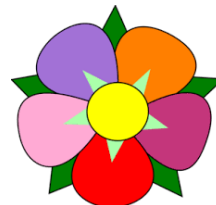


ALL SOULS NEWS -May 2021
All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church
1330 Gotham St.
Watertown, NY 13601



315-788-2742 www.allsoulsuu.org

allsoulsuuchurch@gmail.com



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SUNDAY SERVICES AT 10:30 A.M.

"All Souls—the church that puts its faith in you"

May 2 – Catherine Burns: "Our Lives Go On." As a congregation we are trying to decide our future. Three members will share their thoughts about the past and future. Sarah O'Connell, Frances Mercer, and Harriet McMillan will address the following: where are we going, minister or no minister, and what would it take to make me leave this church. We will be looking for your thoughts, too.

May 9 – Rev. David Weissbard: To be Announced. Stay tuned.

May 16 – Rev. Marty Pelham: "Finding Ourselves in Other's Stories." Whether we study text we consider sacred or easily lose ourselves in movies or novels, seeing ourselves in other's lives is important for nurturing empathy.

May 23 - Eleanor Allen –"Who We Are and What We Want to Be". All Souls has been a congregation in Watertown for almost 200 years. We've changed in many ways over the years. And this year has required more change than usual. Our minister, Rev. Marty Pelham, arrived just before the major flood last December, and he's guided us through a year of zoomed services during the pandemic. Marty is now moving on and we need to do the same.

So, who are we now? In this service, we'll take a quick look at some of our history and the documents our congregation created over the years that attempt to define us. And we'll ask whether these documents accurately describe us now. The worship committee is asking everyone to do a bit of homework: take a look at the UUA website, the seven principles, our mission statement, and our covenant, and think about what these documents say we are as a congregation. When we meet on May 23rd, we'll look at our history, and some of those documents. And we'll give those of us who wish, a chance to speak briefly about where you see us being at

this moment in time and where you'd like to see us in, say five years. Whether you're new, or have been coming for many years, your voice is important. We'll listen carefully to each of us, and return to this subject over the summer to discern our common goals in order to develop a clearer idea of what we want for All Souls' future as a congregation.

To Prepare for the Service, Suggested Reading

Our principles and mission statement are in every monthly newsletter, including this one. Here is what the UUA (<https://www.uua.org/about>) says about who we are as individual congregations: The UUA's 1000+ member congregations are committed to Seven Principles that include the worth of each person, the need for justice and compassion, and the right to choose one's own beliefs.

Our faith tradition is diverse and inclusive. We grew from the union of two radical Christian groups: the Universalists, who organized in 1793, and the Unitarians, who organized in 1825. They joined to become the UUA in 1961. Across the globe, our legacy reaches back centuries to liberal religious pioneers in England, Poland, and Transylvania.

Each UU congregation is autonomous—congregational leaders set their own priorities and choose their own ministers and staff. Congregations vote for the leaders of the UUA, who oversee the central staff and resources.

May 30 – Rev. Marty Pelham: “Discerning the difference between commemorating and mythologizing.” Our first and seventh principles compel us to honor the memories of those who gave their lives to protect and defend others. Our fourth principle helps us recognize the realities of the society they were defending.

Wondering Center

A Word or Two from the Wondering Center—submitted by Frances Mercer

After discussion via Zoom in March, we decided to plan and engage in two outdoor activities each month until we are able to go inside the building, hopefully in September.

The current plan is to conduct these mostly on Sunday afternoons; however, other days and times may be appropriate from time to time. The Wondering Center activities are always intergenerational—children, youth, and adults are welcome.

The list of suggested activities is getting longer and longer. Warren Allen recently suggested another activity—exploring an old rock quarry in Thompson Park, a short walk from the church.

If you have ideas for specific activities or preference for days other than Sunday afternoon, contact Frances Mercer, 314-788-4508 or fmercer@twcnny.rr.com.



In March we had two great activities on the church grounds—a Spring egg hunt on a Sunday and planting trees on a Saturday. Because of the diligent and long term work of Robert South in clearing away invasive trees, we now have an outback area beyond the back lawn that is being planted with trees more native to the local ecology.

