We are a few weeks into the worst pandemic of our lifetime (unless you happen to have been born before 1918). The world has already changed in profound and previously unimaginable ways, and it will continue to change, as the first wave of the pandemic washes over us. We are lucky to live in a state with a governor who responded quickly and forcefully to this public health emergency, but still, I am aware that as hard and disruptive as the current stay-at-home guidelines are, the worst is yet to come.

I remind myself daily that indeed this is why I went into the vocation of ministry: I have felt for a long time that there was a storm coming, though this was not the storm I was imagining, and now it’s here. I wanted, and still want, to be a person who can support others in the storm. I think many of us who are Unitarian Universalist have similar desires: we want to serve, we want to be of use, we want to care for others. This is a beautiful part of who we are as Unitarian Universalists— who YOU are. And I know each of us is doing our best to support others. Even by staying home we are supporting others.

I came across an article this week that really struck me, written by Aisha S. Ahmad for The Chronicle of Higher Education. Dr. Ahmad describes the stages of living through a catastrophic time, and it seems clear that most of us, and certainly our society as a whole, are still in her first stage, what she calls “security”. She writes:

“Your first few days and weeks in a crisis are crucial, and you should make ample room to allow for a mental adjustment. It is perfectly normal and appropriate to feel bad and lost during this initial transition. Consider it a good thing that you are not in denial, and that you are allowing yourself to work through the anxiety. No sane person feels good during a global disaster, so be grateful for the discomfort of your sanity. At this stage, I would focus on food, family, friends, and maybe fitness...Know that you are not failing. Let go of all of the profoundly daft
Take Care, Go Slow, Be Kind, continued...

ideas you have about what you should be doing right now. Instead, focus...on your physical and psychological security.

In other words, if you are not as productive as you would like to be right now, if you are anxious and distracted and trying to make sure that you and your family are safe, this is exactly where you should be. Some may be in her second stage already: “the mental shift”, where you are adjusting to the reality of the situation. But everyone adjusts at their own pace and due to their own circumstances. She writes this:

Now more than ever, we must abandon the performative and embrace the authentic. Our essential mental shifts require humility and patience. Focus on real internal change. These human transformations will be honest, raw, ugly, hopeful, frustrated, beautiful, and divine. ... Be slow. Let this distract you. Let it change how you think and how you see the world. Because the world is our work. And so, may this tragedy tear down all our faulty assumptions and give us the courage of bold new ideas.

In closing, let’s remember we are in times like we have never known before. The world, and our own lives, will be changed irrevocably. Give yourself, and the people around you, the space and time and understanding to make these massive shifts. Kindness is everything.
Greetings of Spring to you all!

Most years, when I see the early flowers starting to challenge the snow, it brings a smile because I know temperate weather is soon to follow. And then, as the snow and cold relent, the flowers rise. Their emergence feels comfortably familiar, yet wondrously new.

This spring is like no other, but not desirably so. We, as a congregation, a community, a world, have not been tempered in quite this way before. Adjustments are essential, and that is certainly true for your UUCUC staff and church leadership. We have been finding solutions and working diligently to support the church and take care of each other during Illinois’ shelter-in-place order.

I am ever grateful to Rev. Florence Caplow and the fantastic UUCUC staff for their resilience as daily and even hourly changes need to be managed. I am also grateful to all of the UUCUC friends and members that continue to find new ways to connect and serve their groups, the church, the community, and each other. You all are inspirations, and I am lifted by the strength and compassion that I see in this community.

Due to the pandemic’s progression, the board postponed the congregation’s annual meeting, which historically has been held in early May. We haven’t set an exact date yet, but to ensure congregational safety and ability to participate, the board will schedule it on or after June 7, pending the guidance of public health professionals. We are committed to do our best to minimize disruptions to the church and its activities.

You have entrusted the board to guide the administration and operation of the church, and we take that responsibility to heart. While recently normal everyday activities are being reimagined, redesigned, and yes, often rescheduled, we will continue to find new ways to adapt together. Part of our reimagining will be how we keep in connection with you. For example, leaders of the church will be reaching out to members directly by phone. We want to know how you are doing and how our new on-line church activities are working for you. Please also share your thoughts at any time about how we are doing and where improvements could be made. You can reach me directly at chair@uucuc.org.

We will emerge. And when we do, some things will remain the same, some will not. One thing that will remain is this very intentional community of love, action, and support. May it continue to rise and thrive.

With wishes of kindness, wellness, and spring flowers to you all!

Randy Locke
2019-2020 Chair
UUCUC Board of Trustees

Greetings From Your Board Of Trustees
Randy Locke, Chair, Board of Trustees
Transitions Come In All Shapes And Sizes
Michele Townsend Grove, Interim Director of Religious Education

Since August 2018, UUCUC has engaged in an intentional transition process for its lifespan religious education program. This process includes:

- Open and honest conversations about the past and present religious education programs
- Some religious education experiments in all age religious education
- Dreaming about the future. What do we want religious education to look like in the next 5-10 years?

