



Volume 24 | Issue 1 September 2020 Unitarian Universalist Congregational Society of Westborough

## September Worship Schedule

**Worship Theme of the Month: *Renewal***

### **SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 6, 9:30 AM**

Online Sunday Service on [Zoom](#) – Lisa Shumway & Sharon Barrett

#### **Raise up American Workers**

On this Labor Day weekend Sunday, we will raise up American workers. From frontline workers who courageously put themselves in harm's way to provide essential services to the rest of us during the pandemic, to those who endured financial hardship by selflessly stepping back from their work to stem the spread of COVID-19.

### **SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 13, 10:30 AM**

Online Sunday Service on [Zoom](#) - Rev. Laurel Gray

#### **"Streams of Renewal" – Water Communion**

This is our ingathering service, a day for celebrating our being together in community and the start of a new church year. It is our custom to start with a Water Communion service, blending waters from places we hold dear to create a well of holy water. And, in the time of Covid and online worship, we'll have to find a new way (check your weekly update for details once we have the logistics sorted out!). In that spirit, this service will be about the streams that renew us in hard times and fill our wells with love, hope, and peace.

### **SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 20, 10:30 AM**

Online Sunday Service on [Zoom](#) - Tara Humphries, Intern Minister, Eliot Church of Natick

#### **Ours to Care For**

How might embracing a more expansive understanding of "family" and "freedom" move us deeper into the practices of interdependence, community, and collective liberation?

### **SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 27, 10:30 AM**

Online Sunday Service on [Zoom](#) - Rev. Laurel Gray

#### **Renewal at Home**

As we continue to live more of our lives from home and weather pandemic life, this service will be about finding renewal at home. In our effort to support our kids and families as we rethink Religious Education, we're now offering a guide called "Soulful Home" that helps us build rituals of renewal in the home. Today we'll dive in to this practice of seeking renewal at home together.

## *From the Minister*

Dear UUCSW,

The air this morning had the cool crispness that I associate with getting ready for a new school year, a reminder that summer will soon meld into fall. It's a smell that feels both exciting and nostalgic to me, that speaks of new beginnings and a respite from the heat of summer. And we are collectively moving into a new church and school season together, odd though it is.

As I write this, I sit planning for this coming year together. We know that we will remain online through at least January, since our first priority as a congregation is each other's safety – this is one of the ways we affirm the inherent worth of all people. Being digital creates both limitations and opportunities. It has been a joy connecting with you across distances, some of you able to return online despite living out of state. Over the summer, digital worship made it easier to share summer services with local UU congregations. This fall, we are going to have a guest preacher once a month to relieve some of the pressure on the Program Committee and to gather together with voices from outside our UUCSW community. The blessing of Zoom is that I've also been able to invite colleagues to preach who live too far away to be with us in person, but can join us online. We'll begin with a service led by Tara Humphries who is a dear colleague in her final year at Yale Divinity School. A big thank you to Sharon Barrett for all her work as the new Program Committee chair! It sounds like summer services were wonderful and we have a solid team heading into the fall.

In addition to underscoring the importance of Sunday morning worship, in the survey we sent out in the spring, you all said you would like more small group ministry opportunities – ways to connect in small, meaningful groups. When I was a congregant at UU San Francisco, joining a small group was the single best thing for helping me feel like I truly belonged. So, we're going to try something new this year – a quarantine experiment! We're going to be grouping the congregation into pods, so that all of you have a small group that you're a part of, and training one person in each pod to facilitate the small group. These will be your people for the year – people to connect with, check in on, and build a deeper sense of community amidst physical distance. It's a new experiment, but I'm excited to work on creating more meaningful connection amidst the strangeness of life right now.

It was also clear from the congregational survey and annual meeting that you are yearning for more social justice opportunities and ways of participating in the movement for Black lives. I applaud you and am proud of the work the Racial Justice Committee has begun. A big thank you to Jane Walsh for stepping up and agreeing to chair this new committee! In addition to their work, I'm starting a weekly "Small Acts, Big Principles" post on Facebook about how we live out our seven principles in the small choices of daily life. Please join in and use the tag #smallactsbigprinciples. My small act this week was to support our fifth principle – the right of conscience and use of the democratic process – by loading up on stamps, ordering toy postal trucks for my nephew, and signing a petition all in support of the US Postal Service.

Last, I want to commend the work of the Religious Education Task Force. When we formed in February, the goal was to rethink how we organize our RE program at UUCSW in light of Cassie moving away. But within a few weeks, the task became much more complicated as we moved to a fully digital platform. Good things are underway and I encourage you to read their letter in this Vista describing their plan for the fall.

