

May Memorial

Unitarian Universalist Society

Newsletter



We embrace all spiritual journeys and encourage service as we build a more loving and just world

March 2023
Volume 86
Issue 3

Perfectly Imperfect Humans



I was recently lamenting about a friendship I have with a person I love very much. This person chose to put themselves in a particular position that makes them generally pretty miserable, tired, strung out, burnt out, basically, all the time.

They have a lot of big feelings about this very often. Our friendship has shifted a lot in the last few years because they just don't really have time for anything else.

And while I was lamenting... like we do as humans. I thought to myself, you know, the job I chose is not all sunshine and daisy's either. I love my job, don't get me wrong, and there are times that I need to complain too, and I (like my friend) chose this job just like they did. And so I realized how unfair I was being to my friend in my own heart and mind for simply being human. Because frankly, being human is hard.

This month's worship theme is vulnerability. Society teaches us that we need to be strong and equates strong with tough and not letting anything penetrate our armor. But as humans, in order to be strong we must also be vulnerable, and this has so many meanings. In this case with my friend, vulnerability means that I need to face exactly what is bothering me. And the vulnerable piece that I don't want to admit out loud is that it bothers me that she has less time for me than she used to, that our friendship has shifted because of the choices she has made. And you know what, everything is not all about me all the time. It makes me feel vulnerable to admit that the reason I was upset with her in my mind and heart is because she has less time for me. But again, it's just part of being human. And so now, whenever I get upset about this, I just remind myself that life is not all about me all the time and that I too have made choices that complicate my life and my relationships. It helps to remind myself that we are both human and that our friendship will withstand this period in our lives and that we just need to begin again in love.

My colleague and friend, the Reverend Theresa Ninan Soto wrote a beautiful poem about this that I wanted to share with you:

i remembered you,
remembered i was
mad at you, for the time
you did that thing. then
i remembered myself. all
human and imperfect. there
were those times i did those
things. and grace was [is]
never [not ever] withheld from
me. this is the miracle. come
then. let us announce. we are
forgiven. we are beloved. we
renounce intentional
emptiness. we begin again.

Worship on 3.12.23

will be primarily on zoom, we will play it on the screen in the social hall where there will be coffee and snacks available. You can watch worship, or chat with your friends, whatever works to feed your soul that morning.

A NOTE FROM YOUR PREZ



We don't like to talk about money, especially deficits.

We assume. Too often we just assume.

Your pledge packets contain the table "Operating Fund History." It is sobering reading because it documents budget deficits for **each** of the last five years! There's nothing illegal here and each budget was duly approved by the congregation. The problem is that deficits have become habitual, glossed over and seldom discussed. That ends right now.

1. The most popular method to paste over/fill in deficits has been to **raid our Capital Fund** which is intended for major building & equipment repairs. But we've raided for so many years, now there's barely enough to replace the next furnace/air conditioner unit that dies, like one did just last summer. We just presume there'll always be heat or air conditioning in every room; we presume there'll be a functioning dishwasher & kitchen for our coffee hours and lunches. We rarely give these a second thought. But the fund that pays for these assumptions is **at rock bottom**; we can no longer assume it.

2. A second method to "balance" our budget is to **appeal to our staff**. For the last three years we've withheld any pay raise; because of rampant inflation, that's tantamount to pay cuts! Why do we just *assume* that Stacy will teach and nurture our children, Glenn provide glorious music, Teri manage our office, Leslie keep our books? Staff are not our birthright we can just assume; they are our stars! Stars that serve as the very face of our mission, help attract new members and enrich our worship. They have been both patient and gracious to help shoulder OUR budget challenges. However, appealing to staff is simply **not sustainable**.

3. The Federal **Payroll Protection Program** is the most recent method to plug deficits. It's been a real silver lining in this pandemic cloud. But we can no longer presume it because it's **no longer available**.

4. We are therefore left with a final method to fill in deficits: our **Endowment Fund**. An endowment fund is an investment that generates income that we can then spend without whittling down the principal of the Fund itself; the fund can then keep on generating spendable income. But with the national stock market plunge, our Fund has already lost nearly a fifth its value! What's remains can sustain plugging deficits for maybe eight years. Then it **will be gone**. Yet, is not our Endowment Fund in a certain sense sacred because it is largely donated in memory of our loved ones? So, not only is it financially imprudent/unwise to spend down this Fund, morally shouldn't we be **preserving** it for those who will sit in our pews when we are no longer?