Put these dates on your fun calendar for May:

Saturday, May 1—Spring

Beech Walk—We'll meet at 10 AM at the church to walk to the beeches again in Thompson Park. The children and adults enjoyed the walk so much in the fall that we are going to repeat the walk each season. So come one, come all and let's see what the differences spring has brought. This is a good walk for adults as well as children. Wear masks and walking shoes/boots.



Sunday, May 30—Flying

Kites—Meet at the church at 2 p.m. Bring your own kite if you wish. There will also be kites provided by the Wondering Center. We fly the kites on a hill just across the street in Thompson Park. Wear masks.

Water and snacks will be available. Good fun for adults as well as children. Some of the children may need adult assistance.

Progress is being made on the rearranging and deep cleaning of the Wondering Center rooms. This requires a lot of work so your help and input will be greatly appreciated. Resource/activity/theme areas, including a quiet, comfortable retreat space, are being set up so that the children are more empowered to “wonder” and will be able to choose among a number of activities and ways of interacting with each other each Sunday.

New idea — a group for parents/grandparents/guardians — to discuss, share and support each other around topics such as nurturing spirituality in children and youth, the joys and challenges of UU parenting, sexuality and our faith—the UU “Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education”, raising antiracist children and youth, etc. We could meet via Zoom or later face to face on a regular basis, perhaps monthly. If you are interested, please contact Frances Mercer, 315-788-4508 or fmercer@twcnj.rr.com.

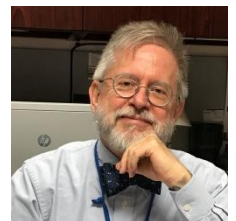
Rev. Marty Perpends

Marty Pelham

Dear Friends,

I want to share how grateful I am for the opportunity the All Souls congregation gave me to take what I spent four years learning in seminary and internship and apply it in a real world context. I have learned so much from you and I have been nurtured and sustained by your love. I can never thank you enough for your role in my ministerial formation. I have known from the beginning that I want to do full-time ministry. That is why I participated in this year's ministerial search process.

On April 1, I accepted an offer to be a candidate for a full-time settled ministry position. I still have to participate in a candidating week and be voted on by the members of that congregation, but I am required to share this information with you right away so that you can make appropriate plans for the future. If everything goes well during my candidating week, I will probably be concluding my role with All Souls on or about June 30. My candidating week will be April 25 through May 2 and I will not be available during that week. I will share information regarding the congregation which has called me once they have announced my name to their membership, which might be as early as



Sunday, April 4. Please know how much I cherish my experiences and relationships at All Souls. Please feel free to reach out – by email, phone, or joining one of my weekly zoom gatherings - to talk about these changes.

I love you, Marty

From the President's Desk

Robert South

Originally I submitted a piece about committee reports for the annual report. Long story short, the standing committees that used to be in the bylaws are now responsible to the board of trustees, rather than the congregation, so they don't necessarily have a duty to submit an annual report to the congregation. But there's no reason why they couldn't, and it's time to start thinking about what to submit. Send it to the office (allsoulsuuchurch@gmail.com) before mid-May-ish.

But then something came up. We're almost certainly losing Reverend Marty Pelham at the end of June (the congregation Marty is going to theoretically could still back out). So, what do we do now? Upon losing ministers the congregation has historically responded in different ways. Sometimes we have a series of full formal Special Congregational Meetings. Such meetings are empowered to take action just like an annual meeting except only in relation to a specific purpose. In other cases, we've simply had an informal congregational conversation, concluding that with that conversation the board has done due diligence to ensure the congregation wanted the board to handle things. *The difference is that the congregation as a whole accepts a settled minister while the board hires a contract minister.*

At any rate, I'm writing this the day before an

announced congregational conversation for sounding things out. My plan is to propose that the board proceed based on input from the congregation at that conversation, and perhaps ensuing ones. If there are numerous members who don't attend the conversation, or who feel a course is set based on it without their input, then the chances of anything final being accomplished before the annual meeting are small. Such a block of members could theoretically insist on a change of course then. So it's safe for the board to proceed based on an informal sounding out.



