



The Chalice and the Flame

Diverse people. Diverse beliefs. One community.

A Monthly Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Salem, OR

July 2023

Office Closed July 12

The Office will be closed Wednesday, July 12, while the staff is on vacation. Thank you!

Let's Keep Our Family Promise by Helping August 13-19

UUCS will host homeless families from Family Promise Sunday, August 13 through Saturday, August 19. We will need volunteers to provide and serve meals, be evening hosts, and to spend the night as overnight hosts. Please consider finding time to help. It takes nearly 50 volunteers to make this work. The Family Promise team will be in the Fellowship Hall after services starting in mid-July to provide information and take sign-ups. If you know now that you would like to help, contact the team at familypromise@uusalem.org.

Optional volunteer training on using best practices with the families is being provided by Family Promise. Here are the dates, times, and locations for those interested:

- 11:30 am, Sunday, July 9 at St. Mark Lutheran Church
- 10 am Saturday, July 15 at First Congregational Church
- 10 am Saturday, July 29 at Holy Cross Lutheran Church
- 6:30 pm Friday, August 11 at Salem First Presbyterian Church

Register for Connections Groups and Chalice Circles by August 20

Yahoo! You are invited to join us! It's time to register for Connections Groups and Chalice Circles! These are two *different* kinds of groups that will meet for 90 minutes each month from September through June. Groups will discuss a new topic each month, and that's where the groups differ. Connections Groups topics may include Heritage, Renewal, Transformation, and more. Chalice Circle topics might be Artificial Intelligence, Education, Discrimination, and more. Both types of groups offer golden opportunities get to know ourselves and each other on meaningful, deeper levels. They are also fun gatherings to anticipate each month!

Register online for [Chalice Circles by clicking here](#) and for [Connections Groups here](#). Group dates and times will be listed on the registration page for each type of group, so you will be able to choose which type of group you prefer, and which days and times will work for your schedule. **Registration is open now through August 20.** You can register online from your own device, or you can use the laptops and tablets we'll have available in the Fellowship Hall after Sunday services. Group facilitators will be happy to assist you with any questions.

Help Provide Coffee Service and Treats This Summer.



There will be no formal plans for coffee service volunteers during the summer. If you are planning on being at a service, consider bringing in a treat or helping with setting up before the service and/or cleaning up after fellowship time.

The Connections Team thanks everyone who participated with coffee service during the year. It was truly a team effort, and we hope that those who participated made some new connections with other members while helping to serve our UU community.

New coffee service schedules will be in the September newsletter. The schedule will begin with the September 10th service. If you are a member and you do not want to be on the schedule or if you are not a member but want to be on the schedule, please send an email to connectionsteam@uusalem.org.



Reverential Ramblings

~ Rev. Richard Davis, UUCS's minister

This Summer season feels distinctly different for me from all summers past. For the last thirty-eight years summertime was for slowing down, restoring, and renewing my spirit in preparation for another congregational year full of promise and possibility.

This summer is unique for me because I know that the coming year will be my last one serving as your minister. So, there's a special poignancy to this time as I think about my last lap around the track before my retirement. The coming year will be one of summing up and a gradual letting go, even as you begin to embrace the promises and possibilities that lie ahead for our beloved community.

Among the many thoughts and feelings stirring in my soul as I prepare myself for this major life passage is how precious and relatively few are our days upon the earth to appreciate our lives and fulfill our opportunities to love and to serve.

The great religious traditions all encourage some form of what the ancient Western classical philosophers called "*memento mori*" (Latin for "remember that you have to die"). At first this might strike you as morbid, but it's not: it's taking the true measure of things so you can have a truer perspective on your life. As the ancient Psalmist sang out thousands of years ago: "so teach us to number our days – to realize the brevity of life – that we might gain a heart of wisdom."

How might we gain such wisdom? Oftentimes, such wisdom arises when we mourn the loss and celebrate the life of a member here. At these memorials we are reminded that the bell will someday toll for each one of us, too. As we listen to the story of a life well lived, we cannot help but realize that all our days to fulfill the promise of our lives do not stretch on interminably – there's a limit.

