

## UUCM NEWSLETTER (Spring 2017)

Susan Jhirad, Editor



**From the Board of Trustees** (Brendan Shea, Nancy Kurtz, Robert Heintz, Susan Driscoll, Geoff Ward, Betty Walters, Joan Trudell)

Welcome to our rebooted UUCM newsletter! Our hope is that this provides an additional avenue for communication between our members, and provides another way for us to feel like a community. In addition to ‘news’ articles, we hope to include things such as announcements – like birthdays, special events, and the like – and pictures of our congregation members, either participating in church events or just out in the larger community. Most of all, though, we want to hear from **you** about what you would like to see in this newsletter; you can send your feedback to the board at [uumboard@lists.neighborhood.net](mailto:uumboard@lists.neighborhood.net).

One of the things we’ve been talking about on the board is the upcoming UUA General Assembly, and who will be participating as delegates from our congregation; you may have seen my recent email asking if there are any volunteers to be delegates. General Assembly is the annual meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association, and is the place where UUA policy is made. It is also a place for connection, worship, learning, and connection with other UUs. This year’s GA will be in New Orleans, Louisiana from June 21 through June 25.

At this year’s General Assembly, the agenda includes the following items:

- Selecting the next UUA president
- Proposed bylaw amendments:
  - Changing the principle 'inherent worth and dignity of every person' to 'inherent worth and dignity of every *being*'
  - Changing the source 'Words and deeds of prophetic women and men' to 'Words and deeds of prophetic *people*'
- Draft Statement of Conscience: Escalating Inequality
- 2017 Report of the Commission on Social Witness

If you’d like to find out more details about GA or the agenda items being discussed there, visit [uua.org/ga](http://uua.org/ga).

Finally, in an effort to make it easier for everyone to know who the members of the board of trustees are, we're ordering some stickers to be attached to our nametags so you can see us at a glance during coffee hour. Keep an eye out for them!



In peace,

Brendan Shea

Board Chair

## **SOUL MATTERS: From our Minister**

**Rev. Marta Valentin**



**Soul Matters.** What's the buzz? Some of you may have heard about a program called Soul Matters that UUCM will be trying on as of the new church year. Soul Matters is a monthly worship theme program that over 200 congregations are joining in together to provide a stronger connection to each other within the congregation and across congregations. I brought it into my last church to great success and I am hoping the track record will continue at UUCM. What I like is that it is a complete program, that is, there are resources for the DRE to include the children and youth and there are small groups that you can be a part of and go deeper with the theme. The themes are usually ensconced in a question, such as "What does it mean to live a life of...theme?" So it's not an intellectual only exploration but directly relating it to one's life, in particular as a Unitarian Universalist.

**How does it work?** Around mid-August the themes for the following twelve months will be revealed. The minister and DRE will each receive a packet of resources created by feedback from all the ministers and DREs involved with the program. The resources are a combination of: spiritual and growth exercises, articles, books, videos, music, quotes, blogs, etc. to help develop the service. By delving into the theme over the month we get the opportunity to think about and be with the theme in a more thorough way. It has been very interesting to consider a theme from various angles, something that is impossible to do well in one service. If a congregant misses a service, they can still pick up on the theme of the month at the service they have attended and therefore can still discuss it with others.

The DRE will receive resources appropriate for her area, so that the Time for All Ages can be directly related and the children and youth can be a part of the action. The idea too is that families can be discussing the theme among themselves creating a stronger

unity between what happens in the sanctuary, what happens in the classes, and what can happen at home.

Small Group Ministries (SGM), concurrent with the above Soul Matters involves creating small groups that meet once a month, usually at the end of the month, to share what they've learned doing the exercises (there are choices) and to go deeper with each other. In my last church I led the group of newcomers to the church and it was a very profound experience. I was able to get to know them and help direct them toward church ministries that spoke to them in one way or another. It was understood that everyone in the church had a ministry and I advocated that they each find theirs. The SGM portion is what sets Soul Matters apart from the other theme-based systems that are out there, and I think it is where so much can happen around UU identity, faith development, growth, and self-discovery. I will offer to run the group here this year as well.

During my study time in August I will be working on the launch of Soul Matters. Please let me know if you have an interest in being a part of a group, or even a facilitator. The beauty of the program is that it is all laid out for you, even the SGM. So it's about showing up, participating, and being willing to let your life change and grow along with your community. I do hope you will join in on the fun at one or all of these levels.

