



The BEACON

News from the Unitarian Church of Lincoln • August 2020

Words from our Minister

“The social realization of these ideas is a continual problem and a continual opportunity”

—Jurgen Moltmann¹

Summer in Unitarian Universalist congregations is traditionally a time of planning for the coming congregational year. Staff and lay leaders take leave time, think up new ideas, and relax. This year, as is the case in so many areas, things look a little different.

We have two ongoing worship series this month: on Sunday morning, we are participating in the Unitarian Universalist Summer Worship Cooperative, along with about a dozen UU congregations across the Midwest, sharing worship services among our congregations. We also have a Thursday night worship series, led by our worship associates, who are each reflecting on the theme of Belonging.

We are doing these things so that we can have space and time to be intentional about the coming year. There is considerable uncertainty around the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of this writing, COVID-19 infections are increasing in Lancaster County. This will have an effect on many aspects of life in Lincoln, including our congregation. While the situation is fluid enough that clear predictions are a fools errand, it seems likely that - at minimum - we will have a major online presence through the coming church year.

The Reform theologian Jurgen Moltmann described the nature of a liberated and liberating church as ‘a continual problem and a continual opportunity.’ This phrase has stayed with me the last few weeks. While COVID-19 is, indisputably, a continual problem, this online pivot we’ve undertaken is also a continual opportunity. It opens up new ways of relating to each other, like the Summer Worship Cooperative, or co-teaching a course with a colleague of mine from North Carolina. What might it look like to go through a programmatic year online, not simply as a response to a disaster, but as an opportunity to grow our capacity as a community?

Over the next month, we will be opening up the conversation about what the next year looks like. Through a congregational survey and town halls (on July 30 and August 2), we will ask: what has gone well in this online pivot? What has been challenging? What do you want to see from the congregation over the next year? How are you excited to get involved?

Each year in a congregation holds promise, opportunity, and challenge. This year, with a pandemic, escalating inequality, and a Federal election, holds more challenge than most - but also tremendous opportunity.

How will you be a part of it?

- Oscar

¹ Moltmann, *The Church*, 106

Summer Sunday Services

We are premiering these Summer Sunday Services on our YouTube channel at 10:00AM Central each week.

www.youtube.com/unitarianchurchoflincoln

August 2 - "The Wisdom to Know the Difference" Rose Schwab, Shawnee Mission, KS

As religious people, we are not only called to the free and responsible search for truth and meaning, but also to the deep and searching moral inventory. As people the world over struggle to look internally at the ways systemic racism has affected communities of color, we can look to the wisdom of other self-help programs for insights into the difficult work of unworking. Please join us for a service about healing from and coming out of addiction, self-hatred, and self-harm, originally aired during the month of April, 2020. May the wisdoms of addiction ministries shed light on the issues that we as a globe face today, breaking us open to more honest, and open dialogue.

August 9 - "Protest and Prayer: Transformed by Courageous Love" Sarah Ogelsby-Dunnegan, Topeka, KS

The tools we need to transform our communities are the tools of courageous love. Although we think of protest and prayer as different tools, what if we could see protest as a form of prayer and prayer as a form of protest? Rev. Sarah Ogelsby-Dunnegan shares her experiences of the intersections between prayer and protest and the power of courageous love to transform each of us and all of us as people and communities working for justice and peace.

August 16 - "Anchored Over the Horizon" Oscar Sinclair, Lincoln, NE

Vaclav Havel wrote that hope ... "transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons." How do we hold fast to hope, even when it is distant? The Rev. Oscar Sinclair serves the Unitarian Church of Lincoln, Nebraska, and will be joined in leading worship by staff and lay leaders of the Unitarian Church of Lincoln.

August 23 - "Persons or a People?: Tensions Between Individuality & Community in our Churches & Culture" Jonalu Johnstone, Manhattan, KS

The tension between individuality and community crops up everywhere — in our response to the pandemic, in our reactions to racism, in running our congregations. Unitarian Universalists steeped in individualism sometimes struggle with how to make ourselves into a community. How do we equip ourselves to create balance between being persons and being a people? The Rev. Jonalu Johnstone serves as Developmental Minister of the UU Fellowship of Manhattan, KS, and is joined by Music Director Renea Brown and lay members of UUFM.

August 30 - "Making Real Community" Kevin Jagoe, BuxMont PA

What does it mean to be part of a community and how do we know when we are in fact part of such a thing? Our Great Pause as a society has called into question many of our prior assumptions about religious congregations and all sorts of other ways we are, or are not, part of communities. The Rev. Kevin W. Jagoe serves BuxMont Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Warrington, PA as their minister and is joined by Music Director John Hook, Accompanist Margaret Lea, and lay members of the BuxMont community.