Paradoxically enough, attending a memorial service or otherwise becoming aware of your mortality – *memento mori* – is a life affirming practice that leads you to cherish the life we do have today.

Since both of my parents lived past their mid-eighties my default assumption is that I will live as long and perhaps a bit longer. Yet, in truth, there are no guarantees. The worldwide average lifespan for males is a bit over seventy (70) and in the U.S. it's a bit over seventy-seven (77). Everyone knows their birthday, but few know their day of death until it comes.

So, when folks ask me what I plan to do during retirement I can say that I do have some plans and ideas, but whether I will be blessed with the time to carry them out is another matter. Besides, there is yet another year until I relinquish my role as your minister, and I intend to cherish the remaining opportunities to fulfill my role as best I am able.

Time flows on. We're always saying "goodbye" to old friends, even as we say "hello" to new ones. It's all part of the great rhythm, the ebb and flow, of our lives. As the poet Blake was moved to write: "Joy and woe are woven fine, clothing for the soul divine, and when this we rightly know, safely through the world we go."

May it be so.

Love,

Rick

UUA General Assembly

Report

The 62nd General Assembly (GA) of the Unitarian Universalist Association met in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania on June 21-25. While many delegates attended in person, many others—including your four UUCS member delegates—participated online. Click here to see [the report of all election results](#) discussed below.



UUA GENERAL ASSEMBLY
PITTSBURGH • JUNE 21 - 25, 2023

A large majority of the delegates voted to give preliminary approval of the Article II [i.e., 2] Study Commission's proposed revision of Article II, subject to five amendments. The 2023 vote is only a preliminary approval of the revision. The bylaws require the Study Commission to now incorporate those five amendments in another draft of the proposed revision. The question of final approval of the amended revision will come before the next GA in 2024. To pass, at least two thirds of those voting must approve. Because the proposal itself is subject to amendments approved at the 2023 GA, the UUA Bylaws authorize the proposal of further amendments before the vote on final approval. The UUA Board and groups of at least 15 UUA congregations may propose those further amendments. To pass, those proposals will require a “yes” vote of at least three fourths of those voting.

Delegates approved, by a 95.5% majority, the election of the Rev. Dr. Sonia Betancourt, as the 10th President of the UUA. Despite a UUA bylaw requiring the nomination of two or more candidates for this position, the UUA Board Nominating Committee stated that it was unable to find other qualified candidates willing to serve. An earlier biographical summary about the Rev. Dr. Betancourt can be found by [clicking here](#). [Click here to see more information](#). Her [Campaign Statement can be found here](#). The term of a UUA president is six years.

Delegates also approved three Actions of Immediate Witness (AIW). An Action of Immediate Witness is a statement about a significant action, event, or development in the world that necessitates immediate engagement and action among UU member congregations and groups. [Click here to learn more](#). Among the three approved, the AIW entitled "[Rise up to Stop Cop City](#)" can be found by clicking on the title. The other two, "Organizing for Health Equity" and "Protect the Dreamers," can be found by [clicking here](#).

The budget passed, but delegates disapproved a Business Resolution entitled "[Complete Divestment from the Fossil Fuel Industry and Subsequent Reparations](#)."

Finally, they elected candidates to fill vacant positions on the UUA Board of Review, Board of Trustees, Commission on Appraisal, Commission on Social Witness, Financial Advisor and Nominating Committee.

The next GA, in 2024, will be only online, not in person. Being online will reduce the costs of GA and the inconveniences of travel for everyone but will also reduce opportunities for personal contact and conversation.

Comments

This General Assembly has been controversial in at least two major respects. A substantial number of UUA ministers and laity expressed doubts about the proposed Article II revisions and the failure of the UUA Board of Trustees Nominating Committee to produce at least two candidates for the position of President. Members of our own congregation also expressed doubts about the need for and efficacy of the proposed revisions to Article II.

I have only my perspective to offer and I know that it is subject to my limited knowledge. Nevertheless, I invite you to consider the following brief observations, based on my experience and study as one of your member delegates at the last three UUA General Assemblies. I welcome a conversation with interested members.