A second chart in your pledge packet is the "Gift Table". It documents that one third of our operating budget is provided by merely 14% of pledge units; nearly one half comes from just one quarter of pledge units. These larger pledgers are frequently retired older members, often without mortgages, no need to scramble for jobs, don't have child expenses or a need to plan for college tuition. So, it's appropriate/understandable that we older members are often larger pledgers. But, over the last few years, too many of us older folks have stopped pledging, because we've either moved away or passed away. We can no longer presume these **larger pledgers**.

What can we do about deficits without greater resources? We get no money from the UUA; we're entirely self-supporting and proud of it! Yes, we do get money from fundraisers, though precious little during the pandemic. And rentals are up, now that we've invested in a safe beautiful parking lot. So, it ain't all bad! However, the **overwhelming majority of our church budget** comes not from fundraisers or rentals but **from pledges**.

We can no longer afford to presume our church bills get magically paid. We are left with only two financial backups: Our Endowment Fund and Ourselves!

Let's meet this financial challenge head on together! I urge you to peruse your pledge packets, ask questions of your Board of Trustees & Finance Committee, and look carefully at your already tight budgets.

See if **you** are able to dig a bit deeper to increase **your** pledge so that together we can: **end** this cancerous deficit financing, **grant raises** to our hard-working staff, and **preserve** our sacred Endowment Fund.

May Memorial is a **wise** investment.

Don Milmore,
President, Board of Trustees

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Why did the kids in Children's Chapel decide to add the 8th Principle? Well, every year we talk about our covenant in chapel. Covenant is the core of what it is to be a Unitarian Universalist. UUs don't have a doctrine or creed to call on to show what we "believe", rather we have shared values and a commitment to live those values in community together. Our covenants are the promises we make that represent those shared values. Every year we look at our chapel covenant and ask if it still represents our values and how we want to be together in community, often times the kids like to keep it as is, but sometimes we need to add or change something. That is another thing that sets us apart as a faith, we recognize that we will grow and change and that our covenants may need to grow and change to better reflect the values that we have in the present.

Just like our chapel covenant, and the May Memorial covenant, the Principles and Sources are a covenant that congregations have with each other as members of the Unitarian Universalist Association. The original Principles were enacted in 1961 with the merger of the Unitarian and Universalist churches. A few decades later it was clear that that original covenant no longer served the whole community. Many UU women spoke up about the patriarchal language in the covenant and worked to change it. In 1984 the current Principles and Sources were voted in at General Assembly, with the exception of the 7th Principle which was added the following year. And the Principles and Sources haven't changed since then, since 1985, which is nearly 40 years ago.

The Principles and Sources aren't working as is for everyone in our community any more. Just like the UU women who came forward to express a need for change, UUs of color came forward in 2017 to ask for another change, they asked for an addition to the principles, an 8th principle: "Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions."

As a religious educator, it is so exciting to share this important development with the next generation of UUs! The kids were very invested in helping to choose how we would represent the 8th Principle in a children's version, "Let us actively dismantle racism and all oppressions to build Beloved Community", and the body movements to go with it. It was an incredible opportunity to involve the children in the process of changing a covenant to better reflect their values. The children understand that their vote to add the 8th Principles is only effective in Children's Chapel and the RE space at May. It is up to the members of the congregation to vote to adopt the 8th Principle officially. There is precedent for youth leading the way in denominational change though! And it is my hope that our congregation will vote for this change as well.

In Faith,

Stacy Sceiford, Director of Religious Education



Summer Worship Series

This summer (as in the past several years) we will be sharing worship with First UU Society of Syracuse! Keep an eye on the schedule as we will have some form of gathering at MMUUS every other Sunday, and some form of gathering at FUUS every other Sunday. To change things up for summer, we will be having something a bit different. We will gather in the social hall at MMUUS, open our services with a chalice lighting and then likely watch a Ted Talk or some other video and then have a discussion about the ideas that came up. If you have any suggestions on topics, please contact Reverend Jo. We will also have a few hymn sings this summer with Fred Fiske!



