

The COMMON

In this church, we believe...



CALENDAR

Pulpit

May 7

Rev. Kate Braestrup

May 14

Rev. Margaret Beckman

May 21

Julia Fitz-Randolph

May 28

Rev. Margaret Beckman

Events

May 13

MUUSAN

meeting / conference

May 14

Mother's Day

May 21

Potluck Lunch

INSTALLATION

Though Rev. Margaret Beckman already has left an indelible mark on our congregation—undisputed guide and leader of this spiritual community—she still is not fully “official,” as she remains to be formally installed as our settled minister. So, let us take care of that detail! More on this later, of course, but be sure to mark your calendars for Margaret’s official installation on Sunday, August 27.

You may have noticed that Julia Fitz-Randolph is to deliver the sermon on Sunday, May 21. Julia is a member of the UU Fellowship in Damariscotta and serves as co-chair of MUUSAN-Maine UU State Advocacy Network. I have preached a sermon in her Fellowship, so it will be a special to welcome her to our pulpit. Disclosure: both Margaret and I are members of MUUSAN’S Steering Committee. Editor

LAKESIDE REFLECTIONS



Lakeside Reflections, May 2017

I walked out the front door this morning and saw a tiny white crocus just beginning to break through the surface of the still-cool, early spring earth. This little patch of ground is often in shade, but there are a few bright flowers that can burst forth even in limited light. This is a fragile little flower.

White Fragility is a little bit like my tiny white flower. There it is. It's often overlooked. It's really a normal part of the spring flower explosion. And, if we're not paying attention, we miss its significance.

Leaders in our Unitarian Universalist Association core staff came face-to-face with white fragility again this spring. It's always there, it's just that we usually don't take any notice of it. It's just so normal. "White fragility" is a phrase that I don't easily own, yet, when I slow down and pay attention to what we mean by this phrase, I realize that, "Yes, this describes me more often than I care to admit."

What happened at our UUA headquarters this past 6 weeks is important as a part of our ongoing work to practice our faith in the world. The curious among us can read more about both a precipitating event (a hiring decision in the Congregational Life Department and the reactions to that decision) at the UUA website and at

www.blacklivesuu.com. But, that's the precipitating event, it does not engage us with the depth of what our friends who identify as a person of color or indigenous person refer to as the white supremacy that gave rise to our institutional structure and that has come to be the lived experience of all of us as "normal."

I am white. I have spent years studying what it means to be white in a society that proclaims race meaningless, yet is deeply divided by race. This is what I have learned: Any white person living in the United States will develop opinions about race simply by swimming in the water of our culture. But mainstream sources—schools, textbooks, media—don't provide us the multiple perspectives we need.

Yes, we will develop strong emotionally laden opinions, but they will not be informed opinions. Our socialization renders us racially illiterate. When you add a lack of humility to that illiteracy (because we don't know what we don't know), you get the break-down we so often see when trying to engage white people in meaningful conversations about race.

When white people, and I identify as a white person, are confronted by or challenged by a situation where insidiousness of white supremacy leads to a dismissal or marginalization of those whose identity is **not** "Normal Whiteness," we often become emotional: denial, embarrassment, 'whitesplaining,' angry, dismissive, etc. This is not helpful. Understandable, perhaps. Still, not helpful. It is an expression of White Fragility. We are so tentative and thin-skinned in our efforts to really and honestly engage in conversations and work about race and racism, that even our good efforts fall short – resulting in a retreat to comfort for white people and additional pain for people of color.

from pg 2

In many faith traditions, there is a concept of sin that many Unitarian Universalists tend to overlook. It's called corporate sin and sometimes is expressed as sins of either commission or sins of omission. In this kind of confession, we acknowledge that despite our individual efforts to be as good as we can be, collectively, we fail. Together, we continue to do that which harms. Together, we fail to do that which heals. Together. Individually, we are not white supremacists. None of us is that. Collectively, we live in a system created by an ethic of the supremacy of the white race and white experience. We still live there. I confess this to be true. After confession comes the work. Only after the work – the beginning and continuing of the work – comes reconciliation and forgiveness. With forgiveness, we are offered the assurance of pardon. With a clean and honest resolve, we begin again, in love.

