the optimism of spring it was easy to envision September 12th as a time to embrace the possibilities for our congregation and country. Now we find ourselves in a time where we are guided by our shared commitments as much as by optimism. What are the commitments that hold us together as a community regardless of the news?

Five years ago, we crafted a mission and vision statements. Our vision statement includes these phrases:

"United First Parish Church envisions ... a future where:

Our vibrant and inclusive congregation offers worship services and programs that promote spiritual exploration, social justice, and creative expression.

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Our relationships with community partners, whose work aligns with our mission, are strong and collaborative.

Our building, through careful and considered planning, is a hub of activity utilized by the congregation, community partners, and the general public. All are truly welcome."

The pandemic years have challenged us to innovate on how we act on these commitments. We began to understand our buildings and grounds as also including virtual space of zoom and social media, and we began using our front steps and other outdoors spaces even more than before, standing side by side with community partners who share our inclusive values and anti-racist convictions.

As we return to our sanctuary on Sunday mornings and take up a multi-platform ministry we have new opportunities, new challenges, and new possibilities before us for how we act on the future we have envisioned. This year when we gather in the sanctuary for worship, we will look one another in the eyes more than we will hold hands or hug. Though we will sing less than we did before the pandemic, we will once again experience live music and we will find other ways to experience worship in body as well as spirit. We will recommit to existing community partnerships and forge new ones. We will hold Sunday morning religious education programs outside and lifespan religious education workshops inside or over zoom. Whether we gather in the sanctuary, in our zoom room, in the parish hall, on our front steps, or in our gardens we will have the opportunity to embrace the possibilities of our shared future grounded in our shared commitments.

In peace and joy, Rev. Rebecca

REflections

By Joan McDonald, DRE

Religious education professionals have been talking a lot about what religious education needs to look like this fall. As much as we plan for programming, again we are asked to pivot as the pandemic alters its course. We want our kids and families to be and feel safe at church. We want our families and children to be included in the life of our church. How do we do that when we wait for the final vaccine approvals for children under 12?

One of the key things we have spoken about in coming back to in-person church is to remember how to be in community together again. The pandemic has traumatized all of us in one way or another. People are on edge as they have entered back into society—trying and sometimes failing to act with grace and civility.

You might recall that over the summer months my other work is as the general manager of an intensive residency theatre program for college age students. While scaled down for COVID, we house, feed and train 33 performing arts students along with 4 stage and music directors during any particular week. The Company puts on a varied selection of 9 musicals and operettas performed 6 times a week for nine weeks. When inviting students to join the company, we required everyone to be vaccinated and to limit outside activities in the community. We tested our company members for Covid on a regular basis.

In planning our season, we anticipated smaller audiences even after the governor opened the Commonwealth up at the end of May. After more than a year hiatus of live in-person theatre—we were bound to witness or in my case experience some less than stellar behavior from some patrons. From the day we opened the box office, I was yelled at for not saving an overdue patron's seating request, for not giving a patron equal or better seats on a new night (looking back in my records, I did give her the exact same seats), when I requested patrons a wear mask, I would receive grumbles—you shouldn't believe the CDC—I'm vaccinated I don't have to wear a mask—an "in your face" angry woman, screeching that she has asthma and can't wear a mask—all these interactions in public view—all these interactions a weekly occurrence in one form or another—my job was to be the shock absorber for these often rude, out of control patrons—their partners and onlookers looking equally appalled and apologetic.

I am reading the book, "Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others" by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky with Connie Burk. If I believe that many of us have been traumatized in small and large ways during the pandemic—then the behavior of my patrons is not unusual. We certainly heard stories on Cape Cod about customers acting badly toward their waitstaff, front desk associates, cashiers, restaurateurs and

business owners. While some could be associated with their belief in their privilege—others seemed so far out of the ordinary—it was like my presence asking them to put their mask on, sorry you lost your old seats because you never responded to our mailings—you in far have the same seats you had in 2019 on Thursday evenings but now on Wednesday evenings.

