

## **“We’re All Changed”**

March 14, 2021

### **Welcome and Lighting of Chalice** - Rev. Betsy Tabor & UUFES Youth

Welcome. Here we seek justice and truth and understanding.  
Here we celebrate life and contemplate mystery.  
Here we seek healing and wholeness. Welcome, all.

A year ago Thursday, the Mail Pouch reminded people to not shake hands Sunday with newcomers, to give each other space “for a while....Let us gather,” it read, “and sing, share and reflect, grateful for all that is the sanctuary of UUFES.” That was Thursday.

Friday, the market crashed and the world closed down.

Saturday at 11, an announcement went out that we would not be meeting at all on Sunday “just in case,” it read, “the corona virus contagion should continue to grow...and our sanctuary....become a vector for disease.” A few hours later, we announced that we would have a service, an online *experiment*.

That Sunday, exactly a year ago, we were thrilled by cameos from foreign lands: Marsha in Brooklyn, Diane in California, the Hoffmans in Tucson, Kim in Florida, and Ruth Hall, whose car had broken down by the side of the road in Tennessee and was calling in on her phone! On the World Fellowship’s borrowed account, we blundered into the world of Zoom. We tried singing – a no-no, we learned. We muted ourselves a lot.

We knew so little. On our screens, we watched China, then Italy. Covid came closer. We learned how often we touch our faces. We scrubbed our hands as if – no, *because* – our very life depended on it. Fear stalked us. We stayed home. Stopped driving. Wiped down groceries. Felt at the same time protective and distrustful of loved ones. We ached for people suffering alone.

What was lost? Lives. Lives of parents, siblings, children, family & friends. Students lost schooling. We lost confidence. The freedom to move around. We lost touching – shaking hands, hugs. Each others’ faces.

That’s a lot for a heart to endure. But our hearts did...and we are all changed. Today we consider events of year.

**Centering Music** - “Planxty Eleanor Plunkett” by Turlough O’Carolan, 1700s

### **Shared Affirmation**

**Hymn** - “Gather the Spirit” (the first hymn our choir recorded, March 2020)

[A Time for All Ages](#) - Alice and Marion Posner (awaiting text)

### **Reflections on a Year - Sandra Carr**

A year like no other: a rancorous election, weather extremes, Social Justice challenges, violence, AND then COVID...well, it was a very long year. Everyone, everywhere, felt the disruptions, fears, isolation, and concerns about friends and family near and far. No one was exempt. Some suffered more than most....with lonely deaths and mourning, financial setbacks, trouble finding basic necessities of life such as shelter and food. The news reminded us daily of the lived reality of brothers and sisters throughout the world whose suffering continually troubled our hearts and minds.

I was one of the fortunate ones. I had everything I needed. A home, food, adequate resources, and a partner and rescue dog to keep me company this long quiet year. Yes, I worried about problems in our world and in our family. Grandkids whose school has been disrupted, a daughter who is a single Mom, unemployed for a year, my health and that of my spouse as Seniors experiencing a NH winter for the first time in 20 years.

I mark this anniversary with positive thoughts for our country with a new administration, with huge gratitude for the amazing vaccine, and with a hope and expectation of some adjusted normalcy returning...in due time.

This pause has served as a time of recognition and adjustment for me. Who would have thought it possible that an agenda-driven individual such as I would morph into one who enjoys her solitude? Yes, that has happened. And I have a heightened appreciation for my home, nature right outside my doors and windows, and for my husband of 54 years who really is my best friend. We have never spent this much time in each other's constant company, and it feels like a gift. And something else that was really nice to experience....our adult children and grandchildren, perhaps inspired by the vulnerability of our age, showed us their tender concern with increased communication, such that even in this time of separation we felt close at heart and much loved.

And Zoom....not only did I learn to embrace Winter in New England again, I also learned a new technology. I still don't love Zoom...but I came here, saw family and friends, went to book club, exercise class, discussion groups...I was virtually connected. Even better.... at the post office or out on a dog walk, I would encounter friends, make eye contact over our masks, and socially distanced conversations would ensue..... and make my day! Small pleasures took on large importance.

A slower pace and a new rhythm for my days opened up time for reading, trying new recipes, clearing clutter, walking, learning new skills like snow shoeing, video watching, napping ...simple pleasures, life is good . All in all.....the year was different. It created a space for me to reflect on personal matters large (a life review) and small (paring down the Bucket List). It's left me feeling deeply grateful and hopeful. As the announcement for this morning's gathering noted....this year WAS a year of disruption and of possibility. What new possibilities did you discover?

