

Unitarian Universalists of Charlestown

Newsletter July 2024

“Friend: the one who sees the beauty, even in the brokenness, and reflects that to us, like a mirror.” Rev Kim K. Crawford Harvie

Our July Activities

All UUC activities are now in person except for the planning meeting. Opportunities to watch other Sunday services and to attend Lectio Divina by Zoom at Channing are still available. Call Bonnie for more information.

Zoom events (newcomers welcome, contact Bonnie for the Zoom information)

July 10 Planning and Caring team 3:00
July TBA Lectio Divina with Channing, 7:00,

In-person events

July 1 Women’s Group meeting, Music Room, 10:00-11:30
July 8 Discussion group with Chaplain Anthony Jenkins, Music Room, 3:30-5:00
July 15 Social Hour, Music Room, 3:00-4:30
July 19, Third Friday lunch at the Fireside 11:30
July 24 Poetry Group with Bill, Music Room, 2:30-4:00
July 28 Monthly service, Music Room at 1:30 with Rev Karyn Marsh

What Now? by Bonnie Kawecki

First, the revised UUA bylaws passed by a vote of 80.2% or 2025 members of the General Assembly representatives from many different congregations. This will change the Principles and Sources in the current UUA bylaws and a few other parts of the bylaws as well. This change in UUA thinking and probably that of Baltimore UU will not necessarily change our focus on what we do best, *Caring* and *Learning*, which are important parts of our fellowship. You’ll find more about this on page 3.

Our last planned service with Rev Karyn Marsh and our last discussion group with Rev Anthony Jenkins will happen in July. While both Karyn and Anthony may return occasionally, they are both going to new full-time positions at UU congregations. In August we will meet Seminarian SarahRuth Wekoye Davis who is presently the intern at Towson UU and is considering joining us for our discussion group and some services.



Staying Connected and Supporting Others

If you need information about visiting at Wilton Overlook or Caton Woods, you can call 410-247-9700. You can also call Bonnie if you need information about any of our Continuing Care friends.

Is there more you can do? Even notes or phone calls would be appreciated. If you can help, call Bonnie 443-833-3679 or Lois 410-916-0036.

If you would like to contact a UU minister or chaplain, call or email Bonnie and she’ll give you some contacts.

If you would like to help lead part of a service, call Bonnie or if you’d like to help bring flowers, a plant or cookies, call Lois 410-916-0036.

A Newsletter Change: Our UUC fellowship enjoys reading about what’s going on in our lives. Bonnie appreciates notes or calls with any news. Suggestions for joys are appreciated, even ideas for TV shows or movies. Personal stories such as medical challenges or family news are not put in the newsletter. These are distributed by email or phone calls.

UUC July Birthdays

4	Lucy Carey
5	Doris Fountain
28	Walt Howe

If you would like to be on our birthday list, or need a copy of our list, call Gil Fisher 410-314-2482. There are updated lists in our cabinets in the Music Room.

June Events in Our Fellowship

If you missed any of the following events, you might be able to get a text from someone who was there.

Tidbits from some of our June meetings:

The women's group decided to make lunch at the Fireside on the 3rd Friday at 11:30 a regular activity of our UUC monthly schedule. It will no longer be only women as men are welcome. It will now be called the Third Friday Luncheon.

Discussion Group with Chaplain Anthony Jenkins:

The discussion on June 17th started with a recognition of all the memorials that happen in June: D-Day, Stonewall, Emancipation Proclamation, Equal Rights Amendment, and Gay Marriage. The discussion centered around Black history including Juneteenth. We also talked about examples from our lives of 'actions speaking louder than words.'

June 23rd Service:

Anthony broke his reflection into four parts. Each part focused on the location of events that took place during slavery near various rivers such as the Congo and the Scuppernong in North Carolina. In addition to Anthony's use of very effective language in telling historical stories, he included some of his own past family history with slavery and then reflected on what this history means for his multiracial family. Anthony asked several times these underlying questions related to the history of slavery: "Would you have survived, and would you have wanted to?"

The June 26th discussion group focused on friendship especially during this time of aging. We began with the following quote followed by others which led into our discussion. If you want a copy of the text or the link for the article, just ask Bonnie.

