

## UUC QUARTERLY REVIEW, Spring 2023

### Minister's Musings

We are in the middle of a growing season. This is the time of greening and blooming throughout the Northeast. It is also the time of abundant life so present in our congregation as more new faces, more young children, and more programs bring energy and excitement to Sunday mornings- and throughout the week- at UUC. This past year alone we have welcomed 15 new members, with more planning to sign the historic membership book on May 7th. So many have expressed their experience of this congregation as a welcoming community, a sign that UUC is living its mission.

And yet, the full mystery of growth is not always visible to the eye. Daffodils and tulips grow from bulbs planted beneath the ground in Fall. While we delight in the blooming cherry blossoms on branches lifted to the sky, we may forget that all trees are sustained by a rich network of roots beneath soil. In the poem "Seven of Pentacles", Marge Piercy writes: "Connections are made slowly, sometimes they grow underground. You cannot tell always by looking what is happening. More than half the tree is spread out in the soil under your feet." In other words, trees grow downward, as well as up, and they do so together, intertwined at the roots, in relationship with one another.

And so, it is here in this place of spiritual community. Growth is more than just branches; it is also roots. It is more than just numbers; it is also soul. Our work of nurturing spiritual growth happens underground— in small groups and teams holding intentional conversations and doing the work that changes lives. It happens in places where communal spiritual practices such as Vespers singing, early morning tai chi, or front yard gardening are providing sustenance and joy. It happens through reflection and action: in Wellspring spiritual deepening conversations on what supports us through the crises of life, in a children's Popcorn Theology class on seeing through stereotypes, in a tough conversation about systemic racism on a Saturday afternoon, and in the work of preparing and serving a meal at Pacific House shelter on a Friday night.

Each of these experiences— and so many more— are growing soul at UUC. The core value of transformation, our commitment to collectively grow spiritually and ethically, is one of the proposed values in the UUA Article II Bylaws Revisions. It is a value, I would say, we are living into every time we gather with intention.

In the words of Marge Piercy, "Keep tangling and interweaving and taking more in." Let us continue to grow deep entangled roots, that our shared lives may transform into blossom and mutual flourishing.

With gratitude,  
**Rev. Terri**

## President's Message

Mary Oliver writes---“Come with me into the woods where spring is advancing no matter what----“

Here, at UUC, we are advancing no matter what---never mind the cracked driveway or the netting STILL on the ceiling in the sanctuary, or the occasional drip on our heads on rainy days during coffee hour.

I love that we FINALLY are able to enter our front door for worship on Sunday morning. Not only does that put us in a frame of mind to settle in from the day to day, but it sends a message to our surrounding community that we are here.

We are here in so many ways---in COMMUNITY SERVICE: some of us cooked and served a meal to the men at Pacific House, while others joined in to fight childhood hunger by packing weekend meals in the program “Filling in the Blanks”

In SPIRITUAL GROWTH: Through Reverend Terri’s weekly sermons, through Soul Matters, Vespers Services, “Mistakes and Miracles” group, and Wellspring.

In THINKING DEEPER: by watching the film “Cracking the Codes”, exploring racial equity and Multiculturalism.

In JOINING TOGETHER: for fun and UUC Community by participating in the UU table Pizza and game nights, Second Sunday Brunch, and Writers Group.

And lest we forget---all of this is made possible through Stewardship and the Stewardship Drive. We are closing in on the final days of our Stewardship Drive, “Our Growing Season.” Last night’s dinner and entertainment was a wonderful celebration of making all of the above activities possible.

The UUC Board, together with the congregation, has voted to go from a ¾ time minister to a full time minister next year. Let us PLEDGE together, along with your time and talent.

“Come, come, whoever you are----“

In love and peace,

**Lynne**

## Religious Education



In March, about 20 UUC Religious Education families, volunteers and friends joined together for AroUUUnd the Table. After a bit of mingling, we considered all those who participated in bringing the pizza to our plates and then participated in a "mindful bite" of pizza noticing all the flavors and textures in our first bite of pizza. After eating, we set up games throughout the Community Room which was abuzz with lots of conversation and laughter. Some favorite games were Apples to Apples Jr,

Headbands and Spot It.

As of this date, more RE events are planned!

- April 29th: Gardening event at UUC for all ages, RE families encouraged to attend.
- April 30th: Religious Education Ministry Team meeting, open to the UUC community to plan for the 2023-2024 year.
- May 21st: RE Sunday, our annual multigeneration service to celebrate the activities, learnings and accomplishments in Religious Education this year.