Despite all the hurdles of life in quarantine, I can honestly say that I'm looking forward to this year together. You inspire me with your love and commitment to this congregation. May this year be one filled with unexpected joys and blessings. We will find our way together.

Blessings,

*Laurel*

[Laurel.Gray@uucsw.org](mailto:Laurel.Gray@uucsw.org)

\*Please note that my days off are typically Monday and Saturday. I try to respond to emails within 48 hours, but that is not always possible. I appreciate your patience.

## *Board Matters*

### **Welcome Back** (kind of ...)

Did we have a summer? Yes, we went to two picnics! We talked to people and wore our masks. We connected just at a safe distance.

What else have you done to enjoy your summer? We also went on Safaris ... well, Safari Sundays! Many of us enjoyed Summer Services via Zoom lead by area Unitarian Universalist Churches. Meeting new people is wonderful and a great opportunity to experience how other churches follow UU traditions. We also enjoyed many lay lead services by our congregants.

We want to welcome you back from all your summer adventures and certainly welcome Laurel back to start the new 2020-2021 church year. Let's hope that there will be more opportunities to share going forward.

Please mark your calendars for the first ingathering Zoom service on September 13th at 10:30 AM. While you have your calendars out, please put the special meeting on September 27th to approve the budget for the remainder of the year. It will be immediately following the service.

This is what the board has been up to:

The 2020-2021 board of elected trustees has been working through the summer. Judith Nicholson and Kim Hall are the co-chairs, David King is a returning trustee, and Scott Owen and Stacy Spies are the newest members.

We have been meeting through the summer to complete the Application for Preliminary Fellowship for Laurel. It is an evaluation tool assessing her as a minister as well as a process to evaluate our ministry.

Representatives from the Board and CoM have already met with Laurel to start working collaboratively, sharing observations, and listening to hopes for the 2020-2021 Church Year. We will plan a way to share our input from the UUA evaluation process with the congregation. We will use the congregations' input toward our overall mission/vision and ministry as we all work together to chart our future.

We held our first board meeting of the 2020-2021 Church Year on August 6th. The liaisons for each committee presented updates to the board. Scott Owen volunteered to be the liaison to the Program Committee and Stacy Spies volunteered to be the liaison to the Building and Grounds Committee. Thank you both! Ashleigh Swain, our new clerk was able to take notes for the minutes and she assures us she will return next month, thank you, too! Some of the updates follow:

The church, although empty just now, is still being carefully taken care of. A leak in the roof is being repaired and the church is cleaned weekly to keep it ready for our safe return.

David, Lisa, and Laurel have continued to maintain and modify Google Suites to streamline our communication, planning, and future archiving and documentation.

The Reopening Advisory Panel is meeting toward our safe in-person return to the church. Many variables need to be considered for the congregation's safety as well as the safety of our renters.

The new Racial Justice Committee presents an opportunity to identify a cohesive Social Justice movement the congregation can support. The Report of the UUA Commission on Institutional Change, titled: Widening the Circle of Concern, Report of the UUA Commission on Institutional Change will be reviewed toward this goal.

Five members of the congregation and Laurel virtually attended the General Assembly (GA) held June 24th through the 28th. The theme of this year's GA was Rooted, Inspired, and Ready! All the GA registrants had access to the GA Virtual Participation Portal, which combined multiple modes of participant engagement including chat, Q&A, and polling. Registrants were able to watch and ask questions in live sessions including workshops and business sessions. The links are still live for many of the recorded workshops at <https://www.uua.org/ga>. Please click on the link and enjoy some of the many offerings in which we participated.

The Site Team for the 2021 General Assembly recommends that it be held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Please think about attending. All of the attendees agreed it was quite an experience.

Small Unitarian Universalist societies and churches are experiencing challenges. We are concerned about our future. The board and committee members were invited to attend an Inter-Church meeting on Saturday, August 15th to share ideas, resources, and challenges, in the spirit of fostering our interdependence. The workshop's goal was to be able to help us toward building a more united foundation for future growth.

The meeting was very positive. We feel that we are laying the groundwork upon which we can build more contact and communication. To start, we will be able to share our calendars and join in other UU churches' activities and invite other congregations to join us in ours. We'll let you know about Northborough's Book and STRAWBERRY SUNDAE event coming in September. Our annual auction and other events will be shared with other churches, too. Hopefully, we will be able to expand our connections, meet new friends, and work toward our common goals.