I know I was tired—I am guessing and maybe giving them the benefit of saying they were too—we all were tired, heartbroken, stressed, sad, mad, hopeless, angry...a DRE said to me—"Yes, you know that saying: the straw that broke the camel's back." It didn't matter what the last straw was—it just was the last thing that this person could take onto themselves.

Coming back to church is in many ways entering a familiar place for the first time again—we may not remember how to be with one another—how to see all those familiar faces again without breaking into tears—how to see those who are missing from our community and not shake our fist at whatever god, goddess, creator, external/internal power that took them away—how to keep our distance, while wanting to throw our arms around a beautiful familiar face—how to share: our grief—our pain—our joy—our anger—our loneliness—our______ (fill in the blank) without: falling apart—crying uncontrollably—shouting to cover up our fears—______ (fill in the blank).

As my fellow DRE's shared their thoughts about programming—we came to the conclusion that we need to begin with play—with sharing our feelings—listening with compassion—offering opportunities to be creative—being open to all the stories we need to share with each other. There are so many possibilities in our future together.

Religious Education Programming

Preschool Elementary Class—ages 4ish and up to 7/8ish:

The first RE class for our younger children will be on Sunday, September 19th. Children will begin in worship and then we will move outdoors together—hopefully we will have a canopy for inclement weather. We will play games, tell stories and just be together. We will do our best to socially distance and wear masks, when that is not possible.

Youth/Teen Programming:

I am hoping that our young people will participate in Nan Moore's Creative Arts and Spirituality Workshop—if there are financial difficulties, please know that you will not be turned away.

Youth programming will begin in October. Programming will be after worship beginning from 12 Noon to 1 PM. We will begin the year with a social justice focus.

OWL: We are waiting to hear about OWL facilitator trainings that may begin this fall or in January. I will keep parents of youth in grades 7 to 9 and 10 to 12 informed as we successfully recruit and train facilitators.

In Memorial

This fall we will be holding three Celebration of Life services to remember UFPC members who have died – some recently and some many months ago.

Celebration of Life for Jane Mudge Saturday, September 18th at 11:00 am

Memorial Service and Celebration of Life for Kirt Switzer Saturday, September 25th. Time and details to be determined.

Celebration of Life for Louise Reilly Saturday, October 16th. Time and details to be determined

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Book Group

Thursday, September 2, 7:00 pm, in-person and 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 in-person in the parish hall or you may join us on Zoom. 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.

"Behold the Dreamers" by Imbolo Mbue is the story of the Jende and Neni Jonga who have recently immigrated from Cameroon to the United States in order to create a better life for their son Liomi. Jende applies for a job as a driver for Clark Edwards, a senior executive at Lehman Brothers. Despite their major differences, Clark and his wife Cindy establish a relationship with the Jongas, with Cindy offering Neni temporary work. When the Jongas undergo financial and immigration hardships, however, their American Dream is put at risk. A compulsively readable debut novel about marriage, immigration, class, race, and the trapdoors in the American Dream. Named one of the best books of the year by NPR and the New York Times book review.

Join by computer: https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/89427298331
Join by telephone: 1-646-558-8656, Meeting ID: 894 2729 8331

Chalice Circle
"The Future of Work"

Adrian Smith and Sharon Gamache, presenters Jamie Grassmann, host Sunday, September 5, 10:30 am, on Zoom

New Technology, changes in work patterns, and conditions set in place during the Pandemic may lead to permanent changes in shape of work of all kinds. Think of what the future of work will look like for you or your loved ones. Here are some items to consider: What will the physical space of work look like? What will our youth face for future jobs and careers? How will the changes affect older workers? What will conditions be like for frontline workers? Who will the new workplace help? Who will it hurt?

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 inperson 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, in-person

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.

Water for Our Water Ceremony

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.

Sunday Morning Worship Roles

On Sunday September 12th we will return to in-person worship services, which will also be live-streamed. As we shift our worship format our volunteer roles are also shifting. If you are interested in any of the following roles, please be in touch with Rev. Rebecca at rev.rebecca.froom@gmail.com or Jamie Grassmann, Worship Committee Chair, at jamieteevee@gmail.com.