Worship Service Information

March Theme: Vulnerability

3/5/2023	What Are You Afraid Of?	Rev. Jo VonRue and Stacy Sceiford	Multi-Gen Service/In person and on Zoom
3/12/2023	Lessons from Gate A4	Worship Associate JoJo Higgins	We will be meeting in the Social Hall for this service or you can join on Zoom
3/19/2023	Value of Vulnerability	Worship Associate Eliza Bailey	In person and on Zoom
3/26/2023	The Other F Word	Rev. Jo VonRue	In person and on Zoom

Join us Sunday at 10:30am For our Worship Service

<https://zoom.us/j/95127684023?pwd=aERpeGNVUWZIZjMQUtZcDVJMENYQT09>
 Meeting ID: 951 2768 4023
 Passcode: 607275
 One tap mobile
 +19292056099,,95127684023# US (New York)
 Dial by your location
 +1 929 205 6099 US (New York)



Sign up for usher/greeter slots for upcoming services here:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0A4CA8AC28A4F94-user>



Do you join services by calling in?

If so, please let Teri in the office know, so if there are changes, you can be notified

It doesn't happen often but when it does we want you to be informed of changes.

HISTORY CORNER



What have you learned about yourself? Covid-19 Pandemic Journal Responses



It has now been three years since Covid-19 abruptly changed our lives. When everything closed down in March of 2020, we could not have imagined that Covid would still be affecting us in 2023! The MMUUS COVID-19 Pandemic Journal is part of the history committee's effort to document the history being made during this unprecedented time. The goal is to leave a record for future congregants of how we at May Memorial have dealt with and learned from the challenges brought by this pandemic.

With Reverend Jo's encouragement, we began soliciting comments from members and friends of May Memorial in December of 2020. Over the next several months five Covid-related questions were posed in the e-blasts and on the MMUUS website. We welcomed responses to those questions, as well as personal reflections or narratives.

Thanks to DRE Stacy Sceiford we were also able to obtain thoughtful responses from children enrolled in RE via Zoom conversations. Some of the children's comments about their lives during Covid-19 and their feelings about the pandemic were shared in the February 2022 newsletter.

Adult responses to the question about finding joy in the time of Covid-19 were summarized in the March 2022 newsletter. As we work to prepare all the Covid responses for the MMUUS website and archives, we want to share a few more adult comments.

Question 4: What have you learned about yourself during the pandemic?

"I've learned that I can be content to stay home. After... years of living an overscheduled life, I have discovered that I can operate at a slower pace and that some things can wait... This has been a revelation... and I will strive to continue some version of this into the future."

"I learned that I enjoyed the solitude that came with being mainly homebound."

"I learned to just be." "With forced practice...I learned to enjoy the serenity of all the days spent alone." "I learned how much I value touch."

"It was important [for my own sanity and hope] to connect with folks I had not heard from in some time."

"I can adapt; I need contact with other people; I have a new appreciation of front-line workers."

"I can survive almost anything with the support of friends and family."

Given the stresses and demands of the pandemic, it is not surprising that most comments were provided by retirees. Although not a sampling of the entire congregation, the Covid responses are thoughtful, perceptive, and at times humorous. They will all be available on the MMUUS website soon.

Mary Louise Edwards
MMUUS History Committee (history@mmuus.org)





Going Green and Seeking Social Justice

by Bess Kamerance

In celebrating Women’s History Month in March, it is fitting to recognize the founders of Black Lives Matter: Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi. Black Lives Matter was founded in 2013 by these three activists in response to the acquittal of the murderer of unarmed Black male, Treyvon Martin. Since then, the organization has worked tirelessly as it is dedicated to fighting racism and anti-Black violence, especially in the form of police brutality.

The mission of BLM is “to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. By combating and countering acts of violence, creating space for Black imagination and innovation, and centering Black joy, we are winning immediate improvements in our lives.”

In 2020, the three founders were recognized by TIME magazine for their work and honored as three of the 100 Most Influential People in the World. The organization has expanded to be the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, Inc. in the US, Canada, and the UK.