The board meetings are open to all our members and friends. Please contact one of the board members to join a meeting or to have something added to the board agenda.

## Happy 2020-2021 Church Year!

*Judith Nicholson on behalf of the UUCSW Board of Trustees*

### Board Meeting Dates:

- September 3, 2020
- October 1, 2020
- November 5, 2020
- December 3, 2020
- January 7, 2021
- February 4, 2021
- March 4, 2021
- April 1, 2021
- May 6, 2021
- June 3, 2021

## Money Matters

As the summer winds to a close, I am happy to report some good financial news. We closed the 2019/2020 fiscal year with a surplus of \$24,730! Thank you to all of you for meeting your pledge commitments (only 3% of pledges went unpaid this year) and contributing through our fundraisers such as the auction, ShopwithScrip and Stop & Shop cards. It all adds up. I'd also like to thank all of you who help keep our expenses under control. We came in just under budget on the expense side.

On to the current fiscal year. As you recall, at June's annual meeting we passed a budget that covered only the first quarter of the fiscal year. As of this writing, we are halfway through the quarter and are ahead of budget on income and on budget for expenses. It is a big help from an income perspective that so many of you are using your bank's "bill payer" option to set up automatic payments of your pledges. That functionality is also available through Realm: <https://onrealm.org/UUCSW/give/now>. Automated giving really helps UUCSW by smoothing our income stream and reducing unknowns.

The newly re-energized Finance Committee met this summer and we are working on two things at the moment: the budget for the remainder of the fiscal year (a special meeting to vote on the budget will be held in late September and low risk investment options for a portion of our unrestricted cash reserves which has grown to over \$100K.

If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Shumway at [Treasurer@uucsw.org](mailto:Treasurer@uucsw.org).

## Membership News

Welcome back to the 2020/2021 church year! The Membership Engagement Team (MET) is looking forward to seeing you all in our virtual pews when regular services begin on September 13th. We saw quite a few of you at our two socially distanced picnics in July and August. We are planning to hold at least two more of these events, one in September and one in October, weather permitting. The MET is looking for new members to help us welcome visitors, keep in touch with our members/friends and help us think of inventive new ways to keep our fantastic community connected to one another while we can't be together in one space. If you enjoy connecting with people or brainstorming/organizing activities we encourage you to join us. You can reach us by emailing Lisa Shumway at [Membership@uucsw.org](mailto:Membership@uucsw.org).

If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Shumway at [Treasurer@uucsw.org](mailto:Treasurer@uucsw.org).

## Pastoral Care

The Membership Engagement Team and Rev. Laurel are always here to support you. We know that caring looks different right now, as we keep physical distance. Rev. Laurel is now, like so many of you, working from home.

If you'd like to make an appointment for pastoral care, or have a joy or sorrow that you'd like included on a Sunday when you're away, you can email Laurel at: [laurel.gray@uucsw.org](mailto:laurel.gray@uucsw.org). She can also be reached on her cell phone at 401-932-7855. Feel free to text or call if something is urgent or you just need to check in.

## Take UUCSW Wherever You Go with Our Podcast

Did you know you can listen to the entire back catalog of Rev. Laurel's sermons on demand - AND hear additional in-depth conversations about UUism, community, healing, anti-racism, and so much more? It's all available on our podcast, called [UUCSW Reflections](#)!

**What is a podcast?** A podcast is a radio show that you listen to on the internet. UUCSW Reflections is the name of our church's podcast. Each sermon or discussion is one episode of the podcast.

**How do I listen to the UUCSW Reflections podcast?** There are two ways:

1. You can visit the podcast website on your computer.
  - Step 1: Click here: [bit.ly/UUpod](http://bit.ly/UUpod)
  - Step 2: Click the "PLAY" button underneath the episode you want to hear.
2. Or, you can listen on your smartphone using a podcast app.
  - Step 1: Make sure you have a podcast app on your smartphone.
    - If you have an iPhone, you probably already have one called Podcasts.
    - If you don't have one, go to your App Store and download one for free. I recommend the one called Overcast.
  - Step 2: Open your podcast app and find the search bar. Search for UUCSW Reflections.
  - Step 3: Tap on the episode you want to listen to.
  - Step 4: Subscribe! That way, future episodes will appear in your podcast app automatically.

**What's the difference between the "Sermon" episodes and the "Q&A" episodes?** The episodes with "Sermon" in the title are recordings of Rev. Laurel delivering her sermons. The monthly "Q&A" episodes are one-on-one conversations between Rev. Laurel and podcast host Amanda Hall. Together they reflect on themes from the month's sermons and answer questions from the congregation.