- Greeter
- Usher
- Videographer for our livestream
- Reader
- Song leader
- Musician

Creative Arts and Spirituality Workshop (12 to adult)

Sundays, September 12, 19, 26 and October 3, 2:00-4:00 pm, in-person

Creativity is something that we all have within us, but often do not access because we push it aside or deny we are creative. Our creativity could be expressed with our hands, minds, pencils, writing, paints, bodies, inventions, dance etc. It's not what we produce that is important it is the spiritual process from which our creativity or artfulness emerges. This workshop will incorporate art expressions, both visual and written, and how the conscious and subconscious unifies through creative spirituality. This link is magical and feeds a deep sense of visual aliveness while connected to our spirit and Selfhood. Please join us for this workshop if it calls to you. (Limited to 12 participants There are 6 spaces for teens and 6 for adults. Teens will fill up first and then the adults will take the open slots. Spaces will be given to adults in order of the sign ups. Email me directly to sign up nan@nanmoore.com)

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September 12 – Group Bonding - Consciously Linking Spirituality with Creative Arts September 19 – Mandalas - Process not Product September 26 – Touch Drawings – Basic Learning October 3 – More Touch Drawing incorporating Writing
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There is a \$23 fee for this class. No one will be turned away if they do not have the fee. Please see Nan or Rev. Rebecca regarding your need. All materials are provided and after the class participants keep your personal art supplies so you may continue creative projects beyond this workshop.

If you are interested in the class, please view the videos to introduce you to Touch Drawings before you sign up. Example: Touch Drawing with Deborah Koff-Chapin https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPwDu8Yo_so Introduction to Touch Drawing (less than 3 minutes) Classroom workshop https://vimeo.com/140496887

Goal Setting for 2021-22 with the Social Justice Action Committee

Sunday, September 19, 12:00—1:00 pm, in-person

The demands for Social Justice Action are unlimited. For You and I, our time and energy are finite. Please come and share your concerns with the Social Justice Action Committee at our workshop in the dining room. We NEED your help to set our priorities for actionable goals for the coming Church Year. If you are unavailable on the 19th, please share your concerns and ideas with me to report to the group. We will schedule a separate Zoom

meeting if there is enough interest. Please contact me at artclaire@comcast.net or via cell phone at 617-272-0274. Thank you, Claire Fitzmaurice

Greeter and Usher Orientation

Sunday, September 26, 12:15–1:45 pm, in-person

Our greeters and ushers serve an important role in creating a welcoming, inclusive, safe, and accessible space on Sunday mornings. As we return to in-person worship this orientation is an opportunity for new and returning greeters and ushers to strengthen our inclusive practices to welcome people of all backgrounds, learn about building safety and emergency preparedness, and familiarize ourselves with revised roles for Sunday worship. If you are thinking of serving as an usher twice a month or twice a year, please do attend this orientation. Contact Rev. Rebecca at rev.rebecca.froom@gmail.com or Jamie Grassmann at jamieteevee@gmail.com to RSVP or for more information.

Writing Group Schedule 2021-2022

Our UFPC Writing Group will be meeting again this year. We will meet the first Sunday of the month in-person in the parlor at 12:00 pm. As in past years, we welcome everyone to join us in a free writing session and optional sharing of our words that pursue thinking on a theme. This is a non-critiqued, open minded, generous group that encourages self-expression in a supportive gathering. You can attend one or more sessions. No advance reservation is required. Groups tend to vary in size between 6 and 14 participants, and the session lasts for 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Sunday, October 3, 12:00 noon Sunday, November 7, 12:00 noon Sunday, December 5, 12:00 noon Sunday, February 6, 12:00 noon Sunday, March 6, 12:00 noon Sunday, April 3, 12:00 noon Sunday, May 1, 12:00 noon

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact facilitator Jim Petosa at <u>jimjamespeto@aol.com</u> or by phone at 301-442-3781.