## Stewardship

The theme for this year's Stewardship Campaign was "Our Growing Season" and we measured our progress by adding a stem and flower to the bulb/roots for each \$10,000 milestone we hit. The Chart was created by Carolyn Gamanos, ably assisted by her sons Roman and Francis. As we progressed in increments of \$10,000, flowers were added by Roman and Francis, AJ and Alma Molina with their mother Katherine's help, Matteo and Ben Martinez-Rasekh, Sarah and Fionuala Damon, and Carolyn and Carter Kagan.

Testimonials were given by Katherine Molina-Powell, John Umlauf, and Bobbie Rich with stories about their journey to UUC and its importance in their lives.



As of the end of the Stewardship Drive, we had pledges totaling \$105,470, which exceeded last year and included pledges from 7 non-members! We are very grateful to all who supported our "Growing Season" and look forward to this coming year as one of great promise.

The Committee members were Maria Lassman, Tom Lintern, Ellen Garcia, Bobbie Rich, Kim Farber, John Umlauf and Bonnie Currie.

### Stewardship Celebration Dinner



On April 22<sup>nd</sup>, we gathered in the Sanctuary for food, fun and festivities. The dinner, catered by LaRocca Market, consisted of a delicious cold salmon, Chicken Marsala, brown rice with lots of fresh vegetables and a colorful salad provided by Ellen Garcia. Appetizers and desserts were catered by our own congregation and thanks to all who contributed.

Music was provided by our Pianist, Mike McGrath during the cocktail hour and as back-up for our celebrated singers, Lynne Lane, Norris Wakefield, Dianne Daddona, Elizabeth Jenkins-Sahlin, and The Board of Trustees. Humor was provided by Ann Preston and Bonnie Currie with more chicken jokes than should have been allowed! Madame President, Lynne Lane, in bunny ears, mesh stockings and a cigarette tray offered "Cigars, cigarettes, Tipirillos?" as part of Norris' routine. It was not in her job description!

Clean up and set up was provided by Jerome Bryant and a cast of hundreds, to whom much is owed!



### Emerson Hall Foundation

Our Pro Bono attorney, Judith Ellenthal, has prepared a Certificate of Incorporation, an Organization and First Report, and By-Laws, which were reviewed by Bonnie Currie, President, Maria Lassman, Vice President, and Jay Fountain, Treasurer, with Attorney Ellenthal. Our Secretary, Frances Sink, was unable to join us on the call, but did review the documents. The next step is to submit the finalized documents to the State for approval and then go to an accountant for an application for non-profit (501(c)(3)) status. We are moving along at last!

## Social Souls

UUC's Social Souls group continued to bring people together by inviting newcomers, visitors, and friends to join its congregants at community-building gatherings and social outings.

Social Souls has been offering an evening "Vespers" service on the second Wednesday of each month (see article below). The Vespers services sparked the formation of a Pop-Up Choir rehearsal group accompanied by professional cellist Gunnar Sahlin. Consequently, the Pop-Up Choir initiative served as a catalyst for shared singing in UUC's regular Sunday services.



In coordination with Marc Chan, a professional pianist and composer, Social Souls organized a successful Piano Recital Benefit Concert in the sanctuary to support the Trevor Project and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation's music ministry.



Tony Alam and Norris Wakefield led the Baking and Bonding session in March. Tony shared his great-grandmother's pie-crust recipe and guided guests' baking activities in the concluding session of the Baking and Bonding series.

In March, Social Souls participated in the UU Unconference in Meriden, CT. We utilized this opportunity to share with other participants our community-building insights and our initiatives in bringing people together. We

also planted the seeds for organizing an Unconference at UUC Stamford in the future.

In addition to monthly After-Service Brunches and Community Potlucks, the other important Social Souls events included hiking, a pancake party, job hunters' huddles, a dance party featuring line-dances, and a breakdance hip-hop workshop.

Socials Souls is inviting people to be part of our leadership team by supporting us in our community-building initiative, serving as hosts for our monthly After-Service Brunches and Community Potlucks. Interested people are encouraged to reach out to [Elizabeth Jenkins-Sahlin](#) for further information.



### Vespers Services



If quiet evening contemplation, chanting and music speak to you, consider joining UUC Stamford's third Wednesday of the month Vespers service. Since last fall, a small but growing group of congregants have been gathering to join hearts and voices in this soothing ritual.

First, the sanctuary is illuminated with candles and light, while those who can come early meet with professional cellist Gunnar Sahlin in the Community Room to run through the music

planned for the evening. Through the "magic" of zoom and large screen projection, we then join UU congregants of All Souls Church in Washington, in order to tap into their established tradition.