That gets us to the core of the question. It's kind of a chicken and egg problem. In the past we've just dived into the different possibilities: full time called minister, half time consulting minister, interim minister, no minister. There are slight variations on all these, such as the possibility of going without a minister for a while, except for a sort of "pinch hitter" arrangement for weddings and funerals and such. Or doing so for a period of time and then seeking a minister again eventually. There are many factors to consider such as finances and location.

But related to this question is what we want a minister to do, and thus what we want to be. These are some deep conversations about religion in America and such. Do we want a minister to help us decide that? Do we just want someone to provide stimulating

or comforting or provoking worship services? What do we want to do at our church, how do we want to be appealing and what kind of people do we want to appeal to? It all comes to how we see UUism, what we want it to be.

My own idea is that the core of UUism is pluralism. We can maintain that consistently. I'm imagining people who walk through the door for the first time, people who perhaps don't know how to use Wikipedia, and they ask "what kind of church is this, what do you believe in, what is your position on filioque, when do we do the animal sacrifices, and who appoints your rector?" What do we want them to walk away with? That we're essentially a form of liberal Christianity, or atheists who want to play church until it's all gone or the church of Social Justice Theory?

I think all those are misunderstandings. We're open minded so people think our brains have fallen out. What we are is the church of pluralism. That is our

core. The fact that we have six varied sources means all this stuff is good, we're open to anything that doesn't close the door behind it and which is compatible with being a good person as we define it. And that definition of a good person is found in the principles. If you adhere to the old Aztec religion, that's a source that may have something to teach, so bring that, but when you start doing human sacrifice we might decide that may come from a source but not coincide with one or more of our principles. So does that make us "The Church of Comparative Religion"? I think it more makes us "The Church of Benevolent Open Mindedness." Which means we filter out that which closes minds.

The pluralism is the trunk, the rest are branches. Don't confuse the part with the whole. But that's just me. Who are we, where do we want to go, and what kind of help do we need getting there? As a good person who believes in democracy I think it's not up to me, it's up to all of us.

Collector

Warren Allen



The pledges for our Financial Year ending *this* June totaled \$36,040.28, coming from 32.00 pledgers. Of those 32 pledgers, two have said that they have to leave this Garden of Eden and go away. Otherwise, for our pledges for the coming F Y, Warren has received 24 pledges, including seven who did not pledge during the current F Y. These 24 pledges total \$26,335, including four which are down from this year from some having challenges, six pledges are the same as they were for this year, and twelve from members and supporters which are for more dollars than they had pledged for the current year. Nine who had pledged during the year ending, and who had not mentioned moving from our paradise, are still apparently considering how much they will give during the coming year. If you have decided what you would like to pledge but do not have your green pledge card please do not despair or wax wroth or rend your garments. You could send a confidential e-mail to our Collector [warrenallen@verizon.net] or mail the amount on a recycled envelope or clean napkin. Thanks for helping us to figure out our budget for next year. For the current year already over a third of the pledgers have already gone over the financial pledge which they made a year ago, which helps us keep the lights on and helps us getting closer to our being able to afford our own full-time minister.

2021 Stewardship Campaign Update

Thank you to everyone who has already sent a pledge. It's been a little more confusing than usual this year because our mail is diverted to the Allens, then delivered to the church. That does offer more opportunities to slow down our receiving your mail.

So far this year we have received 22, with a way to go to reach this year's number of 32. If you haven't sent in a pledge, there's still time! And thank you in advance.