## THE WORSHIP COMMITTEE



**David Parker, Chair**

The Worship Committee had the task of identifying worship leaders for 19 of 26 worship services between December 25 and June 11 as we were in transition to Rev. Marta's leadership. Twelve of these services were facilitated within our own congregation as various people rose to the challenge of meeting the church's need, and we're pleased and proud that each service – whether lead by our wonderful new minister Rev. Marta Valentin, guest ministers such as Matt Meyer and Elizabeth Nguyen, or lay members of UUCM – has been of the highest quality. Our talented music director and church musicians have enhanced all our services with a broad range of music from many cultures and traditions.

Some of our lay led services have been collaborative, such as the recent one on our Unitarian-Universalist "sources, and our Poetry service," involving the voices and talents of many.

Plans for summer worship services have been developed through the collaborative efforts of the entire Worship Committee. We look forward to lay-led services addressing a variety of topics that are certain to be of interest to members and visitors throughout the summer: our traditional pet blessing, hidden disabilities, coping with loss, wise speech, working with prisoners, small group ministry- and more.

At Rev. Marta's suggestion, we have adopted a UUA "curriculum" called Soul Matters for the coming year (see above) which will add small group worship (something that our church has appreciated in our chalice groups) to our Sunday services, using a common theme to deepen our spiritual practice.

Last fall the Worship Committee volunteered to take on the task of proposing revisions to the church covenant, but with the ministerial transition, that work has been postponed. Rev. Marta has some helpful thoughts about how we might approach that task so that the covenant is truly representative of everyone in the church.

## Religious Education

By Mimi Olivier, R.E. Director



All of our R.E. classes have been humming along this month. The elementary age class finished with the Sources curriculum and have transitioned into gardening. The Master Gardeners from the Community Garden Project have collaborated with us and are helping our students plant potatoes and harvest ladybugs. The middle schoolers are concluding their Neighboring Faiths curriculum. This month they visited the Friends Meeting House in Cambridge and attended mass at St. Raphael's Catholic Church in Medford. The high school contingent has been busy working on their Credos and designing the Coming of Age service, scheduled for June 4th.

The RE Committee is working on plans for next year. We put out a call for more congregants to get involved with RE and are looking forward to the response. We are recruiting new teachers, committee members, mentors and others who want to share their talents with our youth. We are hoping to offer a class to 4 and 5 year olds this fall, and are working hard to design an OWL program for our 8th and 9th graders.

The Director of Religious Education, along with congregation member Carolyn Cronin, presented a Teach-In on White Supremacy at the church on May 7th. This was suggested to all UU congregations by the Black Lives group at the UUA, and over 650 congregations answered the call. At our church 25 people attended this first of a series of conversations about racism in society and within the UUA. We are working on developing a plan on how best to continue this important work at UUCM.

Finally, the DRE attended a 2-day training on "UU Identity Development" presented by the UUA on May 9th and 10th. It was a wonderful opportunity to learn what the latest thinking is on how to confront our past and develop our identity as individual Unitarians as well as on a congregational level. Three stages of UU identity development were explored that can be applied to many ages and experiences. It provided a great foundation for planning for next year and beyond.

We are looking forward to a great service on June 4th, where we will recognize the hard work of all of our teachers and students as well as celebrate the milestone of our teen's presentations at the Coming of Age ceremony.

## **Social Justice Work** **Michael Glenn, Chair**

On January 15<sup>th</sup>, social justice activists participated in a UUCM service marking Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Dave Concepcion gave the sermon on “Misremembering Dr. King.” Readings from King’s more radical speeches were given by Antonia Collins, Giovanna Ferrini and Jenn Stiles.

Between mid-January and mid-March, our main social justice work was the Medford Conversation Project on “Race and Ethnicity in Medford and Beyond.” Several UUCM members worked on the Project’s planning team from October through March; three members served as small group facilitators; and several more took part in the series of five small group discussions, culminating in a large meeting of close to 160 people on March 12th. The activism sparked by this Project later spilled over into city-wide organizing to make Medford a safer city for all its inhabitants, a project known as Safe Medford. Ilene Lerner and Susan Jhirad represent our church at Safe Medford, which has begun to meet with Medford Police and city officials on protecting the rights of Medford’s immigrants.