**Joys & Concerns - Clair de Lune by Claude Debussy, played by Eve Goss**

## Hymn - “Spirit of Life”

### Meditation/Prayer

We give thanks  
 For a warm week - for lengthening afternoons  
 We are grateful that seniors may begin to gather  
 That families and friends can think about making plans  
 We are grateful to be alive a year later

May our hearts be forever changed  
 by the chaos in hospital halls  
 by shrieking ambulances  
 by unthinkable makeshift morgues in parks  
 by the courage of frontline workers

May we always remember what this year taught us  
 About people with no choice but to keep working  
 About what “essential” means  
 And how deadly this virus is to people on the margins

May what we have learned change us forever  
 May we question our certainty and cultivate curiosity  
 May we live more gently  
 More daringly  
 May love guide us. In the name of all that is good and true and holy, blessed be.

### New Member Welcome with the Membership Committee (bios in Mail Pouch, “snippets” here)

*Donna San Antonio:* After graduating from UNH in 1974, Donna headed off to New York City where she spent half a year using her sociology degree to tend bar at CBGB on the Bowery – a nightclub that gave stage to punk rock stars like Patti Smith, the Ramones, Blondie, and Talking Heads.

*Barbara Bald:* Barbara grew up surfing on the Jersey coast and her love of the ocean brought her to Star Island where she goes every fall to write with poets and songwriters—it’s a magical place with UUFES connections.

*Meredith Morten:* Meredith once created an installation with performance dedicated to a prehistoric Bird Goddess in an abandoned 15th century Turkish bath in Skopje, Macedonia.

*Lynn Hatch:* Lynn lives near Charlottesville. After hiking all 512 miles in the Shenandoah National Park, Lynn is attempting to hike all **2,135** miles of the Appalachian Trail in Virginia—a full quarter of the entire AT!

*Diane Shank:* In her teens, Diane won a blue ribbon in a “donut race.” This involved racing a horse to the other end of the riding ring where an overhead line had donuts dangling from

strings. Each rider had to take a bite out of the donut without using hands then race back to spit it out at the judge, with the fastest rider winning.

*Kathy Bird:* Kathy gained confidence learning a martial art to 2nd degree black belt level—she never expected to stick with it that long!

*John Frenz:* Thanks to his neighbor (Sandra Carr's husband, Larry) John took up rowing and it has become, along with the daily NYT crossword puzzle, his current obsession. He has even ensnared his partner Janice in the rowing obsession.

*Bruce Larson:* Bruce hosts a colony of “red wriggler” composting worms...they reside indoors and make soil from food waste: 25 years with the same colony of vermicomposting invertebrates!

*Sam Perry:* Sam’s most recent California license plate is “HUZZZAH.” That’s with three Zs. What more would you want to know?!

*Thank you to the Membership Committee for creating today’s new member welcome:  
Peaco Todd (chair), Ricky Banderob, Betsy Loughran, Peggy Polo.*

**Hymn:** Come, Come, Whoever You Are

**Reflection** - Rev. Betsy Tabor

We say we want to go back to life as we once knew it, but how could we? We’re all changed. For a year, a deadly virus has continuously reminded us of our vulnerability. Loss and distance have humbled us. Fear has companioned us. We have discovered how little we know, innocent no more.

This year has forced us to evaluate what’s important. It has slowed us down. We look out the window more. Spend less time in our cars. Is it possible we complain less? We’ve been called into new ways of being and have watched ourselves live more quietly, more thoughtfully – and on good days, more intentionally.

And...we miss so much. We miss Sunday as we once knew it. A smile at the top of the stairs. A welcoming hand offering an order of service. We miss the bright peaceful sanctuary, greens and blues out the tall windows. We miss the sounds and fragrance of the coffee maker. And that moment of beginning, of turning our attention...to...this...moment. No cereal. No pajama bottom jokes. No commenting. Just quieting together. Singing together. Being silent together. Sitting close to each other. We miss wiggly children at Alice’s feet. And we sorely miss the fifteen or so people not on Zoom.

At the same time, this congregation is changed. Expanded...in more than number. For a year, most of us – and happily, more of us – have gathered *every week*, not just when it suits us. Challenge has fostered creativity. We make Sunday services *together* now.

- Dozens of us, not a handful, share their ups and downs. A chorus of soothing voices offer

comfort.

- We can't wait for what Alice and Marion have cooked up and think all week long about sitting in trees and burrowing through scratchy hedge rows.
- We watch for each others' photos; every week someone comments on the beauty.
- Some wise person once said, "*If you always do what you've always done, you always get what you've always gotten.*" Well, our service is no longer a sermon sandwich – a few songs on either side of a sermon. Today everyone chimes in, every week.
- Coffee hour has become wide and inclusive.
- We've even met outdoors this year and will again soon.
- And the music –Shana tells the story....