Much of this work is woven into the larger visioning work which is coordinated by UUCUC’s Dream Team. The Religious Education Exploring the Future (REEF) transition team is an integral part of the Dream Team and constantly brings the religious education transition process into the conversation.

I am grateful for REEF’s commitment, vision and leadership. Currently, they are looking at the current Dream Team’s Nine Vision Statements to discern what they say about the future of lifespan religious education. In the fall 2020, everyone will have an opportunity to dream about UUCUC’s religious education future using the congregation’s mission and vision as a guide. The dreams will help guide the search for a new religious education professional which is set to take place between January and May 2021.

What a joy and challenge to journey with this congregation during this time! I write this article at the beginning of an unknown period of community isolation and physical distancing. We are all feeling this isolation in different ways and learning how to adapt to new ways of being community. There is no doubt that transitions come in all shapes and sizes. As we deal with one transition, others appear- and we juggle our ability to navigate and adapt. It is my hope that we can continue to navigate life and church transitions in healthy and productive ways. You are in my thoughts and prayers.

Religious Education Council
In August 2019, the new Religious Education Council was born with a gathering of twenty people from all areas of lifespan religious education. This new model incorporates children, youth, adult and multi-generational learning under one leadership body. If you wish to see how the Religious education council works, check out the PREZI slide show found on the Religious education council page of the church’s website.

The model may seem complex, but the reality is that it is quite simple. Its success lies in the fact that it can operate efficiently with five keys leaders and the religious education staff. Then, as we add leaders and voices to the council, lifespan religious education opportunities expand! The RE Council can shrink and grow with the number of people willing to work with us. We meet only 3 times a year (next meeting will be April 18th) with small groups doing work in between.

The council would benefit from your leadership, expertise and passions. If you have an interest in making lifespan religious education a vital part of this congregation’s mission, we invite you to join us! To begin, all you need is your passion. We offer training and the opportunity to work collaboratively on a lifespan religious education vision! The possibilities are endless!
Rising to the Call of Spring

Sherry Bohlen, Director of Congregational Engagement

With the coming of Spring and the re-awakening of the world from its long winter slumber, I invite you to join me in celebrating the birth of new ways of connecting within our UUCUC community. While we may be sheltering in place, members and friends of UUCUC are finding ways to connect and support each other through the challenge.

Many have responded to the introduction of our new Buddy System where individuals are paired up with another member of our church community. Buddies commit to connect with each other every day by phone, text or email to confirm that needs are being met and to provide needed social support.

One “Buddy” recently commented to me: “Connecting with my Buddy is a highlight of my day. It’s a daily reminder of the wonderful community that we can return to when this is all over. Plus I live alone and I am comforted to know that someone will be checking in with me each day.”

Others have found comfort in our Worshipful Listening and Check-In Zoom gatherings. Worshipful Listening gatherings routinely include a chalice lighting and reading, opportunity for topic-prompted discussion, perhaps a meditation or song and a closing reading. Also watch on Facebook for details and a link to these gatherings.

Many have enjoyed the comradery available on our Fellowship Hour Zoom gatherings at 11:30 am immediately following our online Sunday Service. Find a link to our online Sunday Service HERE. Then scroll down on the Sunday Service page for a link to Fellowship Hour. A direct link to Fellowship Hour is always posted at the end of our live stream Sunday Service as well.

As people log onto our Fellowship Hour, my heart warms as I watch faces of community members near and dear to my heart pop up on my screen. It’s not the same as a hug, but – given our circumstances – I’m grateful.

And now our latest opportunity to make community connection is our Warm Line number where a team of staff and community members trained in deep listening are standing by 24 hours per day to take your calls. Dial 1-800-705-8158 to speak with a member of our Warm Line Team about something that is worrying you, to simply make a human connection, to share a concern, to find out about resources in the community, or even to find out what you can do if you are worried you or someone in your family might be sick with COVID-19.

Your UUCUC community is here for you. And, while it might sound trite and overused, we are indeed all in this together and we are called by whatever we hold sacred to be of service to each other in whatever way we responsibly can.

If there are other needs your UUCUC community can meet, please let us know. We’ll do our best to rise to the call of your concern just as the daffodils in my back yard are bursting forth and rising to the call of Spring. Blessed Be.
Rev. Florence Caplow kicked off this year’s Generosity Campaign with these words:

“This is a crossroads, a moment to dream big and make a leap to a new way of sharing ministry, where we can shine even brighter for each other, for this community, and beyond.

These words were prophetic, but not in the way we imagined. Rev. Florence was speaking about our dream to add a new part-time minister to our staff in order to support our vital programs, ministries, and social justice work. The congregation said “yes” to shared ministry. 137 individuals joined the Leadership Circle by increasing their pledges by 15% or more and/or by pledging a gift for our Ministerial set aside fund. Yet, today all of our thoughts turn to the pandemic as we individually and collectively respond to this challenge.