President's Message

from Trevor Jones, Board of Trustees President

At the end of June I attended my first General Assembly (GA)-- the annual meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). This meeting was held entirely online, and like democracy itself, I found it both fascinating and frustrating. It is an enormous challenge to connect thousands of people remotely and then successfully engage them in meaningful discussion.

Online conferencing does many things well, but facilitating the free exchange of ideas is not one of them. I think the UUA staff did an amazing job handling technical difficulties with tact and humor, but it was still a bizarre experience. At one point I was one of over 400 people in a chat room called "Birch" discussing potential changes to socially responsible investment policies. Simultaneously thousands of other UU's were in different chat rooms (also named for types of trees) discussing the same issue. When we came together to vote, it was clear that each chat group had interpreted what we were voting on differently! The result was messy and aggravating, but miraculously the work still got done.

Much more happened at GA than I was able to take in, but perhaps the most important thing you

should know about is the work completed by the Commission on Institutional Change. For several years, the Commission has been working on a list of recommendations for improving the UUA. At GA they released their final report: "Widening the Circle of Concern."

This document includes over a hundred wide-ranging recommendations for improving the UUA. The recommendations are much broader than improving operations and hiring practices. "Widening the Circle of Concern" is a road map for improving how the UUA functions at all levels -- internally, with congregations, and with the world at large. As such, the document is relevant to our work at the Unitarian Church of Lincoln, including suggestions on how we can improve our own anti-racism work, make our congregation more welcoming, and much more. The report is much too long to read in its entirety, but I do recommend you take a look at some of the headings and read about a few topics that interest you.

Even though we remain physically apart, there is still much we can do to move forward together. Please stay safe, stay connected, and do not lose hope!

WIDENING THE CIRCLE OF CONCERN:

<https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening>

Open Office Hour

Wednesdays at NOON on Zoom

Stop by Open Office Hour every Wednesday from noon to 1:00PM. We are available to help you. We can answer questions or point you in the right direction! Sometimes people stop by just to let us know how they are doing and we appreciate that, too! The Zoom link is sent out in the daily eblast each Tuesday.

BUILDING PROTOCOL

We continue to track who is inside the building. If you have something that you need to retrieve, drop off, or fix in the building, you must contact the [church office](#) in advance to let us know of your plans.

If you would like to see the Building Protocol effective since March 18, 2020, it is [HERE](#).

RELIGIOUS GROWTH & LEARNING MINISTRY

Perfection Not Expected

The following was part of one of my emails to parents this last month:

I'd like to share with you a story which I use often when I lead my teacher trainings.

When we were at Faith United Methodist Church while our own building was under construction, I stepped into a classroom when a teacher told me they were struggling with a student. I came into the class to find the student had his head on the desk and was not engaging in class. He had been pounding his fist on the table. He had tears in his eyes. The teacher told me, "He's being difficult. I don't know what to do because I have all these other children to work with". The assistant at the time also was busy with the other children.

I took the boy out of the classroom - sometimes simply changing the environment can help. "What's going on?" I asked. "I'm ready to listen to you."

What he said next has stuck with me for years. "I just wanted my picture to be perfect." This hit me right in the heart. How often have we worked on something and tried and tried and just couldn't get it 'perfect'? It is a long life lesson to let things go. To recognize that sometimes we need to practice before we get something done the way that we want it 'just right'. Or to simply realize it is something we may never perfect. I used to practice piano and eventually gave up. I couldn't read music. It just wasn't my thing. However, for a long stretch of time, I practiced dance for hours and hours every week. I never was 'perfect', but at one point when I was taking 8 classes per week, I like to think that I sure was doing a great job. More than anything, it FELT good to do it, no matter how 'perfect' the moves may have been or not. The moral of the story is two-fold. A child can teach an

adult just as much if not more than adults can teach children. Also that an adult simply asking "What's going on?" can make a big difference (we never know what is going through their minds). However, to the point of the theme of 'effort', I am always reminded that perfection is rarely attainable.

Our children and youth need you right now. They need to stay connected with the adults who care about them from this community. You do not need to be perfect. You just need to be PRESENT.

Please consider volunteering in our program. Contact me for more information.

religiousgrowth@unitarianlincoln.org

Peace, Faith, and Love, Chelsea

Volunteers Needed

From the comfort of your own home.... In your living room... or wherever you like to set up!