"Over many years of taking care of older patients, I've learned that the factors many people think are most important for aging well — such as having longevity in your family or lack of physical illnesses — do not guarantee a positive experience with getting older," says Amit A. Shah, M.D., a geriatrician, internist and palliative care specialist at Mayo Clinic. "It's the quality, duration and nature of your relationships that seem to matter most," he says.

July Events in Our Fellowship

Discussion Group with Chaplain Anthony Jenkins:

From Anthony: "For our July 8th Discussion Group meeting (in the spirit of July 4th), we'll center our conversation in the concepts of independence and interdependence. How does the desire for freedom blend (or clash) with the desire for connected

belonging? And how does this play out in our personal lives, relationships, communities, and societies?"

A Letter from Rev Karyn

"Freedom's just another word for nothin' left to lose." So go the lyrics from Kris Kristofferson's song, "Me and Bobby McGee." The version made popular by Janice Joplin in 1971 has been running through my head for many years, but even more so now. It seems like everyone is talking about freedom these days. Back in the 1960's, it was the cry of the political left. Now, however, the political right has claimed the word as its own by reframing every policy and position as a matter of "freedom."

The word "freedom" resonates for me as a Unitarian Universalist minister. After all, both Unitarianism and Universalism are liberal faith traditions and the root of the word "liberal" itself comes from the Latin word for freedom. I joined a UU congregation precisely because I had the freedom to explore my spirituality and find truth and meaning in my experiences. As a minister now, I appreciate the free pulpit, which allows me to explore ideas without fear of being censured or excommunicated by an ecclesiastical authority. I also appreciate the ability to make decisions about the direction of my ministry. For the last three years, I pursued chaplaincy as my primary ministry, while preaching in various UU pulpits, including Charlestown. I have found preaching to be an enriching experience that has deepened my spirituality. What's true for preaching is doubly true leading small groups, like those at Charlestown. Over the last six years, you have taught me by freely sharing your truths whether in services and small groups.

I think that freedom is why I decided to apply to be the developmental minister of First Unitarian Church of Baltimore. You, the UUs of Charlestown, reminded me of why I became a Unitarian Universalist and why Unitarian Universalist remains relevant for our time. With my transition to First Unitarian, my role with you all sadly must change. I will not be able to preach regularly as I once did but I will be available for backup pastoral support. I hope that you can all join me on July 28 for my last service at UUC when I will speak about freedom.

Yours always in faith and freedom,
Rev. Karyn Marsh

Our July 28th service will also include a flower communion. Information related to that common UU ritual will be in an email closer to the date. For those of you who don't know about this ritual, you might enjoy reading about it.

What Matters to UUC? Learning and Caring. by Bonnie Kawecki

Before I go more deeply into the theme of this newsletter, I want to include one more value from the UUA revised bylaws: **Generosity**. I'm including this value because I think it, in addition to others, represents some of what is important to our fellowship: (UUA values are in **bold**.)

"We cultivate a spirit of gratitude and hope.

We covenant to freely and compassionately share our faith, presence, and resources. Our generosity connects us to one another in relationships of interdependence and mutuality."

I think **Generosity** combined with **Pluralism** (...We covenant to learn from one another in our free and responsible search for truth and meaning...) are probably the values that are most important to our fellowship.

Regardless of the change in the UUA bylaws, our fellowship will probably want to decide if and how we want to include the UUA values as a focus in our learning and thinking. It's our decision.

Here are some relevant words from the UUA Executive Vice President Carey McDonald that I mentioned last month:

"Regardless of the vote of the General Assembly, individual congregations and UU communities can hold and value the Seven Principles as a meaningful part of our religious tradition, just as some have adopted the Eighth Principle on their own."

I assume our fellowship will decide to continue to focus on the strengths of our community, namely *Learning, and Caring*. The diversity of our activities provides a variety of ways in which we connect with each other. This continual interaction over the years deepens our connections. In UU terminology this is referred to as building *Intimacy*. Our discussion groups and the monthly service also give us the opportunity to think and talk about our journeys through life sometimes through a spiritual lens. That aspect of UU thinking is called *Ultimacy*. Therefore, whatever UUC activity you are participating in, you are experiencing the possibility of *Intimacy and Ultimacy*. (*Significant UUC words are in italics.*)

In more concrete everyday terms: we enjoy deep friendships while sharing a common search for meaning and truth in our lives as we face various challenges together.

Perhaps this core strength of our fellowship is very important as we age. Because we often lose partners, spouses, and old friends, we need the new friends we make living here at Charlestown.