I believe that the preliminary approval of the Article II revision and the election of the Rev. Dr. Betancourt as our next UUA President have a simple and evident cause. That cause is the strong desire by many within our UUA to confront and oppose systemic oppression within our society, particularly oppression based on race, sexuality, and gender identity. Consider what has happened in the last few years—the “white supremacist” rhetoric and rallies before, during and after the election of President Trump, the police shootings of blacks, the subsequent “antifascist” protests in our cities, the emerging sexual and gender rights issues. I believe that those seeking changes within UUA want to engage our association as an agent for greater social justice in

America and are not satisfied with a UUA that would only serve to foster individual spiritual growth. Although I am unconvinced that the Article II revisions are needed, let alone sufficient, to achieve these aims of social justice (which I share), I do not count these UU activists as my enemies or as threats to Unitarian Universalism as I understand it. I trust them and am sympathetic with their goals, despite questions about their approach.

~Bob Muir, Chair of General Assembly Committee

UUCS Annual Meeting

Strategic Plan Annual Report

This Report was to have been presented at the UUCS Annual Meeting in May but was omitted when time ran short. It is printed here, and available on the UUCS website [by clicking here](#) on the 2023 Annual Meeting page.

The Strategic Plan was developed in 2018. A group of 9 people helped create this plan that would: practice covenant, invest in congregational vitality, nurture the hopes, and serve the needs of our community and world. The Vision of the Plan: By 2023 we will be an inclusive, cohesive, participatory, and resilient congregation where we cultivate strong, covenantal relationships, live from plentitude, and are inspired to reach out to the world.

Oversight, Periodic Review, and Update

The 2018 Strategic Plan is a living document. The Plan can and should be reviewed, refined, and improved with policies and/or procedures for modifications,

The Board and Team Council will be responsible for oversight, review, and update of the Strategic Plan for Year One and periodic reports to the congregation.

In Years Two and beyond, the Team Council will monitor progress, make recommendations, and provide periodic reports to the board and congregation.

The goals, strategies, and suggestions in this document are largely team/committee-based and their implementation will mostly come from and be accomplished by the teams/committees.

What the Board and Team Council did in 2023

- Developed a 4 phase Strategic Plan Updating Procedure
- Developed a position called the Strategic Plan Coordinator to help track goal progress
- Established with Team Council what goals had been achieved, what still needed to be worked on and what did not seem probable to be achieved at this time or with the connected team.
- Focused on 4 Goals from the Strategic Plan that teams would work on and provide monthly reports for January – May. Those 4 goals were:
 - "Nurture Hopes and Serve Needs: Social Justice for a Program Congregation"
 - "Nurture the hopes and serve the needs of our community and world through Membership and Fellowship Teams for a Program Congregation"
 - "Leadership and Governance: Foster Leadership Development"
 - "Staffing/Personnel": Become an "Employer of Choice"
- Outcome - showed the many and various ways different teams are providing the congregation with social justice actions, increasing sense of membership and fellowship, working on leadership development and being an employer of choice
- Developed and streamlined reporting process of team progress to the Board and Team Council.
- Started process of developing an Organizational Flow Chart

Next Steps

- Review Goals with proposed updated Vision and Mission statements and modify goals as needed for 2023-2024.
- Create an organization chart/representation of Teams/Ministries/Administration of UUCS to assist in understanding and promoting connection of Strategic Plan and Goals in relation to functioning of the UUCS community. (This is being worked on by other Board members.)

- Create a 1-page visual of Vision/Mission to give to Teams to remind of focus on Goals.
- Repeat analysis of UUCS Strategic Plan in 2028 (5 years' time).

Revised Mission and Vision Statements

At the UUCS annual meeting in May 2023, we voted on these revised Vision and Mission Statements. Our Vision expresses our dream, our “vow with the universe.” Our Mission states “who we are and why we exist.”

Vision: We aspire to be a generous, loving, and diverse intergenerational community that fosters and celebrates free religious exploration and expression, inspires spiritual growth, appreciates the gifts people share, and encourages lives of integrity, joy, and service to our congregation, our community, and our world.