We have taken a leap to a new way of sharing ministry, but not the leap we imagined. We are learning to support one another via zoom, calls, and social solidarity as many of us stay home to protect ourselves and our community. We are grateful to each person who is still providing vital services and to each person who is helping others. And in some areas, we are doing ordinary things in extraordinary times. Our Board and other leaders are still trying to manage the church budget and plan.

We are implementing giving by text, credit and debit cards to make it easier to give during online services to our shared offering and to the church. You may also donate online or by mailing a check to the church. Online you can give to multiple funds at the same time (e.g. social action and unpledged donation). If you are sending a check, write on the memo line or send us a note. We continue to pay our staff. Our members and friends, who are able, continue to submit pledges and donations. The ordinary is necessary and comforting, and extraordinary. Thank you!

If you would like to pledge, you may pledge online here or contact me at (217) 649-5049 or at generosity@uucuc.org. Please call me if you have any questions or concerns about generosity or just want to talk. You know that I will be at home.
Mission And Vision Re-Examined—Our New Mandala And Vision Statements
Becky Densmore and Karen Folk, Dream Team Members

“Build community. Seek inspiration. Promote justice. Find peace.” This is and has been the mission at UUCUC since 2005. It clarifies our congregation’s purpose and serves as a lens to define our reason for being. Over the past year, reflections initiated by the Dream Team taskforce affirmed that our mission continues to provide meaning and identity for UUCUC as a community.

Like our mission statement, UUCUC’s nine new visions reflect our dreams and the best of what our congregation would like to become. The shared vision, gathered and refined from many congregational voices over the past 18 months, reflects our strong caring community and our desire to extend that care to others. The more we use these visions to set goals for the next five years, the more likely our church will continue to thrive.

Both our mission and visions have been presented to the congregation in a mandala reminiscent of Buddhist and Hindu traditions. The circular design denotes our nine visions anchored by our four mission statements as they overlap and intersect with each other. These nine themes are never ‘done’ as they represent our dreams of what we can be. Can one ever learn all there is to learn? Can we truly be finished with mobilizing and uniting people? Should we close our doors because we only have space for a prescribed number?

These visions have been distilled from your individual voices and represent our collective declaration of our hopes for UUCUC’s future. The next steps are to set broad goals and associated action plans to guide us into the next five years. The goals will likely impact more than one of our interconnected visions included within the mandala. We will need to engage in innovative, creative brainstorming and teamwork to set priorities and achieve what we have envisioned together.
Hospitality Team As Shared Ministry

Peggy Patten, Hospitality Team Coordinator

Who are the folks wearing the rainbow lanyards on Sunday morning? They are members of our Hospitality Teams. Our Hospitality Teams started 5 years ago to support our Sunday worship & fellowship experience by welcoming, ushering, ringing our bell, & providing decorations & snacks each week. Each of the six Hospitality Teams is responsible for two months of Sunday service during the year. There are 30-40 members on each Team to share in the duties. This year’s Hospitality Team co leaders are: Pam Richart & Jenna Zeidler (Team A), Jen Livingston & AJ Herzog (Team B), Marcy Joncich & Wendy Graves (Team C), Anne Sharpe & Priscilla Kron (Team D), Katie Madigan & Kathy Robinson (Team E), & Gail Hueting & Kelly Halcom (Team F). We thank them for their service.

If you are not already on a Hospitality Team, consider joining one. They are a critical part of our shared ministry & a good way to connect with others at UUCUC. When we are again gathered at UUCUC you can stop by the Hub Table on Sunday morning to sign up for a Hospitality Team (or to find out which Team you are already on), or contact Peggy Patten, mspeggypatten@gmail.com.
Spring Meditation

Evin Carvill Ziemer courtesy of the UUA

Our Souls Speak Spring!

If we lived in another climate
Our souls might speak other languages
We might speak oasis or permafrost, dry season or monsoon

But our souls speak spring
Our souls speak green shoots pushing through last year’s leaves
Our souls speak flower buds stretching to sun
Our souls speak mud puddle and nest building, damp earth and worm castings, tiny green leaves
and frog choruses

We speak spring because spring sings in us

We gather to nurture our faith in our own growing
Our own courage to push through
Our own blossoming in beauty
Our own small part in the spring of this world

Come, let us worship together
Just For Fun! Easter Egg Chalice Coloring Page

Courtesy of David Snedden via UUA
We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Our Sunday Services

Our services are scheduled to be live streamed on Sunday at 10:15 a.m.—https://uucuc.org/worship/livestream-at-uucuc/. If you would like to participate in chatting with other congregants while the service is live streaming, you can also view the service on our YouTube channel.

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