Maybe it's time to confess our collective sin and repent ~ through accountability, reparation, and renewal of the promise to establish the Beloved Community. This is a promise with real meaning. It is also the promise that we have broken, and may break, a thousand times. Still, we come. We come to the table of conversation. We come to the garden of new life. We come into the presence of another person's experience of our world where there is white fragility and white supremacy and pain for people of color. We come, yet again, we come into a faith full of hope for a different, more just, future.

So often words fail us
And we do not know to whom or what to
pray.

*We ask for legs that can walk for peace,
Arms that can work for justice,
Voices that can speak with love,
Hands that can soothe a feverish brow.
By our actions and voices
May our prayers be sent.
Shalom. Salaam. Om. Amen.*

Namaste,

Margaret

*footnote: "White Fragility: Why It's So Hard to Talk to White People About Racism" – Internet post on April 9, 2015 by [Dr. Robin DiAngelo](#), a former Associate Professor of Multicultural Education. Her scholarship is in Whiteness Studies. She has twice been honored with the Student's Choice Award for Educator of the Year. In addition to her academic work, Dr. DiAngelo has extensive experience as a workplace consultant in issues of race relations and racial justice. She currently serves as Director of Equity at Senior Services. She has numerous publications and just released her second book, "What Does it Mean to be White? Developing White Racial Literacy." Her previous book: *Is Everyone Really Equal: An Introduction to Key Concepts in Social Justice Education* (co-written with Özlem Sensoy) received the Critics' Choice Award by the American Educational Studies Assn.*



Lifting Our Voices, Readings in the
Living Tradition. Boston: UUA, 2015.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Leslie Fairbank

Margaret, Colin and I attended all or part of the Regional Gathering of UU's in Woburn, MA. It is apparent that various personnel resignations at the top of the denomination reveal some serious challenges, particularly in the area of racial justice. It is also a time of real opportunity for change and growth to occur. As we struggle as a congregation to find meaningful ways to support social/economic justice projects in our local area, we hope for significant progress at UUA.

A concrete action was undertaken by the Northern New England District (to which we belong), to give \$100,000 to BLUU (Black Lives UU), an emerging organization working to engage and support the participation of people of color in Unitarian Universalism. The NNE District also authorized another \$100,000 to be given as matching funds to congregational gifts. We will want to consider such a gift.

We spent considerable time at the meeting being taught and led in congregational singing by two gifted musicians, Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout and Dr. Isaye Barnwell. It was remarkable how beautiful the actual music became. The sharing of spirituals and freedom songs with sister and brother UU's was a moving and sustaining way to spend a Saturday afternoon.



REFORM / OPPORTUNITY

Gil Tenney brings this to our attention. Let him know if you wish to participate.



Maine House Speaker Sara Gideon is proposing comprehensive legislation that offers Maine families living in poverty real reform and real opportunity. Join the movement to help Maine families leave poverty behind. LD 1475, an Act to Reduce Child Poverty by Leveraging Investments in Families Today (LIFT), includes changes that will address housing, transportation, and other areas of basic needs for families living in poverty.

Help us LIFT all Maine families! Take a moment to [read our overview of LIFT](#) and make your voice heard on May 8.

WHAT: Public Hearing on LD #1475, An Act to Reduce child Poverty by Leveraging Investments in Families Today

WHEN: Monday May 8, 1:00 pm

WHERE: Health and Human Services Committee Room 209, Cross Office Building

Sign on in support of LD 1475! [Please complete this form](#) for us to share with legislators. Help us get to 200 support flyers by sharing with 5 friends or family. Can't be there that day? Look for an email from us with easy at-home actions to take on hearing day!

Thank you for working with us to end child poverty in Maine. See you on May 8th!

A GROWING YEAR:

The Collaborative Ministry Internship Lane Fisher

April was a month rich in collegial relations, a treasure for which I had little appreciation three years ago and realize now is essential. April 5-7 I was blessed to join the northern New England members of the UU Ministers Association (UUMA) at their spring retreat at Biddeford Pool and talked with many of them again at Regional Assembly.

I suspect many in our churches don't grasp why strong collegial relations among ministers are in every congregation's best interest. I certainly didn't before I started seminary.

I read and agreed to uphold the UUMA Covenant and Code of Conduct early in seminary, when the Belfast church was my sole "laboratory." Those documents made me understand for the first time how many of Rev. Deane's choices and former Interim Minister Mary Wellemeyer's admonishments were rooted in UUMA agreements. UU ministers have a formal set of rules and guidelines that call us to support one another; they also make clergy misconduct less likely to happen and more likely to be called out, decrease the possibility that we will injure one another's ministries, and create clear processes for navigating tricky passages or restoring right relations, when necessary.