*Shana:* It has been quite a year, re-imagining our UUFES Music Ministry online. Appreciations to all our singers and musicians. You answered the call week after week to join our virtual choir and instrumental ensemble, a shared ministry in creating our growing repertoire of 40+ recorded hymns. Thanks to you, we can all enjoy a feeling of "singing together" from our homes. In addition, our musicians helped to create another 25+ recorded Anthems, Christmas carols, and instrumental pieces for Centering, Offering and Postlude music.

#### REPERTOIRE OF HYMNS RECORDED BY OUR CHOIR

*(recorded during Covid)*

**WOW!**

1 #108 How Can I Keep From Singing 3/22	21 God Be In My Head 1:34 7/12/20 +
2 #298 Wake Now My Senses (1-3-5) 3/22	22#86 Blessed Spirit of My Life 1:35 7/19/20 +
3 #347 Gather the Spirit 3/29 3/14/21 +	23 #354 We Laugh, We Cry 5/10/20 2/7/21 3/14/21 +
4 #1008 When Our Heart is in a Holy Place 4/5, 5/3+	24 #359 When We Are Gathered 7/26/20 +
5 #146 Soon the Day 4/5+	25 #108 How Can I Keep From Singing 8/2/20 +
6 #270 O Day of Light and Gladness 4/12	26 #391 Voice Still and Small 8/2/20 +
7 #123 Spirit of Life 4/12, 4/26 lots! +	27 #188 Come, Come, Whoever You Are 8/16 1/31/21 3/14/21 +
8 #207 Earth Was Given As a Garden 4/12, 4/19 +	28 #295 Sing Out Praises for the Journey 8/16
9 #21 For the Beauty of the Earth 4/26 +	29 #27 I Am That Great and Fiery Force 9/13/20 +
10 #131 Love Will Guide Us 4/26+	30 #331 Life is the Greatest Gift of All 9/27/20
11 #118 This Little Light of Mine 5/10 +	31 #206 Amazing Grace 9/25/20 +
12 #16 Simple Gifts 5/3 +	32 #1069 Ancient Mother 10/11 +
13 #163 For the Earth Forever Turning 1:26 5/17, 10/18/20 +	33 #1068 Rising Green 3:30 10/4/20 10/18/20 +
14 #15 The Lone Wild Bird 1:10 5/17/20 2/7/21+	34 #1002 Comfort Me 3:35 11/12/20 +
15 #159 This is My Song 5/24/20 +	35 #88 Calm Soul of All Things 11/13/20 2/7/21 +
16 #157 Step By Step the Longest March 5/29/20	36 #68 Come, Ye Thankful, People Come 11/20/20
17 #396 I Know this Rose Will Open 6/13/20	37 #189 Light of Ages
18 Arise! Arise! 6/14/20 +	38 #57 All Beautiful the March of Days 12/18
19 #151 I Wish I Knew How 6/21/20, 1/18/21+	39 37 #100 Peace Like a River 1/3/21 +
20 #95 There is More Love Somewhere 2:09 7/12/20 +	40 #352 Find a Stillness 2/7/21

"+" = *sung in multiple services*

Special, special thanks to Eve Goss who has recorded 24 piano pieces and counting. Eve, your music transports us.



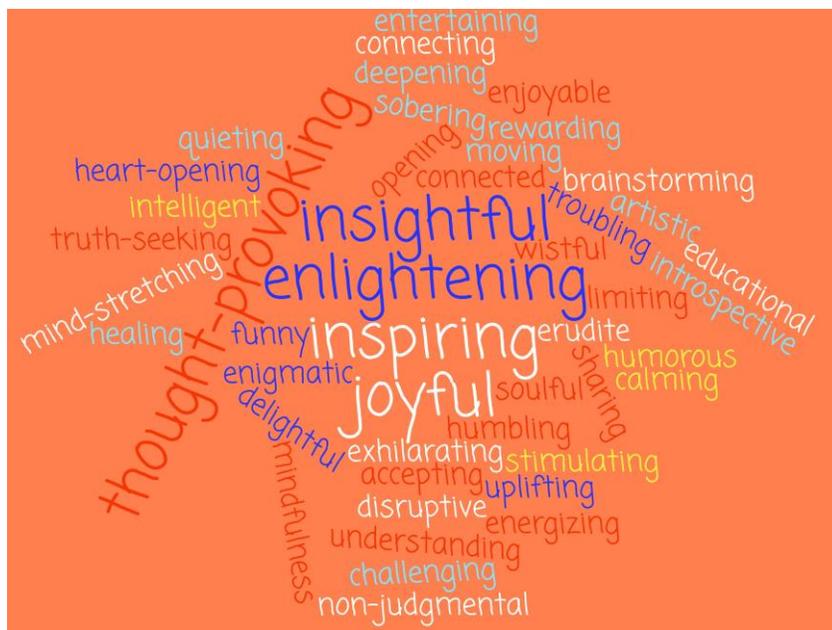
Lastly, appreciation for your fun and creativity in making this pledge drive awesome!