From the Historian's Files

Sarah O'Connell

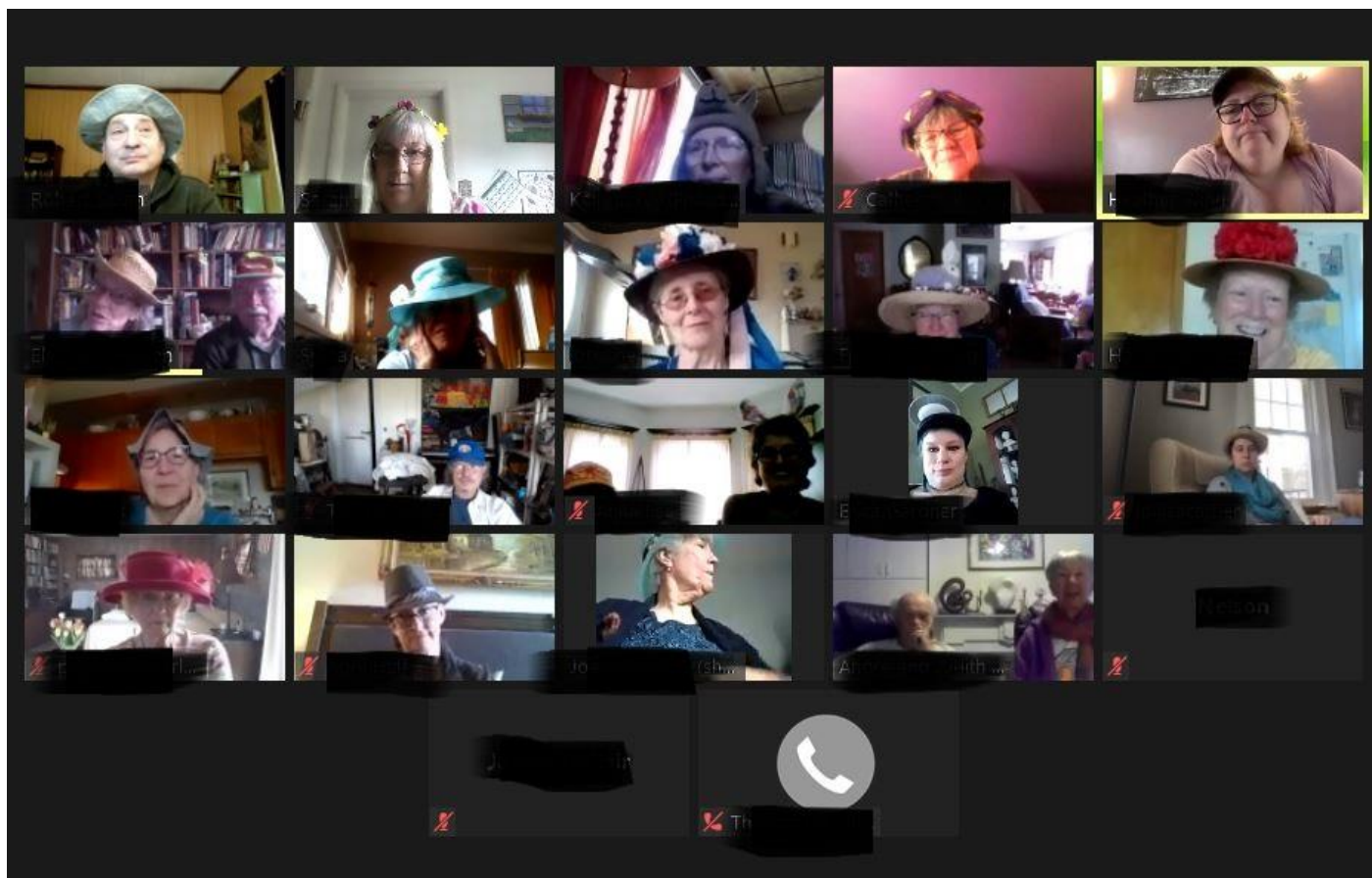
As I was going through the boxes stored in the newly situated historian room, I found several bulletins from the 1960's. At that time there were still 3 Universalist churches operating nearby, the one on Washington Street in Watertown as well as the smaller ones in Dexter and Henderson which today are serving as homes for historical societies. The three churches co-produced a common weekly bulletin called The Universalist. The Dexter service was at 10 a.m. and the Henderson one at noon; both services were led by the same person, mainly alternating between our own David Weissbard and a Mr. Adolph Weidanz who was installed as minister of those churches in June 1965. The Watertown services were led by the Rev. John E. Wood and then Mr. Blaine Hartford.

From the December 15, 1963 bulletin, this poem on the cover was written by someone named Rev. Albert Q. Perry, entitled "Contemporary Questions."