According to Elizabeth Jenkins-Sahlin, who has worked diligently each month to organize and coordinate Stamford vespers, the goal is to eventually hold our own standing service. Recent steps toward this include our pre-vespers choir practice and live musical accompaniment.

So, if a quiet pause in the activity of your day and a healing contemplative evening with friends hold appeal, join us next month for this soothing experience. Become a part of another growing ritual here at UUC Stamford.

## Afternoon Adventurers Step Out to the Bruce Museum

In late March, a small group of congregants gathered at Zody's Restaurant in Stamford. The goal was two-fold: to re-establish a long-time tradition of casual lunches at this popular dining spot and to brainstorm ideas for afternoon outings that could create further bonding opportunity, and also be extended to the broader congregation.

Following the recommendation of Helene Devine, the diners agreed to visit the newly renovated Bruce Museum. The Bruce is a long-time favorite for locals, particularly Bob Nixon, who recounted his many trips over the years. (Despite being awed by the recent renovation and expansion of the museum, Bob did have a moment's pause upon realizing that his beloved dinosaur statues had been relegated to a new spot).



The Penguin exhibit was a natural draw for all – where we learned there are close to two dozen different species and that Penguins have more feathers than any other type of bird. Yes, Penguins are birds!



While some of the group wandered slowly through the Museum, others raced from room to room. Wayne Esquivel seemed to be running counter to the flow of the rest of the group as he circled the statues several times in search of the penguins. Ann Preston lingered alone to appreciate the varied art collection, which included paintings by Matisse, Childe Hassam, Emile Carlson, among other famous Impressionists.

Rev. Terri was particularly impressed with the new “Then Is Now: Contemporary

Black Art in America” exhibit, which featured the work of close to twenty black artists, showcasing pieces created from the late 1960's to as recently as 2021.

After more than two hours, the museum-going UU's were ready for lunch, which was enjoyed dining alfresco on an uncharacteristically warm day. While gathered to eat (hmmm, a recurring theme with this group), the chatter was light and informative, and Don Perley (our own resident artist) shared that he had just launched a new website showcasing his work!

The Bruce made for a pleasant outing, and with so much on display, the Adventurers may be returning soon! In the meantime, join us at Zody's on the third Wednesday of the month and share your own outing ideas, or reach out directly to Bonnie Currie.

### **Social Action Realized -- UUC Kitchen Put to the Test**

Learning more about homelessness and the housing crisis in our community leads naturally to the question, "What can we do now to help?" When Bob Nixon, Bonnie Currie and Rev Terri toured the Pacific House, a self-sustaining, multi-unit homeless facility in downtown Stamford, they soon discovered a way to engage. They quickly signed on the dotted line to prepare and serve a meal to an anticipated group of 70 Pacific House residents.

Sign-up sheets were posted in the community room, and volunteers awaited their marching orders. Norris Wakefield soon surfaced as our sergeant, outlining the menu, shopping for provisions, and handing out assignments. Norris' go-to chicken recipe from childhood (infinitely scalable, tasty, and evocative of warm family gatherings), became the recipe du jour.

Volunteers were deployed to a number of stations – the UUC kitchen found Norris and Helen Devine adeptly spreading, stuffing and rolling chicken breasts, with assistance from Elizabeth Jenkins-Sahlin – who also stopped periodically to fill the kitchen with her rendition of Spirit of Life.

Pam Bruno and Lynne Lane took to their own kitchens to prepare five pounds of rice each, while Jay Fountain whipped up eight trays of his signature cornbread with jalapenos. The sides "met" the main course at the appointed hour at Pacific House and the UUC cooking crew joined forces with additional volunteer servers, as the action began.

We received rave reviews for our efforts, and hearty thanks and blessings from many of the Pacific House residents. After the meal, Lynne circled the dining room serving mini cupcakes, a welcomed treat.

One resident returned our generosity with an offer to sing, breaking into throaty renditions of "Amen" and "Amazing Grace."

"I was deeply touched by this act of service", said Lynne, while others echoed her sentiment. "It's one thing to identify problems and advocate for change, and another to step up and serve in a very personal way."

That said, our congregational, ad-hoc "Social Action Task Force on Homelessness" is poised to do more.



According to Bob Nixon, we will continue to work to build relationships with community partners, congregations, and advocates who share our concerns. And while providing support at the local level, at the state level we will strongly advocate for full funding of the emergency housing response system.

Representatives of Pacific House will be joining us on Sunday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, to share about their work. We're also in the midst of collecting donations for a Basket of Hope which will provide items to an individual or family moving out of the shelter to more permanent housing. Please contact [Trina Wong](#) for details.

For more information, or to get involved with other concerned congregants, contact [Rev. Terri Pahucki](#).