I so look forward to when we can return to the joys of live music. Until that time, we'll continue to explore new and creative ways to make music on Sunday mornings, and, even when many of us will finally gather again indoors, we will be sure to keep the precious musical gifts of this year alive. I invite you to bring *your* gifts to growing our shared music ministry!

Rev. Betsy: Who knew a pandemic would bring such opening and growth? As singer songwriter Lea Morris wrote to me this morning: “We're always new and different and altered by what we've seen and learned and experienced. (It just isn't always so obvious.)”

UUFESians now see each other during the week. We know each other differently. Two new ministries have drawn wide participation: Tuesday poetry and Thursday “Seriously.” Yesterday, participants put words to these afternoons. Seventeen-plus folks have tiptoed into poems, often written by Black and brown and indigenous poets. We’ve watched ourselves grow, heart and mind.

Kim Hamel  
Barbara Bald  
Shana Aisenberg  
David Wilkins  
Marsha Carlm  
Peggy Polo  
Grace Ferguson  
Hope Hutch  
Sam Perry  
Eleanor Jenkins  
Margaret Rieser  
Teena Kula  
Meredith Morten  
Cindy Edmondson



On “Seriously” afternoons, we’ve talked about the 7 deadly sins and the noble virtues, and this we’re having a series on reparations. During really hard weeks, we’ve shared stories of our favorite cars and household pests – another way our experience of community has stretched.



There’s no “going back to…” – we’ve grown too much and wouldn’t fit into that old container. When the world finds its new normal, what we’ve come to value now, in the present, is what we shall be. Alice Walker wrote: “Look closely at the present you are constructing. It should look like the future you are dreaming.”

In this moment, I think of our congregation as a swarm of whirling bees hovering in the air – somewhere between yesterday and tomorrow, until we land in a new place. We don’t know what tomorrow will look like. We don’t know how we will meet our desire and our *need* to meet every Sunday without fail. How will we bond across the miles? Or hear from dozens of people? How will coffee hour welcome and give voice to every person in the room? Opportunity awaits – let’s figure it out!

A year of untold loss has changed our circle. More contact with each other has deepened it. New faces have widened it. New ways of communicating have softened it. Our collective suffering – now in sorrow, now in outrage – has strengthened it.

It is we, together, who have created this spacious, lustrous, pulsing moment. No one else could have dreamed it up!

One year out, let us feel into the heart’s knowing of an unimaginably hard time. And let us celebrate, too, the growing, bubbling, life-giving container that this sweet, strong congregation now is.

“Look closely at the present you are constructing. It should look like the future you are dreaming.” So may it be.

**The Morning Offering** - “Money” by Eleanor Jenkins, sung by Eleanor and Hope (to the tune of “My Little Margie” by Con Conrad and J. Russel Robinson, 1920)

**Anthem** - “Landslide” by Stevie Nix (not in the service recording, for copyright reasons)  
Sung by Shana Aisenberg

### **Community Response**

1. What have you lost in the past year?
2. How are you changed?

**Hymn** - “We Laugh, We Cry”

### **Extinguishing of Chalice**

#### **Reminders**

- Daffodil Brigade: Who would like to deliver daffodils to folks not on Zoom? (Please contact David Wilkins or Rev. Betsy)
- “Seriously”- Reparations: explore the website [www.stolenwealthreturns.org](http://www.stolenwealthreturns.org) this week.

#### **Benediction**

“Look closely at the present you are constructing. It should look like the future you are dreaming.” - Alice Walker

**Postlude** - “This Fellowship of Ours” by Moria Merriweather, with Annie, Tammy and John, and Shana (to the tune of “This Little Light of Mine”)

This service can be viewed until June 14, 2021 at:

[https://uuma.zoom.us/rec/share/1-w5C6rJ1t0fnH\\_Af1qHxDIG3HuC6eu\\_PFJiXxsEsyBD4gGiWr9ZOV1wtt33N6zR.mPQShPNVaGFmL94E](https://uuma.zoom.us/rec/share/1-w5C6rJ1t0fnH_Af1qHxDIG3HuC6eu_PFJiXxsEsyBD4gGiWr9ZOV1wtt33N6zR.mPQShPNVaGFmL94E)

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