"If a dusky baby Jesus be born this Christmas day, and angels sing his glory, and kings from far away come to adore and stay to pray,
If swaddling clothes enfolded a tiny body black, and in a manger lies he on a tatter'd flour sack in a segregated shack,
If he grows to prophetic manhood, preaches love and equity, -- must we one day hang him from a cross of infamy while he weeps for you and me?"

Easter Bonnets

Here we are once again on an Easter Sunday morning wearing our Easter bonnets.



Around the Church

Beltane Ceremony

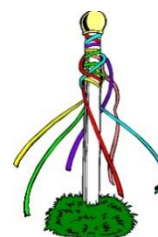
Chalice Circle CUUPS invites all those who are interested to attend a Beltane celebration, featuring a dance around the Maypole, on Saturday, May 1 at 7 pm.

This will be an outdoor event; limited access to the building for restrooms only.

Bring your own chair and beverage. Please be aware of social distancing and mask-wearing. Due to the COVID pandemic, there will be no potluck this time.

Check our Facebook page (Chalice Circle CUUPS of Watertown NY) for more information as the event draws closer.

-Joanne Harter



Building and Grounds

Rebecca Carr reports the following. Our sexton is leaving at the end of April. The renovations are still not complete as there has been a problem installing the countertop. There was a tree planting day on the cleared area behind the church.

May 8 Opportunity!

We know how to have fun! On May 8, All Souls will do its semi-annual adopted road clean up. It will also be a day to continue to get the church ready for reoccupation.

People cleaning up the road should be at the church at 9 AM, wearing work clothes and sturdy footwear. We'll provide vests, hard hats, and gloves. You may want to bring a "picker-upper" if you have one. The cleanup takes a little over an hour with four groups of 2.

Meanwhile, back at the church, there are many jobs to be done.

- A big job is to clean the chairs. Harriet McMillan plans to rent a carpet cleaner with a furniture attachment.
- The kitchen needs to be settled. All the dishes need to be washed, and put away. All the supplies need to be put away.

Veronica Hartman plans to work on the stoves to get them cleaned up.

- The baptismal font needs to be cleaned, then moved into position in the narthex.
- Clean the furniture in the LaMothe Lounge, and settled.
- The male bathroom needs to be well scrubbed, especially around the urinal.
- Set up the Wondering Center.

Is this enough fun? We can always find more to do. Please put the date on your calendar and save the date.



April 6 (Rain Date) Easter Egg Hunt



Frances Mercer organized our annual Easter egg hunt on the church grounds. This year, Frances had the children hunt for the eggs, then trade the eggs for a piece of candy per egg.



Most Recent Blood Drive

Julie Jeffers sits at the Welcome Desk. She was signing in donors for the blood drive. There were 14 total pints for the day, 4 turn aways due to iron, 1 church member, and only 2 no shows. Julie considered it a pretty good day over all.



Reforestation Project

On April 17, Robert South organized a tree planting project on the church grounds. Turn out was good.





Beltane

Every Month at All Souls

CUUPS (Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans)

meets the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays at the church. Gathering and chatting begins at 6:30, the meeting begins at 7 PM.

And Every Week at All Souls

The basket for your donations to the Urban Mission Food Pantry are always available for your donations. Also, Joanne Harter collects the orange bags in which our newspapers are delivered. She then delivers them to the SPCA to be used to keep the grounds clean.

We serve fair trade coffee during our pot luck coffee hours.

As always, Joanne Harter, our CDO (Chief Decorating Officer) appreciates help with the altar decorations.

Generosity Project

Every year we choose two organizations to share half of our uncommitted plate collections. It works as follows: the collector tracks the uncommitted funds, and the congregation selects the organizations. At the end of the church year, we divide the uncommitted funds in half, retain one half, divide the remainder in half and send those monies to the chosen organizations. This year we chose Hospice and Planned Parenthood. Each organization receives 1/4 of the uncommitted funds for the year.

Unitarian Universalist Association

From The UUA President: Planning for Multi-Platform Operations

April 15, 2021

Dear Friends,

I write today with guidance from the UUA about planning for safe operations in alignment with our UU values. The significant disruptions to life in our congregations and communities over the past year has been traumatic. There is, understandably, a deep yearning to gather again in person. Unfortunately, we are in an “in-between” transition time that continues to be risky. Our first concern continues to be safeguarding the well-being of our people and the public.