On February 5<sup>th</sup>, we welcomed Muslim members of the Malden Islamic Center and the Medford Bangladeshi community to a service on welcoming our neighbors. After the service, we invited our guests to join us at small tables for a buffet lunch and conversation. This event brought close to a hundred people into our church and served to deepen our commitment to upholding the worth and dignity of all members of our community. As a follow-up to the event, the Malden Islamic Center welcomed several students and teachers from our RE Middle School program, to introduce them to concepts and the practice of their religion.



*Welcoming Muslims event.*

In addition, members of the church have continued attending various rallies and demonstrations—in Boston and beyond—including the spectacular Women’s March on January 21st. Around eight of our members attended the march in D.C., and 12

attended the big march on Boston Common. As a follow-up to the March, and in honor of International Women's Day, Susan Jhirad and Carolyn Cronin led a Sunday service entitled "Why We March," which featured a slide show with photos of the Boston march by Sophia Concepcion.

Our book clubs continued to investigate the topic of race and white privilege by reading and discussing Debby Irving's *Waking up White* and Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me*. Jenn Stiles led one group, Michael Glenn the other.

We also took a special fundraiser for our high school students (Antonia Collins and Willa Driscoll) doing social justice work at the high school.

Linda Schwetz, who works in our food pantry, marched in the Walk for Hunger in May, soliciting donations from our church. Other members of the congregation joined her.

We held a meeting for people interested in social justice work on May 21<sup>st</sup> to talk about the coming year. Without a chair, we will have a more decentralized approach, allowing our members to follow their passions, with a little help from their friends. Carolyn Cronin will serve as communicator-in-chief. Ben Marder will work on a Social Justice section of our website with Melissa. Those interested in racial justice issues should contact Carolyn, Jenn Stiles and Dave Concepcion. Those interested in immigrant rights should contact Ilene Lerner and Susan Jhirad, working on SAFE Medford. Needless to say, many issues are pressing: racism, immigrant rights, women and GBLTQIA rights, poverty, and the fate of our planet. UUCM will continue to be active in the issues that face our society and the world. All activism is welcomed! Meanwhile, due to "popular demand" book groups on social justice and other issues will continue.

# The Teach-in on White Supremacy

Carolyn Cronin

This past spring, Black Lives UU put out a call to UU congregations to hold a teach-in on White Supremacy. UUCM was among 668 congregations and communities across all states as well as international UU's from Mumbai, New Zealand, the UK, and Canada to register their commitment to hold some form of teach-in whether during worship, meetings, or programming as decided by each leader.

At UUCM, Carolyn Cronin and Mimi Olivier led a discussion after church with the goal of trying to establish a baseline understanding of the use of the term “White Supremacy” as it is being used to describe the culture of our parent organization the UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association of congregations. Our teach-in was meant as a start of a conversation; please keep an eye/ear out for additional opportunities to learn and discuss this topic.



## Community Cupboard Food Pantry News

Liz Ammons, Co-Director, Food Pantry



Entering its twenty-fifth year, the Community Cupboard Food Pantry located in our church continues to be a very successful collaboration between the church and the community. Right now, volunteers under the direction of two volunteer Master Gardeners from the Master Gardeners Association of Massachusetts are getting the gardens at the church ready to grow fresh produce to be distributed to Food Pantry clients. Last year the Master Gardeners started their gardens for the Food Pantry in the raised beds next to the church and in the yard of Osgood House, and they grew beautiful produce. It's wonderful to have the fresh, healthy vegetables and herbs to distribute to Food Pantry clients, who are delighted to receive it! If you would like to help with the gardens, please don't do any tending on your own (weeding, harvesting, etc.) since the Master Gardeners in charge, Susan and Joan, have a plan. But they invite anyone who wishes to participate to contact them: [susan\\_oldwork@earthlink.net](mailto:susan_oldwork@earthlink.net), or [joanparkwood@gmail.com](mailto:joanparkwood@gmail.com). All are welcome!



## MUSIC AT UUCM

Vivian Montgomery, Music Director

We've had some wonderful music-making at UUCM these past few months, with the choir, our usual in-house talent (Nancy, Molly, Brendan, Joe) and other community musicians. For Christmas Eve we had baroque instrumentalists accompanying the choir in music by the French 17<sup>th</sup> century composer Charpentier. Our love song service in February was a great success, Easter featured the choir on rousing spirituals accompanied by saxophonist Diane Heffner, and our recent performance of excerpts from Jason Shelton's UU Cantata "Sources" was very well received. Other important musical elements include the regular and impressive contributions of Russell Tripp as well as services with guests drummer/singer Matt Meyer (who also served as guest minister) and jazz pianist Peter Cassino. Our Women's Day service included a woman's choir singing the theme song of the demonstrations "Quiet" and local singer Didi Stewart singing "Respect."