K-5: I'm looking for 8 volunteers to facilitate ONLY 5 times online through Zoom on Sunday Mornings at 11:00AM!

Middle and High School: I'm looking for 8 volunteers to commit to ONLY 5 times assisting online through Zoom on Wednesday and Thursday nights, time TBD. We'll be combining with a church in Virginia! (You are totally welcome to do more than 4 if you would like!) The technology side is run for you... All you have to do is show up!

*IF we do come back to the building I would reach out to volunteers individually to explore their willingness to teach in-person. Your commitment for now is ONLY for online and TBD for in-person.

Contact Chelsea Krafka, Director of Religious Education, for more information:
religiousgrowth@unitarianlincoln.org

Lay Pastoral Care Team and Friendly Faces

From Elizabeth Meyer and Jackie Egan

Has it been nearly five months since we began response to the global pandemic? Hard to imagine that we've been separated from one another for that long. We hope you are well and active—socially distanced and masked! Peculiar times!

I (Jackie) keep thinking back over my lifetime and pondering the peculiarities of other times. End of WWII, my parents went back to school and we lived in student housing in Albuquerque. Times during the Korean and Vietnam Wars lent a different lens. Kennedy's and Martin Luther King Jr.'s deaths. Each era felt/feels different, didn't it? What have we learned? What do we regret? What do you remember of your challenging or unusual times?

Would you like to chat with someone to share those memories or to talk about how you are making changes now in light of the pandemic? A Friendly Faces volunteer would love to hear your stories or to catch up on what is new. Call me (Jackie) and I can connect you with a Friendly Face for just such a conversation. I can be reached at 402.435.6111 or egan@neb.rr.com or 8218 Stockwell 68506.

Sometimes when life throws us a curve like the pandemic has, we need more than a chat; we need a supportive ear from someone who can help us think through the challenges we're facing. Members of the Lay Pastoral Care Team are available to talk by telephone and by Zoom. The easiest way to connect with a member of the Lay Pastoral Care Team is to send an email to pastoralcare@unitarianlincoln.org or call Elizabeth Meyer at 402.405.6725.

Lay Pastoral Care Team members have been trained by Oscar to provide support to church members and friends, as an adjunct to his ministerial support. If you are interested in being trained, please send an email or call Elizabeth. The next training session is in the planning stage, likely in early August.

We wish you well! And would love to hear from you!

Save the Date: Virtual Congregational Retreat

September 3 - 6, 2020

Mark your calendars for UCL's first virtual congregational retreat. We will have a series of events kicking off the congregational year (worship, social, and educational.) More details to follow in your daily eBlasts.

Thursday September 3, 2020

7:00-8:00 Opening Worship, "Ingathering"

Friday September 4, 2020

9:00-9:30 Spiritual Practice

2:00-4:00 "Daily Video Update: Live!" with Q&A

7:00- ? UCL Game Night

Saturday September 5, 2020

9:00-9:30 Spiritual Practice

10:00-11:00 Workshop slot 1

11:00-1:00 Lunch Break

1:00-2:00 Workshop slot 2

2:00-3:00 Workshop slot 3

4:00-5:30 Moderated panel discussion

"How are we a church in the pandemic?"

7:00-9:00 UCL Movie Night

Sunday September 6, 2020

9:00-9:45 New Member Welcome &

Coffee Hour

10:00-11:00 Closing Worship, "Life Calls Us On"

11:00-12:00 Religious Education

Green Corner

From Linda Brown

Plants for Birds: Change your Yard, Community, and Climate with Native Plants!

Tuesday, August 25th • 6:30PM - 8:00PM

We invite you to join us for a presentation about native plants, birds, and a promising new faith coalition. This event is kindly hosted by the Green Sanctuary Committee at Unitarian Church of Lincoln and the Green at Heart team from Westminster Presbyterian. The first half of the event will be a Zoom presentation from the Audubon Nebraska Plants for Birds team, Cacey Wilken and Jason "the Birdnerd" St. Sauver, followed by time for questions and discussion.

The presentation will include information about the Plants for Birds program, native plantings, advocating for native plant use at city and state level, and a growing vision for a faith coalition centered on affecting the climate crisis by using or advocating for native plants on the urban and suburban landscape. Our hope is to foster discussion and excitement around collective and individual action in support of the climate change movement in Lincoln's faith community and beyond.

To register and receive THE Zoom link, please email your name, email, and PLANTS FOR BIRDS scp@audubon.org.