Last May, the UUA recommended that congregations plan for a year of virtual operations. Moving into the coming year, the UUA recommends that congregations plan for multi-platform operations—a flexible combination of in-person and online engagement based on the needs and risks in your community.

Key Principles for Planning

As a faith community, we root our decisions in the values of inclusion and consent. It’s important that everyone who gathers in person has the ability to consent to do so, so that no one is forced to choose between their congregation and the safety of themselves or their loved ones. This includes congregational staff and volunteers. When making decisions, the people responsible for congregational programs need to have a central role and those impacted by decisions must have input. As religious leaders, our role is to help facilitate conversation and decision-making in an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledging that members and staff have a variety of needs and perspectives.

Follow the science. Congregations should follow the latest CDC guidelines and local public health regulations to determine the best ways to move forward as the pandemic recedes. Our public health advisors have all stressed the dangers of this time and the need to remain vigilant. Vaccine distribution remains uneven and inequitable (nationally and globally), new and more contagious variants are spreading and children are not yet eligible for vaccination. Many unanswered questions remain, such as how effective the vaccines are in response to emerging variants, whether vaccinated people can spread the virus, and how long vaccine protection lasts. I can’t stress strongly enough the need to proceed with caution in our planning.

Go slow and be flexible. Now is the time to plan and consult with the people responsible and engaged in your programs. Take time to create a shared understanding of the risks. Given the ongoing risks, worship and other large gatherings should not be the first thing we return to in person. Our public health officials have also said that as we begin to have some in-person offerings, we have to be prepared to shift back to all virtual if conditions change. Create this expectation, flexibility and resiliency from the beginning.

Be humane and realistic with expectations of ourselves and others. Remember, the goal is not perfection. The most important values in this time are care and compassion. We’ve experienced a year of traumatic disruption and loss. Be realistic as leaders and convey realistic expectations to your congregations. There are well-founded concerns that multi-platform ministry will require additional work without additional staff and volunteer capacity. It’s important to have honest conversations about our capabilities and expectations. And keep in mind that significant changes might be overwhelming even if dearly wanted.

In the midst of so much loss and tragedy, it has been the life-saving practices of centering care, inclusion, collaboration and compassion that have held and guided us so well. Finding ways to share ministry, to partner across congregations and lean on each other has been a gift this year and one we can continue to draw on as we move forward. These are the values and tools that will continue to guide us.

As always, your [UUA regional staff](#) are thought partners with you. Please reach out to them with any questions or learnings.

Yours,

Susan

All Souls UU Church Board of Trustees

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The May board meeting will be May 20, 9:30 via Zoom. Board meetings are open to all congregation members. Contact the church office for the link.

Newsletter Editor, Harriet McMillan, harrietm@allsoulsuu.org

Office Administrator M, 9-11

W 11-1

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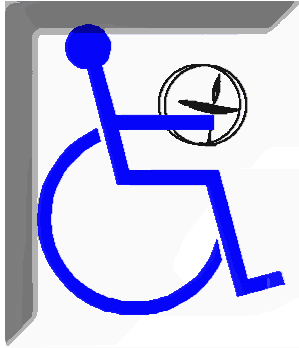
E-mail: allsoulsuuchurch@gmail.com

Website: <http://www.allsoulsuu.org>

PLEASE SUBMIT ITEMS FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER NO LATER THAN THE 10TH OF THE MONTH.
ITEMS ARE APPRECIATED AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE.

All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church
1330 Gotham St.
Watertown, NY 13601
ALL SOULS NEWS May 2021

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



We affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

Our Principles

Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Our Mission

- The mission of All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church is to create an environment in which personal and spiritual growth is encouraged; and where each of us is free to explore our individual beliefs and search for meaning.
- We strive to be a warm, supportive, nurturing and inclusive religious community where all people are respected and honored because of their uniqueness.
- We promote acceptance, diversity and social justice through our dealings with each other and our actions in the local and global community.

Visitors are welcome! If, as a visitor to our church community, you find yourself in agreement with Our Principles, please consider joining our church community. Just sign our membership book in the presence of two board members.