

The Circuit Writer - June 2020

Monthly theme: Compassion

What does it mean to be a people of Compassion?

Join us for our **online service** every Sunday! Our podcast is e-mailed and posted on our Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/firstuuwausau>) Sunday mornings at 10:15, along with an Order of Service. Grab a cup of coffee, settle into a comfortable chair, and join us as our community gathers in spirit together. Then join us on Zoom at 11:30 for our virtual Coffee Hour, and enjoy catching up, seeing familiar faces, and spending time in the warmth of beloved community.

Want to sign up for e-mails? Contact danika@uuwausau.org and she'll be happy to add you.

Sunday Services for June 2020

June 7: Julie Trombley, DRE, preaching

June 14: *A Conversation about Meaning Through the Language of Poetry*—Led by UU Wausau's Minister & Staff

June 21: *On Fatherhood* — The Rev. Brian Mason, preaching

June 28: UU Wausau invites you to join the congregation as they host a watch party for the largest annual gathering of UUs joining in worship. The worship service will include a collection for the [Tomaquag Museum](#), an indigenous museum featuring an extensive collection and archive of Southern New England tribal communities. A link with details will be sent separately via e-mail and posted on Facebook closer to the date. ***Please note: This service starts at 9AM.**

During this time of virtual services, know we hold you in our thoughts and our hearts, and look forward to the day we can all gather together in person again.



From a Window on Grant. . .

GREETINGS

I've never been so grateful for warm weather in my life. Being outside, if only in my backyard, offers refuge after months of pandemic lockdown. Despite my anxiety around reopening and all that it involves politically and economically, I am optimistic that goodness and common sense will prevail. I have some study time and vacation scheduled in July, so I won't have another newsletter until August, which is why this one's a bit longer. Hope you enjoy!

2020-21

In recent weeks I've been meeting with the staff and Board of Trustees to begin planning for the 2020-21 church year. The majority of scientific research about the coronavirus warns that church buildings in particular are high-risk gathering places. These warnings prompted Susan Frederick-Gray, current President of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, to recommend the following in her [May 14 newsletter](#): "Based on advice from experts, we continue to recommend that congregations not gather in person. We also recommend that congregations begin planning for virtual operations for the next year (through May 2021)." You may need to take a breath after reading that. I did. The thought of having to do virtual worship and programming for another year is daunting. But it is being considered.

UU WAUSAU BOUNCE BACK

After consultation with the staff, Board, and clergy colleagues, I have started to develop a **UU Wausau Bounce Back** plan. Like many of the plans developed by state governments, and also by local organizations like the YMCA and Conservatory of Music, UU Wausau's will be scientifically informed, but in keeping with the church's means and resources. At this point the plan is being designed with 3-4 phases that gradually allow in-person gathering opportunities. It will be designed so that in the event a Safer at Home order is reinstated, the staff and I will be able to immediately offer the same programming online.

Despite the challenges, I am excited and enjoy thinking creatively about evolving the church to address the needs of this particular moment here at UU Wausau. **But please, if you have ideas or suggestions, or you think it'd be fun to brainstorm with me, let's be in touch.** I love collaborating with people and welcome suggestions. My goal is to have a ratified plan ready sometime in early to mid-August.

SUMMER SERVICES

It's that time of year again when the Worship & Music Committee coordinate the annual summer service series, but this year they'll be podcast only. This is a wonderful UU Wausau tradition that never fails to offer unique and eclectic services. I hope you will consider offering a service, or maybe you know someone who has an amazing story to tell. I've personally signed up to do one in August. The staff has developed an easy process for recording podcasts; so don't worry about the tech.

Summer services go from July 5 to September 6. Several Sundays have been claimed, so if you'd like to pitch an idea, act fast! **For more info or to schedule a service, contact the W&M Committee co-chair, Randy Jefferson (715-845-3806 or rpi1115@yahoo.com).**

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From a Window on Grant. . .

THANK YOU

I want to thank everyone for the kind and encouraging notes you've sent the staff and me these past couple months. They helped in ways I cannot convey in words. Thanks also to all of you who continue supporting the Mission and Vision of the church by keeping your pledges going. They allow us to minister to peoples' hearts in ways we never have before. I also want to thank the people who donated to the church's food pantry and contributed to the Minister's Discretionary Fund. That money helps people who slip through the cracks of government safety nets by providing the means for essential and immediate needs. Despite our physical distance, UU Wausau continues to be a welcoming sanctuary of love for all who desire to move in our orbit.