On a local level of activism, there is Rahziel Seals, founder of Black Cuse Pride. Their goal is “to create an inclusive, welcoming environment for all queer people of color in Syracuse.” They also collaborate with ACR Health, CNY PRIDE, and SAGE Upstate.

For more information, contact Black Lives Matter locally at blacklivesmatter315@gmail.com

Follow both organization on their Facebook page.

Ready for a Scrumptious Salad Bar March 5th?



For our **March 5th luscious lunch**, the Bookenders have teamed up with Wellspring to present yet another novel theme: a full-course salad bar + delectable, deliriously delicious desserts.

Even though kids sometimes turn up their noses at salads, they’ll go back for seconds this time! With such a provocative potpourri of tantalizing temptations, neither they nor you can possibly resist a second bowl. Just try to leave some room for the finale!



Our FSL are always fun, but they’re also fund-raisers with requested donations of \$5 to \$10 per adult and \$2 for children under 12. While all are welcomed, consider contributing a bit more for our church; it’ll also show how much we appreciate all the considerable effort Bookenders & Wellspring have lavished on our lunch!

See you March 5!



MmUUS Artist for March



March Artist – D. Michael Price

D. Michael Price is a fantasy artist whose works have graced the walls of hundreds of galleries both nationally and internationally. Michael works in acrylics and oil on canvas. Well-respected as a fine artist, he has also written and illustrated children's books. His work is known for its extensive detail and magical atmosphere that transport the viewer to another realm, and children and adults alike are spellbound by their humor and originality.

While Michael's sterling reputation in this genre extends well past his home in Upstate New York, his love of the magical beauty to be found in the hills, valleys, forest and streams of home, provide Michael with constant inspiration. It is his wish to share with the viewer this magic and, for however long a period, transport them. Michael earned his Bachelor for Fine Arts Degree with Honors from the State University of New York at Oneonta, with an emphasis on oil painting and book design. He published his first book *Across the River* in 1995. His original art works are the illustrations for his books. Since that time, Michael's successes as both a children's author with multiple books published, and fine artist, have gained him celebrity status.

Additionally, Michael undertakes commission artwork for various publications; he has worked for many prestigious houses and such noted publications as *The National Geographic*. Michael has lectured on art and the creative process in schools and colleges and has been the artist in residence at the Roberson Museum at Binghamton, New York.



The CareRing is currently trying to get contact information for members in case of an emergency at church or at home if you don't have family members in town. If you haven't already done so, please fill out the Emergency Contact Information form by using the link below or you can get copies at church the next few Sundays in the Social Hall or on the shelf under the nametags.

https://mmuus.org/docs/emergencycontactform_2022_fillable.pdf





Mark your calendars! UNIRONDAK WEEKEND for the MMUUS, FUUS and other New York UU communities – Sept 22-24, 2023

New and returning families, individuals and people of all ages are encouraged to participate in the Fall family weekend at Unirondack - Friday Sept 22 (starting at 4:00) - Sunday Sept 24 (ending at 2-3 pm). This weekend is a week later than our usual September weekend. Other congregations from Central New York are invited to participate as well.

Unirondack is a UU Camp and Conference Center, 2 - 2.5 hour drive from Syracuse in the western Adirondacks, near Lowville, NY. To see the Unirondack facilities/environment, the website is: www.unirondack.org

Since 2008, this intergenerational Unirondack weekend has been a source of early fall community building for our UU congregations. This weekend is often an introduction to the camp for youth and families who later go on to be campers and staff at the weeklong youth or family camps. We often have space for more folks, so invite a few friends and family to participate in our community gathering.

There are cabins and heated sleeping spaces with indoor bathroom facilities. People need to bring their own bedding, towels and pillows as well as their personal items. We ask that there be no electronic games since this is a weekend to spend in community with other UUs from the area. People hike, bike, read, play games, go boating, swim, talk, nap, arts, crafts, sport games or just sit by the lake soaking in the beauty. Group activities are encouraged and are led by the weekend participants. Please leave your pets at home.