The wisdom in maintaining open and honest dialogues with colleagues was sharply underscored on March 30, when the Rev. Ron Robinson, a well-known UU minister in Oklahoma, was arrested and confessed to offenses involving child pornography. Although the report gave no reason to suspect that children in his congregation were involved, it was a sickening reminder that misconduct can and does happen within our ranks.

It is less likely to happen if we have warm and authentic relationships with ministers we feel welcome to call when we need another perspective or simply need to vent frustrations. We minister to one another. If, instead, we were to tap members of our congregations to help us as we try to help them, it would blur boundaries. At a minimum, this can damage congregational dynamics, but it also can open paths to ministerial misconduct. Strong collegial relations are an insurance policy for ministers and their flocks.



So it fed my soul and the integrity of my forming ministry to talk with seasoned colleagues at the spring retreat, just as meeting with our northern Maine ministers in most other months has been a deepening practice. With a sense of blessing and respect for the covenant among ministers, I'll fill a small role in the April 30 installation service for the Rev. Drew Moeller—who came to the UU Society of Bangor in part because of our area's active network of UU ministers, in contrast to a state where another church would have welcomed him as a candidate.

Did I mention that this network benefits all of us? I am grateful to have joined it.

With blessings and love,
Lane

Spring Conference and Annual Meeting

and justice for
Maine and
Mainers

The Intersection of Faith and Advocacy

WHY: Be part of this
statewide
group of
Unitarian
Universalists
advocating for
a brighter
future

Keynote Speaker:

Hon. Thomas
Andrews,
President &
CEO Unitarian
Universalist
Service
Committee
(UUSC)

Vital Advocacy Work -
Democracy in Action,
Health Care for All, and
Climate Change
Congregational
Connections - increasing
our UU influence and
the value of our liberal
religious voice in public
policy

WHEN: Saturday - May
13, 2017 - 9:30 a.m. to 3:00
p.m.

Lunch will be
generously provided
by spectacular
volunteers

WHERE: UU Community
Church of
Augusta –
169 Winthrop
Street, Augusta
Augusta, Maine

REGISTER NOW: Email to
admin@muusan.org
Call Betsy Parsons at
207-775-0173 for more
information

WHO: All Unitarian
Universalists
and friends
who have an
interest in faith

***MUUSAN - bringing
Unitarian Universalist
values to the pu***

COLLABORATIVE READ

Your Collaborative Ministry Team from the Castine, Ellsworth, and Belfast congregations invites you to read and discuss *Hillbilly Elegy*, by J.D. Vance. Mark your calendars for the evening of [Thursday, June 1 at 5:30 PM](#).

From the book jacket:

“*Hillbilly Elegy* is a passionate and personal analysis of a culture in crisis—that of white working-class Americans. The decline of this group, a demographic of our country that has been slowly disintegrating over forty years, is reported with growing frequency and alarm, but has never before been written about as searingly from the inside. J. D. Vance tells the true story of what a social, regional, and class decline feels like when you were born with it hung around your neck”.

This #1 New York *Times* bestseller, published in 2016 by Harper Press, is hailed by *Times* book critic David Brooks as “essential” ~Vance’s] description of the culture he grew up in is essential reading for this moment in history.”

The Economist states “You will not read a more important book about America this year”. When we gather on June 1, participants of each congregation will meet in their respective church offices to begin the discussion and in the latter part of the gathering, we will all join together to share our thoughts via the magic of videoconferencing. For more information, please contact Colin Powell - colin.powell@gmail.com Start reading now and make plans to join us for this timely and important discussion!

Many thanks to the UU Community Church of Augusta for the colorful “articles of faith” reproduced on page 1. As many of readers will have observed, yard signs of this poster and a sister are posted at each entrance to our church.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

Leslie Fairbank, President
Colin Powell, Vice President
Diana Bernard, Treasurer

Anne Romans, Clerk

Tom Mason
Jessica Rollerson
Marcia Schatz
Rodney Flora, Alternate Member

The Governing Board meets in the Parish House at 8:30 am on the third Thursday of each month. Observers always are welcome.

THE COMMON

The Common is published monthly and distributed in both electronic and photocopy forms. All members and friends are invited to submit items for consideration. Send submissions or comments to editor Kent Price at kapricorn75@gmail.com.

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