**How do I submit topics or questions for Rev. Laurel and Amanda to discuss on the monthly Q&A episode?** Easy! Email [podcasts@uucsw.org](mailto:podcasts@uucsw.org). We won't share your name or identifying info on air.

The summer is a perfect time to catch up on anything you may have missed before we return with brand new episodes in the fall. Happy listening!

## RE Task Force

As we look forward to Fall and the beginning of a new church year, planning is underway for this year's Religious Education Program. The RE Task Force is brainstorming options and experiences that enable the children and families to be engaged in meaningful conversations and experiences as a whole group and in smaller age-appropriate groups. While safety and social-distancing guidelines remain in the forefront of importance, the hope is to facilitate one whole group activity a month and then one activity as well for each of the RE age groups (pk-2, 3-5, and 6-8). While much of the interactions will need to be facilitated through social media, an occasional opportunity for outdoor connections will also be considered. Soul Matters <https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/> will be used as a reference as activities are created and organized.

Please email [re@uucsw.org](mailto:re@uucsw.org) if you are interested in learning more and being a part of this experience at our congregation.

## *Help Get Out the Vote with "UU the Vote"*

### Join a Letter-Writing Campaign

We, the UUCSW Social Justice Committee, are participating in a "UU The Vote" letter writing campaign to encourage lapsed voters in targeted states to vote in this year's presidential election. Join us and we will give you voter names, addresses and standardized voter-specific letters that you will personalize by handwriting your reason for voting. People can typically complete 20 letters in an hour to an hour-and-a-half.

Here's the Executive Summary:

Marge Fisher & Jerry Breecher will sign up through UU The Vote with the sponsoring organization, **VoteForward**. They will download lists of voters and will email you a PDF of the voter-specific letters which you will print. **VoteForward** is tracking which voters are 'adopted' so it is important that we pay attention to detail.

Participating includes providing printing, envelopes, stamps – and of course encouragement to vote. (If the cost of stamps is an issue, the Social Justice Committee can provide postage).

**Let Marge and Jerry know as soon as possible if you want to participate.**

Questions email Marge ([mfisher2898@gmail.com](mailto:mfisher2898@gmail.com)) or Jerry ([jerry@breecher.com](mailto:jerry@breecher.com))

## *UMs at Lunch*

Considering the continuing Covid 19 situation with social distancing requirements and all, I don't see how it is feasible to plan to have our lunch gatherings at the present time. We would be so separated that we could not have much interaction. We are also a high risk group with members in their late eighties and some in their nineties. I personally have no desire to go into a restaurant at this time, and we can't make reservations for outdoors in advance because we can't be sure of the weather, and we are too large a group. As a result, I am disappointed, but I am not going to plan a lunch get together in September. We will have to wait and see how things work out.

## *From the Reopening Task Force*

Hello from the new group, charged with evaluating options about reopening after Covid-19 shut out doors temporarily. We are thinking carefully about how we can see each other safely, how our renters use our building, how our children experience RE and how we clean and sanitize. The Task Force meets regularly and is providing advice to the Board about using shared spaces and how to proceed. As we solidify steps needed to open the church, we will keep you posted.

*Ann Maloney, Juliana Spofford, Phyllis Samara and Andy Koenigsberg*

## Food Collections

Last year, our congregation made and delivered hundreds of lunches to a homeless shelter in Worcester. The need remains, but the pandemic is blocking us from repeating our success of last year. We will adapt to ensure that we can provide at least the same level of assistance to one of Worcester's most vulnerable populations.

Please watch for notices of and support monthly food collections, and, if you would like to do more, please reach out to:

- Ed Walsh ([walshnboro@aol.com](mailto:walshnboro@aol.com)),
- Jerry Breecher ([Jerry@breecher.com](mailto:Jerry@breecher.com)),
- Pauline Sciarappa ([psciarappa@gmail.com](mailto:psciarappa@gmail.com)), or
- Marjorie Fisher ([mfisher2898@gmail.com](mailto:mfisher2898@gmail.com)).

## Blood Donors Needed!

Throughout the summer months blood donations typically are low. Please consider donating blood through any of the following organizations to give the gift that is desperately needed and greatly appreciated. You can let others know of this opportunity to help others by email, phone call or any social media that you choose, spread the word! Most locations prefer appointments but some may have limited walk-in opportunities.

Make a difference even on your vacation/staycation by finding a donor center near your happy place.

Thank you!

