

# Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Corvallis

January 2020 Monthly Update

## Between Us

*Jill K. McAllister, Senior Minister*

*“Remember that every day is a new beginning. Make time to reflect upon your choice of this path, and upon your commitment ... and give yourselves the chance to choose it again and again.”*

I use these words most frequently in wedding ceremonies, but they are appropriate for any new beginning, including the new year before us. In terms of ethical living, it is clear that the choices we make day after day are where ethics and right relations become real, or not. As we enter a new year, in this time of heightened awareness of the consequences of our actions and our relations, may we each find ways to strengthen our commitments to the religious life, which means to living in right relations as much and as often as we can.

The hallmark, the challenge, and the call of liberal religion, and especially of a liberal religious congregation such as ours, is not theology or dogma or charisma or tradition, but covenant—the agreement to walk together and work together, in service to the highest ideals of justice, equity, compassion, and wisdom. The call is to a commitment, and a way of life.

Living in covenant means living in active engagement with each other. In marriage, this is obvious, though not always easy. In a religious community it is an ideal, but often without shared understanding of the practices and skills it requires. All relations of mutuality and respect require both commitment and practice. I think of a few friends, for whom I am especially grateful, each of whom I have come to trust for their willingness to be generous and honest with me. We do not agree on everything—in fact two of us disagree on a great deal—but we have come to appreciate greatly how much we need and depend on the loving offering of different perspectives, to challenge and to nurture one another. We have ventured out on limbs of trust together, and because of that we have each changed and grown. The gift of this trust is priceless. It is the currency needed in the search for truth.

If you're new to the Fellowship, or if you've been with us for years, I want to say to you that this is what the Fellowship can mean to you. It is a community where you can find others who are equally committed to the search for wisdom and truth. It can be a place to find trustworthy companions to respectfully call out the best in you, if you will do the same for them.



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### Sundays in January

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Our ideals and commitments as religious people call us to live in right relations with ourselves, others and Life. We know this at some level, yet we still have much to learn about what right relations requires of us, including skills which foster right relations. This month in worship we'll move in the direction of learning more. We'll think about things to let go of – habits and ideas which no longer serve us or ethical living – as we begin the new year. We'll consider the tenacious undercurrents of racism and patriarchy in the structures of our relations, and aim to find ways to dismantle more of those structures – both within us and between us. We'll consider the meaning of membership as a choice to live in right relations. We'll hear from several Fellowship members, and some of our youth. We hope you'll join in worship as often as you can.

### Worship Leaders in January

Jan. 5 Israel Buffardi  
Jan. 12 Rev. Jill McAllister  
with Jean Gilbert preaching  
Jan. 19 Rev. Jill McAllister  
with members of YRUU  
Jan. 26 Rev. Jill McAllister

As the new year begins, I invite you to come as often as you can. Come to help build this network of trust, which the world desperately needs. Come to help consider a broad range of topics over the coming months – from “hot-button” religious/political issues, to explorations of next steps in anti-racist, anti-oppression, multicultural living in the context of a climate emergency. Come to help one another.

See you Sunday -- Jill

## **E**xplorations

*Israel Buffardi, Assistant Minister*

### **What do You Believe?**

Many Unitarian Universalists tend to spend more time talking about what they don't believe rather than what they do believe. This is understandable since many Unitarian Universalists come to this faith after having rejected belief systems that no longer gave them meaning, purpose, or affirmed the sacredness of their identities.

Regardless of our spiritual and religious histories, we often find ourselves in the same human predicaments: trying to wrestle with life's big questions; and trying to figure out how to live meaningful, whole, and ethical lives.

Although our faith offers no neatly packaged or simple answers to these big questions of philosophy and theology, we encourage the process of communal spiritual exploration. The process of exploring beliefs is no trivial matter, for our beliefs affect how we relate to life, death, other people, and efforts for justice. I believe that when we come together to ask these questions and explore meaning, the process is much richer and more powerful than when we do it alone. We learn from each other and with each other. We need each other for the journey.

### **Coming this Winter! Coming of Age For Adults**

You may or may not know that every other year we offer a Coming of Age program for our youth to explore and develop their personal beliefs together. It is so important to examine our conscience and our heart to ask ourselves what we believe and what our personal mission is. This process is not only important for our youth, but for Unitarian Universalists of ALL ages and stages of life.

That is why I am facilitating a Coming of Age Program for Adults this winter! The program will be offered as a series of 6 sessions beginning in late January.

In this program, we will follow a small group format of personal sharing and relationship-building, combined with some lectures and readings. Participants will explore, discuss, and develop personal beliefs on the big theological questions we face, such as life, death, god/higher power, truth, good and evil, justice, and UU theology. Sessions will culminate with the writing and sharing of personal belief statements, known as credos. I hope you will consider joining in the conversation!

#### *Words for Reflection*

*We are called to live with the knowledge and awareness that we are part of all that is and that our decisions have an affect on the quality of life for all beings. We are called to live this connectedness that exists between all members of creation... We are called to remember loving kindness for one another until each of us can remember, believe and live in love.*

*Sr. Mary Goergen, OSF*

Coming of Age For Adults: What Do You Believe? Session Dates:  
Mondays and one Thursday: 1/20, 1/27, 2/6, 2/10, 2/17, 2/24 at 7-8:30 PM

RSVP to Assistant Minister for Religious Exploration Israel Buffardi [assistantminister@uucorvallis.org](mailto:assistantminister@uucorvallis.org) to register.

## Board of Directors Report

*Scott Bruslind, UUFC Board President*

The Board met on Monday December 9 at 7pm, facilitated by Jen Akeroyd. Thank you Jen. It's custom to start the meeting with candle lighting and a reading, so I took the opportunity to shill for Greta Gerwig's adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's Little Women, in wide release on December 25th. In the pantheon of famous Unitarian Universalists, LM Alcott personifies what it means to be engaged in the world. Her life and work resonate today. She wrote in a short essay for Christmas:

*There have been some important revivals in religion; for the world won't stand still, and we must keep pace or be left behind to fossilize. A free nation must have a religion broad enough to embrace all mankind, deep enough to fathom and fill the human soul, high enough to reach the source of all love and wisdom, and pure enough to satisfy the wisest and the best.*

No pressure, but Alcott was a perfectionist, and so we have work to do.

We spent a goodly part of December's meeting discussing the building construction plan. The matter seems to be one of how we, the current members and friends of the Fellowship, steward the gifts from those who have gone before to those yet to come. We have money. Folks have been generous and pledged on faith. We likely need more. So, in January we will collectively decide what our task is, and what we must leave for others. My guess is we will work within our means, and borrow only as much as we feel we can justify to our children who will be obliged to finish the tab. Related to building matters, we discussed how we share our space with others. The UUFC staff are refining a rental policy that makes us an attractive rental space, and to make sure that our building policies and practices are fair and equitable.

Finally, it would not be a Board meeting without wrestling with policy review. Thank you to Steve Strauss and Anna Sontag for taking on parts of this ongoing process. January 5th, after the second service, we'll start the year running with a Town Hall on the building construction. See you there.

Our next Board meeting will be 01/13/20 at 7pm. Meetings are open. You are encouraged to RSVP, and we'll keep a comfy couch open.

### **Leadership Supper, Tuesday January 28, 6 PM**

Leaders of councils, committees, teams, task forces, and events, plus all who are interested in leadership in the Fellowship, are invited and encouraged to attend our second Leadership Supper of the church year, sponsored by the Committee on Ministry. A light supper will be provided. We'll focus on an update on Fellowship Councils – what are they designed to do, how are they currently operating, what are their goals for this church year, and what help is needed?