Showing Up for Social Justice

From Jackie Kehl

This month we:

- Joined UUs for Social Justice to write virtual letters to Senators Fischer and Sasse urging them to support legislation related to the Justice in Policing Act and to support the bipartisan amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act to stop the Pentagon from providing free military equipment to civilian police departments.
- Participated in a forum with Civic Nebraska and the Lancaster County Election Commission about voting rights.

Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, August 19 • 7:00PM • Zoom

All are welcome. If you would like to join us, please contact Jackie Kehl jekehl@hotmail.com so that she can send you the Zoom link.

Write Here! Write Now!

Write Here! Write Now! is taking a break in August and will return in September. The four main policies Civic Nebraska is working on are resisting voter ID, expanding vote-by-mail, nonpartisan redistricting, and immediate restoration of voting rights to felons who have completed their sentence and parole.

For the November election, all Lincoln registered voters will receive a card to complete and return to request a vote-by-mail ballot. Voter registration information and application to vote from home can be found at civicnebraska.vote. You can also check your registration status and register to vote there.

Movie Poll Winner – 13th!

Sunday, August 9 • 7:00PM • Zoom

The winner of the movie poll for an August showing was 13th, Ava DuVernay's powerful documentary that argues, although slavery was abolished in 1865, a loophole within the thirteenth amendment has allowed pernicious forms of enslavement—mass incarceration, for example—to exist within American institutions. The film traces the history of over 150 years of incarceration and disempowerment of minority communities in our country, culminating in racially coded rhetoric of “law and order” and the “war on crime.”

The movie runs an hour and a half, will be shown via ZOOM on Sunday (also a poll winner), August 9 at 7:00PM with discussion to follow. If you'd like a copy of the discussion questions prior to the showing, contact Jackie Kehl, jekeh1@hotmail.com or Mary K Stillwell, marykstillwell@gmail.com. Watch the Eblast for the Zoom link.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the viewing and discussion of Just Mercy in July and participated in the movie poll for August. Everyone is welcome; send out the word! - Mary K Stillwell



Ready For Beloved Conversations?

UCL Task Force for Dismantling White Supremacy

During this sheltering time, Task Force members are plowing through a shelf's worth of books to become better-informed leaders, preparing to help all of us imperfectly undertake the work of dismantling white supremacy. Task Force members have committed to take up Layla F. Saad's *Me and White Supremacy* as a "common read" to better ground our anti-racist work as a team.

In June, most Task Force members wrote their personal biographies of race, and/or attended UUA general assembly sessions where they engaged in intensive listening, learning and sharing about race beside black, indigenous and people of color in UU leadership. Check our Facebook social group, where Morissa Raymond will begin regular posting on the church's social page to share some of what we've learned. Frank Edler is in the process of contacting individuals who hold our church's past

racial justice history. Please let Frank know your stories: frankhwedler@gmail.com

Early in July, we fielded a request and asked the board of trustees about funding a Black Lives Matter sign for our building. We are excited that the Board of Trustees and the Program Council have agreed to act on this long omission and make our support visible on the A Street corridor.

Soon, you will have a new opportunity to join in our work!

Beloved Conversations is a program that other UU churches have undertaken as a means of diving deep into anti-racism (the importance of which Lori Straatmann mentioned last month). With enough enrollment in Beloved Conversations, we can offer a discount on registration.

Scholarship funds will also be available thanks to a matching grant from Judy Cole Funds. Beloved Conversations, Part 1: Within begins this fall and those who complete it can continue with Part 2: Amongst. Part 3 is TBD.

Milestones, Millstones and Stepping Stones



Congratulations to Denise Craig on being appointed to the position of principal at the Bryan Community Focus Program. See the article in the Lincoln Journal Star, July 10, 2020.

We have learned that Luther Davis (Dave) Clements, long-time member and previous board president, died March 26, 2019.

Please join us to honor the legacy of long-time member Amy Birky. The Unitarian Church of Lincoln will host a celebration of life for Amy at 4:00PM Saturday, August 1. The service will be officiated by the Rev. Oscar Sinclair.

It will be live-streamed via Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/99602056287>. You may also use your telephone to call in and listen to the service by calling (312) 626-6799 and entering the Meeting ID: 996 0205 6287.

if you have any questions, please contact Kelly: MemberAdmin@unitarianlincoln.org

The Beacon is published monthly. Newsletter deadline for submissions is the 18th of each month to news@unitarianlincoln.org. The Beacon is available online at www.unitarianlincoln.org/newsletter.

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