*Pauline Sciarappa*

### **Boston Children's Hospital Blood Donor Center**

333 Longwood Ave Boston

Call 617-355-6677 or visit <https://www.halfpints.childrenshospital.org/>

### **Donor Center at DFCI**

450 Brookline Ave Boston

Call 617-632-3206 or visit <https://www.dana-farber.org/how-you-can-help/get-involved/donate-blood-and-platelets/>

### **Rhode Island Blood Donor Centers - multiple locations**

Call 800-283-8385 or visit <https://www.ribc.org/>

### **American Red Cross Donation Centers - multiple locations**

Call 800-733-2767 or visit <https://www.redcrossblood.org/>

## *New! Racial Justice Committee*

Authorized by the 2020 annual meeting in June, the committee is devoted to all things related to understanding racism and pursuing racial equity. Several members met virtually a few times over the Summer and it's not too late to get involved! If interested, contact Jane Walsh at [janenboro@aol.com](mailto:janenboro@aol.com) or 508-393-9206 (please leave a message).

We understand our initial role as being to

- Inspire UUCSW members and friends to learn about racism/antiracism and to act to create racial equity;
- Cultivate strong foundation of internal-congregational awareness of racism/antiracism while incorporating external-congregational initiatives;
- Serve as a repository of opportunities (internal and external to UUCSW) that promote racial equity through learning and/or action;
- Lead by taking advantage of opportunities. The opportunities that are pursued will reflect the interest of the person taking the lead. Opportunities will reflect one or more of four pillars supporting committee activities: learn, vote, volunteer, and donate.

**Join us on September 16, 2020 via [Zoom](#) at 7:00 pm**, for discussion of the book *"How to Be an Antiracist"* (2019) by Ibram X. Kendi.

Interested and no time to read? Watch this interview about antiracism with Dr. Kendi, from the 2019 Aspen Ideas Festival <https://www.aspenideas.org/sessions/how-to-be-an-antiracist>

**Who is Dr. Kendi?** Marge Fisher tells us "Born in 1982 as Ibram Henry Rogers, he changed his middle name to Xolani (meaning "peace" in Zulu) in 2013 and changed his last name to Kendi to match his wife's when they got married. (Kendi means "loved one" in Meru.) One of America's foremost historians, he is the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities and the Founding Director of the Boston University Center for Antiracist Research. He is also a contributing writer at The Atlantic and a CBS News correspondent. In the 2020-21 academic year, he will be a Radcliffe Fellow at Harvard University."

**What does it mean to be antiracist?** Kim Hall summarizes Kendi's definition as one who supports, through action or ideas, policies that produce or sustain racial equity between racial groups. Policies include written and unwritten laws, rules, procedures, processes, regulations, and guidelines that govern people. Kendi argues that there is no race-neutral position. If not antiracist, the only other option is racist.

What do **you** think of Dr. Kendi's ideas? Join Kim Hall and Jerry Breecher as they facilitate this discussion. Join the Zoom Meeting at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88916111195>.

**Suggestions? Questions?** Contact Jane Walsh, Chair of the Racial Justice Committee [janenboro@aol.com](mailto:janenboro@aol.com) or 508-393-9206 (please leave a message)

# September Calendar of Events

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
9:30 AM – <a href="#">Online Summer Sunday Service</a>	6:30 PM – <a href="#">UU Knits (online)</a>	🕒 7 PM – <a href="#">Community Hour</a>		🕒 10:30 AM – <a href="#">Community Hour</a> 7 PM – Board Meeting		
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
9:30 AM – <a href="#">Online Summer Sunday Service</a>	6:30 PM – <a href="#">UU Knits (online)</a>	7 PM – <a href="#">Community Hour</a>		🕒 10:30 AM – <a href="#">Community Hour</a>		
<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
10:30 AM – <a href="#">Online Sunday Service</a>	6:30 PM – <a href="#">UU Knits (online)</a>	🕒 7 PM – <a href="#">Community Hour</a>	6:30 PM – <a href="#">Racial Justice Book Discussion</a>	🕒 10:30 AM – <a href="#">Community Hour</a>		
<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>
10:30 AM – <a href="#">Online Sunday Service</a>	6:30 PM – <a href="#">UU Knits (online)</a>	🕒 7 PM – <a href="#">Community Hour</a>		🕒 10:30 AM – <a href="#">Community Hour</a>		
<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
10:30 AM – <a href="#">Online Sunday Service</a>	6:30 PM – <a href="#">UU Knits (online)</a>	🕒 7 PM – <a href="#">Community Hour</a>		🕒 10:30 AM – <a href="#">Community Hour</a>		

🕒 Rev. Laurel office hours