The 2023 cost is expected to be: \$110/PP for those over 12 years old; Children 4-12 years \$100; Children 3 and under are free. This is inclusive of 2 nights (F, S) lodging, Friday night welcome light meal, 3 meals Saturday and Sunday breakfast & lunch. Meals are prepared by participants and are shared in a dining hall. Special dietary needs are carefully managed in food planning and prep; refrigeration is available for individual needs. Snacks and transportation are not included in this rate. Carpooling has been arranged by individuals in the past.

A 50% deposit is required to hold your space; the balance needs to be paid 2 weeks in advance of the weekend. Reservations can be made by sending your names/ ages of children to Stephanie Cross at mscross1234@gmail.com.

Deposit checks should be made to "Stephanie Cross", given to her at MMUUS or mailed to 3844 Pompey Center Road, Manlius, NY 13104. Venmo payments can be sent to: Stephanie-Cross-75

Please include your contact information, names of people attending and ages of the children attending with your payment.

This is a great weekend - we hope you will join us!

Stephanie Cross, Coordinator, May Memorial UU Society, Syracuse

The 2023-2024 Stewardship Campaign: February 12 - March 19

Preserving and Growing Our Welcoming Religious Community



KICKOFF SUNDAY FEBRUARY 12!

- Muffins for Money: Come early or after worship to the Social Hall to pick up your pledge packets describing how to make your pledge. Tea, coffee, juice and home-baked goods (some gluten-free!) will be available.
- During the campaign, we will hear testimonials that reflect individual members thoughts on our community and its future. During the campaign, we ask that you carefully consider your pledge with generosity to support our mission. "We embrace all spiritual journeys and encourage service as we build a more loving and just world"
- Making your pledge as early as possible will help our leaders make plans for next year.
- Thank You! All together, we can make a more loving and just world.

*You're
Invited!*

**MMUUS COMMUNITY
BUILDING ACTIVITIES**



Saturday March 25th (1-8pm) We will have an all-ages board game day. We are asking if you come to please bring (along with a game if you have any) some kind of delicious dip to share for snacking!!

Saturday April 15th (6-9pm) We will have an all-ages Trivia night! Come with all your awesome and weird knowledge. We will create mixed teams and have a great time together!

Pre-registration is a must 5 days prior to the event by contacting the office.

Monday May 1st We will do something to celebrate the First of May with FUUS!!

Saturday May 20th will be our annual church auction! This year we are hoping to have a live auction as well as a silent one, it will be a night of great fun and giving to our congregation!

Sunday June 11th We will wrap up our church year with our annual flower communion and annual meeting.



Please let the office know if you have any changes that need to be reflected in the directory.

Updates to the directory are vitally important so we may effectively communicate with you.



Vespers

Join us on Wednesday evenings at 8pm for a short 30 minute time of connection and reflection. We will listen to a short reading, a piece of music that expands on the topic, and we connect with one another through check-ins and conversation. You can find a zoom link each week on our website!

<https://zoom.us/j/97595560626?pwd=Sk5EL1lKd2xPNTJoUHUvYWQ0NjRGQT09>

Meeting ID: 975 9556 0626

Passcode: 210723

One tap mobile

+19292056099,,97595560626# US (New York)

Dial by your location

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

Join Us for Our Social Justice Vigils
First Tuesday of the month at noon!



Please join us on the first Tuesday of the month at noon in front of the church.

Bring your own signs or borrow ours!

Please remember to wear your mask and observe physical distancing.



Church Office

Minister

DRE

Dir of Music

Board President

Book Keeper

Finance

Teri Coon

Rev. Jo VonRue

Stacy Sceiford

Glenn Kime

Don Milmore

Leslie Dendy

Jane Fagerland

office@mmuus.org

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May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society

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Office Hours:

Sunday: 7am-12pm

Mon - Thurs: 8am-4pm

Days off are Friday and Saturday

- **Calendar Items:**

All zoom meetings must be scheduled through the Office Administrator.

- **Deadlines to remember:**

E-Blast and Order of Service need to be to me by *5pm on Wednesday*.

- **Newsletter:**

Deadline 20th of preceding month, please adhere to this deadline to allow for the newsletter to be sent out in a timely fashion.

Please keep word count to 300-400 to allow room for everyone to have a voice in the newsletter