Visitor Program Vignettes

By Bill Westland

I am repeating a Vignette which I wrote last year in anticipation of our return to regular church services, which never happened. Here it is again so you won't forget what it was like to go to services before our current restrictions. Think about approaching our "Stone Temple" on Sunday, September 12th and seeing those four 25-foot, 25-ton Doric granite columns. Mr. Torrey charged \$1000 per column. They are cut in one piece, and it required a specially built wagon pulled by eighty oxen to transport them from Rattlesnake Quarry. Mr. Holmes supervised the erection of the columns and apologized because he could only erect three of them in one day before it got dark and had to do the fourth the next day. Walk inside and look up at that 130-foot diameter coffered dome ceiling in the style of the Roman Pantheon. The whole ceiling is done in plaster, including the lotus blossoms, passion flower and Greek key. The lotus blossoms and passion flower all have religious significance but the Greek key is strictly decorative. We paid Mr. Edson \$825 to construct it, and when we had it restored in 2001 it cost over \$200,000.

When you take a seat in a pew, think about that when the church was built in 1828 your pew sold for anywhere from \$100 to \$400 depending upon location, and the owner had to pay a yearly rental fee even though he owned it. I say he because back in 1828 women couldn't own church pews. Now look at that high Santo Domingo mahogany pulpit in the front of the sanctuary. Notice the workmanship, especially the replica Doric columns carved on each side. The name of the cabinet maker who did this work is unknown, but he was paid \$400. Can

you imagine what it would cost today? Originally the plan was to use curled maple but at the last-minute mahogany was substituted, perhaps because there was a good buy on mahogany or perhaps mahogany was easier to carve. There was a special kind of old forest Santo Domingo mahogany that was all used up in the fifty-year period between 1800 and 1850. Our pulpit fits in that time period. A Chippendale desk from this valuable wood in 2007 sold for 3.3 million dollars. If our pulpit is this same wood, who knows what it is worth? It is probably better not to know for insurance purposes.

Mr. Briggs was paid \$178 for the sofa located behind the pulpit, the two high backed chairs in the front of the sanctuary plus the communion table in front of the pulpit. He was also paid \$28 for the velvet cushions on the pulpit. Originally the plan was to have a window behind the pulpit, but it was decided to have a large window on each side of the pulpit instead in order to let in more light. These windows were replaced by the current doors when the parish hall was built in 1889. A velvet curtain was hung behind the pulpit to cover that wall space, and Mr. William Hancock was given the contract to provide it. Major Lane, who had painted the interior of the church and the pews, was hired to stain the pulpit. I am not sure what he charged but he got paid 6 cents a number when he painted the numbers on the pews. Long time church member, Forrest Neal, told me that the long table on the right of the door leading into the parish hall was originally in the parish hall for the Sunday school to use, so probably dates back to 1889. Most of you don't remember Forrie as he passed away back in 1992, but he was the President of the South Shore Chamber of Commerce and was instrumental in bringing the T Red Line to the South Shore. Before that you took a bus to Quincy then another bus from Quincy to Ashmont and got on the subway there.

Now, turn around and look at the clock on the balcony. This was a gift of Abigail Adams and Hannah Black to the Hancock Meeting House and brought over when the meeting house was torn down in 1828. Unfortunately, at some point it was electrified. Of course, in the balcony is our valuable, historic, Hook and Hastings organ which was installed in 1907. Incidentally this is the third organ, and we didn't purchase the first one until 1837. Before that we had some string players and a choir. The church actually owned a double string bass which we sold to help pay for that first organ. One of the Quincy family wives complained that the string players always played off key. Also, when we did purchase our first organ the man who pumped the organ bellows got paid more than the organist. I am not sure this was because his name happened to be Adams or the congregation felt that pumping a bellows was harder work than playing an organ, and thus he deserved more money.