That's what Rev Bruce Marshall discovered when he wrote *In Later Years**. In addition to realizing how much seniors needed friends, he also found that making new friends is often not easy for seniors. "The need for relationships during the senior years came up in many of the conversations I had...It is not clear to me whether relationships begun later in life remain superficial because of a lack of time and opportunity to develop them or because participants prefer them that way. Seniors can be hesitant to commit to new relationships. When you have lost friends through illness or death, you may become reluctant to start again with someone new." Bruce then goes on to tell stories of seniors who have overcome these challenges. Maybe that is something we might talk more as we continue to age.

*Our library has copies of Bruce's book, but they are often out or have disappeared. We can get more. Bruce was the UU chaplain at Riderwood and was our mentor as we started our fellowship 10 years ago. The book is based on Bruce's interviews with many different seniors including several Charlestown residents.

A final thought and a memory of Lou Nielsen

The care we showed for Lou after Elaine died is the most recent example of the strength of our community. We eagerly included him in our activities and supported him when he wanted to participate in a discussion and might not remember exactly what he wanted to say.

I imagine we all are grateful for the example Lou set for us as we watched him value his relationship with Elaine and then continuing with a meaningful life as much as he could after she died. I think the following poem represents the kind of life Lou led. I hope I will be able to look back on my life and discover I have lived as full a life as I think Lou did.

"I Will Not Die an Unlived Life"
by Dawna Markova

I will not die an unlived life
I will not live in fear
of falling or catching fire.
I choose to inhabit my days,
to allow my living to open me,
to make me less afraid,
more accessible,
to loosen my heart
until it becomes a wing,
a torch, a promise.
I choose to risk my significance;
to live so that which came to me as seed
goes to the next as blossom
and that which came to me as blossom,
goes on as fruit.

Love Showed Up by Elizabeth Harding



What is your heart doing right now?
“Remembering. Remembering!”
from Mary Oliver’s “When Did It Happen?”
in *Felicity*

Patricia was our hospice patient for three years. She had lung cancer, and by the time I got to know her she had beaten all odds. Patricia was extraordinarily blunt and independent and quirky. At one point, she even “fired” as many hospice team members as she could manage—including me, the chaplain.

When Patricia was nearing the end of her life, her son Richard came to Chicago. He didn’t believe it at first, but slowly he understood that Patricia was at the end of her road. After she died, Patricia’s neighbor came to me and said, “We need to acknowledge Patricia’s life, but Richard doesn’t want a memorial service.”

The “we” she was talking about were Patricia’s friends and neighbors, all of whom had pitched in to take care of her and had grown to love her. They were sad; they needed to share their love for Patricia with each other and to get to know Richard before he returned to his life out of state.

Patricia’s neighbor and I agreed that she would round up Patricia’s friends and the other neighbors, and would put out some drinks and food in Patricia’s condo. I would lead a time of sharing.

I began the evening by lighting a candle. I read some poetry I knew Patricia would like, then shared what I knew of Patricia’s life — a eulogy of sorts — inviting people to share their favorite stories about her. We closed the evening with more poetry, and then I blew out the candle.

Afterwards, Richard approached me. “Thank you,” he said. “I didn’t know I needed that.”

Remembering is the art of holding a memory and sharing it; it’s drawing upon that memory so it can help us to grow into people who live lives of meaning and service. As a practice, remembering connects us deeply to each other and to the love that sustains us.

Richard may forget the content of the stories he heard. He may forget the names of his mother’s friends. He won’t forget that Patricia loved him, or that she was loved. Love showed up when Richard was feeling bereft, and held him close.

Prayer

May our challenging stories—the ones full of pain and sorrow—merge with the stories of joy and laughter as we reflect and remember, held by the great Sustaining Love that accompanies us. May we feel content in the richness of this Sustaining Love. Amen and Blessed Be.



Elizabeth Harding is one of the affiliated community ministers of Second Unitarian Church of Chicago, IL, and serves as one of the bereavement counselors for Journeycare, the largest non-profit hospice and palliative care provider in the state of Illinois. She lives outside of Chicago with her family, husband Kevin, son Lucas, and three fish.

<https://www.uua.org/braverwiser/love-showed>

A final quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson:

“You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late.”
(Thanks again to Bernice DeBels’ shelf for this quote.)