CHURCHES ARE ESSENTIAL

Maybe you caught some of the hubbub following the President's comments that churches are essential. Forgive me, but I agree—**churches are essential**. But you already knew that.

Throughout history, from plagues to persecution, churches have been temporarily scattered. In almost every instance you find record of people who persisted. They never stopped worshipping and celebrating, even if it was at home amongst family. The church is called to worship, and worship we will. We're also called to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, and care for the poor and oppressed. I want us to be together in person more than anything. **I miss each of you so much**. I miss your surprise visits and handshakes and hearing your voices in song and chatting loudly with each other in the moments before service. I miss seeing the children make their way down the aisle for the story and joking with the youth. **But our highest and holiest calling isn't just to go to church, as vital as that is; we are also called to be the church.**

We will worship in person again when it's safe— & what a glorious day that will be! For now, our essential work is to *be* the church wherever and in everything—*everything*—we do.

Cheers and blessings,

Brian



Reflections...

If you are anything like me, you're REALLY glad that the virtual school year is coming to an end. And if you're anything like me you're also looking at an empty summer calendar with one event after another canceled, and scratching your head wondering what your kids are going to do all summer. I'm looking forward to more time outside. My family is in the process of planting a garden for the first time in 7 years and I'm looking forward to us tending it together. It will definitely be a summer unlike any other. We typically close down Religious Education for the summer at First UU Wausau. Since this summer is different from any we've ever experienced, First UU Wausau Religious Education is doing something it's never done before.

We're offering a **summer at-home RE program** for children and youth: Quest for UU Identity! This summer might be the perfect time for your kids, and your whole family, to learn more about what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist. This program will offer age appropriate activities each month that will focus on UU identity, including spiritual practices and relaxation techniques. All activities will be completed at home and whenever you'd like to do them during the week or month (no live events). The majority of tasks will be hands-on and interactive. The only screen involved will be an occasional video link. Children or Youth will complete some activities on their own and some will involve the whole family. Activities and information will come to you through emails AND a packet that will be mailed or delivered to your home. Participation in our summer RE program is optional and **registration is required**. To register your child(ren) or youth, email the names and ages of the children you're enrolling to julie@uuwausau.org. **Registration deadline is June 3rd**.

Please remember that you can connect with me individually. Reach out to schedule a phone conversation or Zoom meeting for yourself OR your children. I'm here for you. Please take good care of yourself.

With Love,

Julie

June's Soul Matters question:
*What does it mean to be a people
of COMPASSION?*



From this month's packet: "Compassion calls us to change things! It's not just about comforting others; it's about our comfort getting disturbed. It's about connecting with another's pain and struggling so deeply that we can't rest until they rest. When we feel compassion -real compassion- we don't just understand another's pain, we want it to stop. And then we do what's needed to make it stop."

This month's packet is full of spiritual exercises, questions, and resources to help us pause and reflect on compassion. Soul Matters packets are available to all church members. Email Julie at julie@uuwausau.org to request one be emailed to you.

From the Board Table...

Strengthening our 150-Year-old Church Community in the Midst of the Pandemic

I don't think I am the only one who did not anticipate the remarkable resonance and responses to our Church's podcast services. When the Board made the safety-based decision to discontinue in-person services, it made sense that podcasts would be an effective way to continue sharing our weekly worship together. That being said, it did not occur to me how fully these pre-recorded services would pull me into prayerful meditation and create a genuine sense of connection with the staff and congregation. Nor did I appreciate the added benefits of being able to listen whenever I had time, and to listen again when found a service particularly poignant. Instead of missing services that happen on an over-booked Sunday, I can go back to them and even share them with others.

And this doesn't happen by magic or accident. It is entirely due to the exceptional talent, passion and dedication of our professional staff, led by the Reverend Brian. I love hearing the echo of their voices in the sanctuary, the way they talk to us as if we are sitting right there in front of them, the beauty of their voices and music and the thoughtful, heartfelt compassion that they share with us every week.