When we return make sure that you look at all these great features in the sanctuary. I haven't said anything about the busts and plaques. We will save that for another day. Just remember that Our United First Parish Church, designed by Alexander Parris, is one of the best examples of Greek Revival Style architecture in the entire country, and on top of that came in 10% under budget thanks to a frugal, no nonsense building committee. So, stay well and hopefully we will finally have this service in our "Stone Temple" on September 12th even if we have to conform to covid restrictions.

Embracing Possibility - A Reflection from Soul Matters Sharing Circle

United First Parish Church participates in the Unitarian Universalist theme-based ministry program "Soul Matters Sharing Circle." We include in our monthly newsletter the reflection essay written by the Soul Matters staff on that month's theme.

Of all our themes this year, Embracing Possibility is arguably most central to our faith. It has distinguished Unitarian Universalists from the start. Historically, when others saw depravity and sin at the core of human identity, we saw potential. When many were preaching that this world was fallen, we fell in love with the possibility of heaven on earth. Theologically, you might say we were the people who believed that God hadn't given up on us and so we shouldn't give up on each other or this world. Psychologically, it's led to us being a people of "why not?" Why not give people another chance? Why not fight what seems a losing battle? Why not risk a little failure?

So that's our religion. But what about us personally? How open have you been recently to "Why not?" How's your faith in possibility doing? As we honor our religion's faith in what's possible, we need to allow space for the reality that trusting possibility isn't so easy for many of us. Here's how one Soul Matters member puts the challenge: "When I think of possibility, I think of all the people and opportunities we close the door on. Such as: 'I will never

see eye to eye with my sister.' 'I couldn't possibly leave this job to start my own business' 'I will never have close friends like I had where I used to live.' 'I will never really make a difference, so why bother?'"

We tell ourselves so many small stories about who we and others are. So many tiny tales of what the world could be. Part of it has to do with real life defeats. But often a bigger part of it is about imagined fear and protecting ourselves. There's comfort in convincing yourself that the effort is hopeless; that way you don't have to try and risk failure, hurt or disappointment, vet again.

All of which is to say that maybe Embracing Possibility has more to do with being a people of vulnerability and courage than we've thought. The work isn't just about believing in possibility. It's about being willing to endure a few wounds along the way. It can hurt to be hopeful.

So maybe the question this month isn't "Are you ready to lean into possibility?" but "Who's beside you and who are you bringing along?" "Who have you gathered to patch and pick you up when the path gets bumpy?" Whose faith can you lean on when yours grows dim? After all, no one makes it down the road of possibility alone.

And perhaps that's the real secret: remembering that "Why not?" is something we all have to say and sing together. It's not a solo act. For it to sink in - and better vet take flight - it needs to be at least a duet. Of course, a quartet is even better. And just imagine what we might pull off if we can gather a choir, all singing the tune of "Why not?!" at the top of our lungs!

WORSHIP SERVICES

Services are held at 10:30 am in-person on Sundays. Services will also be livestreamed; details about the livestream will be forthcoming in the weekly email announcements and on the website. Note, masks are required for all indoor events and social distancing is strongly encouraged inside the building. An outdoor social hour will follow the worship service.

> September 12 "Embracing Possibilities"

Rev. Rebecca Froom, Joan McDonald and Jim Petosa

For our annual ingathering worship service that marks the beginning of the "church-year" we return to our beautiful sanctuary for in-person worship services for the first time since March 8, 2020. We will gather outside between 10:00 and 10:30 am to greet one another and listen to beautiful music performed by violinist Jagan Nath Khalsa and cellist Hannah Soren. We will then enter the sanctuary together. The service will include our Water Ceremony, so please bring water from a place that is meaningful to you - from near or far! Water will be provided for folks who have not brought their own. An outdoor social hour will follow the service, with ice-cream provided by the Board of Governors.

> September 19 "The Time of Our Jov"

Rev. Rebecca Froom

Mid-September marks the Autumn Equinox and the Jewish harvest holiday of Sukkot. This is a time of transition and balance, of abundance and loss. In this service we reflect on the Equinox, Sukkot, and the ways in which we find and create joy and stability in the midst of impermanence.

> September 26 Rev. Rebecca Froom

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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