Mission: We are a free and diverse, multi-generational spiritual community promoting liberal religious exploration in a congregation governed by democratic principles, and committed to stewardship, friendship, and shared ministry, as we live out our Unitarian Universalist values.

How will our church leadership use the Vision and Mission Statements? To make these more nearly a reality, the Team Council (leaders of all teams and committees together) will create Shared Ministry Goals for the coming church year that align with the Vision and Mission Statements, and with the existing Strategic Plan. Teams will then create mission objectives within their sphere of work that are concrete and measurable to support the Shared Ministry Goals, and report back to the Council and the Board. Thus, we hope we will all move in the same positive direction toward shared goals, and more nearly live our Vision.

Behind the Chalice

Looking Behind “Behind the Chalice”

In case you haven't figured it out over these past three years, the author of Behind the Chalice, is I, Sara Pickett, Worship Team Chair.

I started this column as just a one-time article while we were in the midst of the COVID Pandemic. The Worship Team and our newly founded Production Team were working frantically each week to bring you Sunday Services via YouTube recordings. Yet, the teams and you weren't seeing each other face to face and I wanted you to know what the teams were doing behind the scenes, or “Behind the Chalice.”

Well, over time, the editors of the Chalice and Flame graciously kept this column going. Monthly, I tried to keep you amused as well as informed as we went through the pandemic together and then we were finally able to get together, the column kept going, introducing you to team members and at times asking for your help.

From a Behind the Chalice perspective, a lot has happened in the past four years. We have new Celebrants while retaining established ones. Many Celebrants also became Homilists. Being in both roles enriches the experience in both roles. We are more involved with the production side of things, including the creation of slides for projection during services, camera work, OBS, live streaming—all of which also increases the need to focus on sound during a service. We have been very fortunate in finding qualified volunteers who not only bring their talent, but also their patient and kind attitudes to their work every Sunday. Working with the Music Team and Lifespan Religious Education as well as the Hosts, Life Lines Lay Ministers, coffee crews, office, Communications Team—all of this comes together so nicely, and it produces a meaningful service experience. At least that is how we feel about it and we hope you are able to experience that feeling as well.

I have enjoyed writing this monthly column so much! And I hope you have enjoyed reading it as much as I have had finding things to tell you. After four years as Worship Team leader, I'll soon be passing that responsibility on. (The team has recently nominated Barbara Stebbins-Boas to take over as Worship Team Chair, subject to Board approval.) However, who knows, I may start a new column, “Before the Chalice” or “Facing the Chalice Window” or “Snoozing in the Sanctuary” (no, I've been told that isn't nice to say or true). In other words, finding out about you all! So beware, you may be asked questions! I leave you with the Worship Team Mission Statement: “to create a welcoming, compassionate, and inspiring spiritual community.” May this continue for many years.

~Until next time, we remain yours, Behind the Chalice.

Social Justice News

Housing Our Neighbors

Housing Our Neighbors is a faith-based program to house and support the homeless. It doesn't require permission because it doesn't use church resources. All it requires is a few members of a congregation deciding that they want to adopt a homeless person, preferably someone who is known to them. Housing could be a tent on someone's property, an unutilized or underutilized shed, or a camping trailer that is not being used. They would provide food, clothing, friendship, and assist with achieving housing and work goals. Is this something UUCS can do? Send me an email at jprouu@gmail.com and let me know your thoughts about this.

~John Prohodsky, Chair Social Justice Team

More Help Needed and Appreciated

Volunteers are Needed as Sunday Hosts

The Membership Team is recruiting hosts for this coming fall. An important part of every Sunday service being greeted by friendly hosts as we enter the building. If you are a friendly person who enjoys talking with others, this may be for you. This is also an easy way to start getting involved in the UU community. It is only a once-a-month commitment starting September 10th. Other duties include handing out programs, collecting and counting the offering, welcoming, and having newcomers sign the visitor book and helping visitors feel welcome during fellowship time. Our team members always have a good time and enjoy each other's company as we take care of the Sunday morning hosting. If you think this may be for you, [fill out this online form](#). If you have any questions before making a commitment, email membership@uusalem.org. There will be a host training on September 10 following the service (about 11:45 pm). Thank you for your service!