The broad recognition that we are truly fortunate to have such a wonderful staff leading and building our Church community is demonstrated by how many people (250 – 300, from 33 states and 8 countries) are listening each week.

So despite, and to some extent, because of the pandemic, I am enormously encouraged by how we have stayed together and supported each other. To keep this going will require engagement from the entire congregation, so I invite you to think about how you would like to contribute to and be part of future, podcast and in-person services. The staff cannot and should not carry this responsibility alone.

- Brian Stezenski-Williams

Interested in helping with a Sunday service this summer?

We are still needing several service leaders over the summer months. Currently, we tentatively have seven of the ten Sundays from July 5th—September 6th filled. If any of you are interested in helping insure the continuity of services through the summer by providing the message for the recorded podcast for one of those Sundays (staff is here to answer any questions, and help make sure your recording process goes smoothly), please contact Randy Jefferson, at (715) 845-3806 or rpj1115@yahoo.com.

Treasurer's Quarterly Congregational Report

Financial results through April 30, 2020

Key 2020 Annual Budget Numbers:	2020 Pledges:		
Total Income	\$122,508	Pledges Budget	\$334,875
Total Expense	\$122,441	Pledges Made	\$326,765
Net Income	\$ 67	Pledges Lower Than Budget	\$ 8,110

Outstanding Mortgage: \$147,506 Endowment Fund: \$405,317

Financial results for the first third of the year show that both income and expenses are tracking close to budget and very close to one another. It is heartening that thus far in our physically distanced relationship with church and our church community our pledge receipts have remained steady. It is critical that this trend continue so that we are able to compensate our staff at the budgeted level we have committed to them. Their considerable efforts to provide sustaining, nurturing, and enriching ministry to us during this difficult period deserve our full support

We knew our 2020 Stewardship goal was a considerable stretch for us. While we ended up 2.4% (\$8,110) short of that goal, the \$326,775 that was pledged represented a 14.7% (\$41,765) increase over 2019. Nine new pledge units were added for 2020, but the total number of pledges dropped from 134 to 124. That made the overall results even more impressive, with the average pledge increasing from \$2,162 to \$2,635. It should be noted that a generous matching gift pledge of \$21,478 helped these results significantly. In the next quarterly Treasurer's report to the congregation, I will include a quartile analysis of the 2020 pledges that hopefully provides helpful guidance for members as they plan for 2021 giving.

Because our Endowment Fund is invested through the UU Common Endowment Fund, which is a balanced portfolio that helps manage investment risk, we did not experience the full impact of the recent stock market downturn. Our current Endowment Fund balance of \$405,317 represents a drop of 8.8% from our position when I last reported to you three months ago. Remember our long term goal, based on UUA guidance, is to grow our Endowment Fund to twice our annual operating budget before we make scheduled disbursements from it. Our 2020 budget is \$384,795. As previously reported, we plan to replenish the \$150,000 transferred from the Endowment Fund in late 2019 to cover critical structural tuck pointing needs with some of the anticipated contributions which will be received from the multi-year Capital Campaign, the initiation of which has been put on hold during the current economic uncertainty.

Respectfully Submitted
 Randy Jefferson
 5/18/20

June 2020

Morning meditations are posted to our Facebook page Monday-Thursday at 8:30AM.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 Choir Hangout on Zoom 6:30PM	4	5	6
7 10:15AM Podcast posted to FB & e-mail 11:30 Coffee Hour!	8	9	10 Choir Hangout on Zoom 6:30PM	11	12 2nd Friday Nighters on Zoom, hosted by the Zavadoskis 6:30PM*	13
14 10:15AM Podcast posted to FB & e-mail 11:30 Coffee Hour!	15	16 BOT meeting on Zoom 6:30PM	17 Choir Hangout on Zoom 6:30PM	18	19	20
21 10:15AM Podcast posted to FB & e-mail 11:30 Coffee Hour!	22	23	24 Choir Hangout on Zoom 6:30PM	25	26	27
28 10:15AM Podcast posted to FB & e-mail 11:30 Coffee Hour!	29	30				* Zoom link will be e-mailed the week of the event.



First Universalist Unitarian Church of Wausau
 504 Grant Street
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Newsletter of the First Universalist Unitarian Church of Wausau

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All staff is available via e-mail.

Please contact us to set up a phone call or online meeting.

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