This week, we'll have the song-leadership of Jim and Beth Sargent, special guests from the Needham UU community. Coming up in June, we'll have Vivian's talented offspring, clarinetist and keyboardist Ezra Morrison, as a guest musician, and for our final choir service, we'll be performing an amazing piece by Canadian composer Laura Hawley weaving together Arabic incantations of welcome and joy. We are very fortunate to be able to bring such a wide variety and high quality of music to the congregation! Inspiring collaboration with the minister and RE director helps to make the music strong and integrated, and the activism and engagement of the congregation is also a real blessing to this very important part of worship. Many thanks to all who contribute their gifts!

## **Membership**

by Michael Glenn

Growth in our community is vital to its survival. So “membership work” is a basic part of church life. To augment this work, we received a one-time Woburn Grant from the New England Regional UUA. We asked for funds to purchase materials for a “welcome bag,” which we planned to give to all first-time visitors who stayed for Social Hour. The bag would be an expression of our delight in welcoming them. It contained a coffee mug embossed with our logo, some fair trade chocolates, and an assortment of pamphlets about Unitarian Universalism and our church. We also received funds to maintain our visitor data-base, as well as to pay for child-care during Sunday services—so people with small children could attend the services without having to worry about their kids. The Woburn Fund granted us \$3,600, and we began implementing this program in February, 2017.

Steve Schmidt agreed to maintain our visitors’ data base, contact newcomers, and make new name tags for visitors who wanted them. Lily and Jahna MacNamee volunteered to staff our Sunday nursery. Mimi Olivier, as Director of Religious Education, organized a spring brunch for parents of small children, as well as a family “Games Night,” and invited newcomers with small children to these events.

Many members contributed to the warm welcome our visitors experienced at Sunday services and afterwards in Benker Hall, and we want to thank them all. But we also relied on a team of people who wore the “Red Apron” to serve as official, visible greeters. The “Red Apron” team addressed newcomers and answered their questions. This year, the team included Annette Bloom, Michael J. Lowe II, Dana MacNamee, Tammy McKanan, and Steve Schmidt. Steve also maintained a consistent, welcoming presence at our front entrance, introducing newcomers to our church and inviting them to sign our visitors’ book. Dawn Milam and Elizabeth Ellis also helped at the visitors’ desk.

People decided to become new members at various times of the year, and Rev. Marta held a Membership Service on Sunday, April 23. We were delighted to welcome seven new members this year, as approved by the Board: April Evans, Margery Gans, Paul Marcucilli, Dawn Milam, Avalon Owens, Thomas Phillips, and Meghan Rogers.

Our new members’ photos and brief biographical statements were posted in Benker Hall for six weeks after the ceremony. We now plan to take photos of all church members during the coming fall, invite everyone to write a “biographical statement,” and then hand out a small Members Book to everyone in our community. Thanks to everyone who has helped out this year!

**Stewardship: A Riddle**  
By Carolyn Cronin

*Question:* How did  $1 + 4 + 14 = 70,980$ ?

*Answer:* when the UUCM community responded to the “Let It Shine” 2017-2018 Canvass Pledge Drive.

The campaign kicked off March 12 with a rousing sermon by Rev Marta and ended as a great success of 58 households pledging a total of \$70,980, a 9% increase from last year.

**Unpacking the riddle:**

*One* refers to the Canvass letter designed by Michael Lowe that was sent to everyone in the UUCM community.

*Four* refers to the heartfelt testimonials by Ilene Lerner, Molly Ruggles, Dana MacNamee, and Brian Wolf.

*Fourteen* refers to the Canvassers who reached out to fellow congregants; our canvassers were: Liz Ammons, Loren Bernardi, Mark Castle, Carolyn Cronin, Sue Driscoll, Michael Glenn, Susan Jhirad, Susan Jordan, Nancy Kurtz, Dana MacNamee, Brendan Shea, Steve Schmidt, Joan Trudell, and Betty Walters.

**Thanks** to everyone who contributed to the success of the pledge drive. If this is all new news to you and you would like more information about the UUCM pledge campaign, please reach out to a Stewardship committee member: Liz Ammons, Dana MacNamee or Carolyn Cronin.