Have Fun Helping with Our Landscape

Look at all the land our congregation has. Now, who takes care of managing the upkeep of this beautiful space? No hired landscape firm, no master gardeners looking for experience, not some other one, alone. You and I can share that task Saturday mornings. It's amazing what ten volunteers can accomplish on one or two of our monthly landscape parties.

It's not all heavy lifting, but weeding and trimming, raking, and planting, or just watering. Mark your calendar right now for the 2nd and/or 4th Saturday of the month and join us at 9 am for exercise, making new friends and caring for this beautiful piece of land. Let's surprise and relieve the few that have carried this heavy burden.



Let's not make caring for our landscape a burnout job, but an expected shared experience. Thank you all!

Splinters from the Board

In June the UUCS board approved Bob Muir, Barbara Stebbins-Boaz, Sara Pickett, and Joel Martin to be UUCS member delegates to the 2023 UUA General Assembly. It also directed the delegates to vote their consciences regarding the election of the next UUA president and the proposed revision of Article II of the UUA Bylaws, considering the views about the proposed revision that were expressed by those who attended one of two discussion meetings after Sunday services earlier this year. Because the board did not know what amendments to the proposed Article II revision would be submitted to and approved by the General Assembly, it was unable to give further instruction to the UUCS delegates before their participation in the Assembly.

Chris Keese-Ferguson was appointed to another two-year term as a director. Patty and John Davenport were appointed as co-chairs of the Landscape Team.

The board gratefully accepted Rob Schiff's generous donation for a new air conditioning system, hoping it will soon be installed.

~Lynn Cardiff, UUCS Board Chair

Sunday Services and Religious Education

Religious Education <i>No TFA. Children may go to LRE wing during service</i>	Sunday Service <i>In-person and Live-streamed</i>	Fellowship Time <i>In person</i>
10:30 am	10:30 am	Noon
July Share the Plate Recipient: Oregon Black Pioneers		

Sunday, July 9

Greg Gregg, Homilist/Storyteller

"The Homily of Pious Pete"

A pious man with good intentions and a passion to redeem his wayward neighbor discovers the dangers of rejection, isolation, and unfounded fear.

Celebrant: Brenna Norval

Music: Marcia Christenson

Sunday, July 16

Bob Muir, Homilist/Storyteller

"I Am Not Entitled to My Opinions!"

A teenager finds himself in yet another argument with his father, who then cuts him off, saying, "I'm entitled to my opinion." Stymied, the youth asked himself: Is dad entitled to his opinion? Years later, the youth now grown finds political leaders boldly asserting "alternative facts" and stating blatant falsehoods and a lawyer claims "truth is not truth." What do our UU principles suggest about all this?

Celebrant: Barbara Stebbins-Boaz

Music: Stephanie Smith

Sunday, July 23

Janet Stevens, Homilist/Storyteller

"Who Am I Anyway?"

When you say "me" or "I" it's clear what you mean....or is it?

Celebrant: Gloria Holland

Music: Loriann Schmidt and Mark Levy (Special Music)

Sunday, July 30

The Rev. Mark Gallagher

"We are Moral Animals, Not Fallen Angels."

Reconsidering fashionably cynical attitudes about humanity and civilization

Celebrant: Sara Pickett

Music: Marcia Christenson

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This issue was edited by Bob Muir with help from Vicki Cunningham, Elsa Struble and Kathleen McKinney.

EVENT SCHEDULING: use the [Event Scheduling Request](#) form on the UUCS website to add events to the UUCS calendar and/or reserve a UUCS space.

PUBLICITY and ANNOUNCEMENTS: Fill out the [Publication Request](#) form on the UUCS website for any announcement, event, or news item. This form is a one-stop place to put a notice in the monthly newsletter, the UUCS website, the *This Week* email and/or Facebook.

DEADLINES:

Newsletter: The deadline for the next newsletter is 8:00 pm on Friday, **July 28, 2023.**

This Week submissions are due by **Wed.** noon.