

## ALL SOULS NEWS -December 2020

All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church

1330 Gotham St.

Watertown, NY 13601



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**SUNDAY SERVICES AT 10:30 A.M.**

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

### ***Snow!***

In the event we need to cancel a service because of the weather, a notice will be posted on the opening page of our website [www.allsoulsuu.org](http://www.allsoulsuu.org).



***Dec. 6 – Pastor Marty Pelham: “Stillness, The Bridge Between Grace and Gratitude.”***

Stillness is a quality of being which reconnects us to our inner nature and the role of grace in our existence. It helps us recognize the reality of our interdependence and the absurdity of perfectionism.

***December 13– Robert South – “Serendipity Thinking.”*** Our theme this month is "stillness" and serendipity thinking is a kind of stillness that fits the holiday season. The surprise of opening gifts, for example, is a kind of serendipity, just as waiting to open them until the right time is a kind of stillness. Similarly keeping a mind open for serendipity is a kind of stillness, a kind of receptiveness that comes from waiting and accepting what comes rather than trying to impose a plan.

***December 20 – Joanne Harter – “Lessons from Winter Solstice.”*** The service will blend some of the old traditions with what we can apply to the pandemic situation.

**December 24 – - Join us at 7PM for our traditional Christmas Eve service adapted for zoom. Service planned by Sarah O’Connell with the able assistance of Eleanor Allen and Robert South.**

**December 27 Pastor Marty Pelham – “ The Beauty of Rest: Sabbath Keeping in a New Year.”** If we want to have the energy to make good trouble and also honor the inherent worth of ourselves, we need to be intentional about rest and re-creation.

## *Pastor Marty Perpends*

### Pastor Marty Pelham



It is not unusual at this time of year for our thoughts to turn to the future and what we might like to change in the coming year. I have recently been engaging the question of what I can do to leave a different legacy than the one I inherited, especially in terms of racial justice. I'm intrigued and challenged by the concept of reparations. It seems like such a good idea. However, many experts believe that adequate financial reparations would effectively restructure our entire economy and transfer billions (possibly trillions) of dollars. Regardless of whether it is a righteous concept, I cannot imagine enough people in our consumerist economy agreeing with that to ever make it happen.

Does that mean we shouldn't do anything? Every time I discuss the enormity of a major crisis with someone and whether small changes can make a difference, I am reminded of the story about the child throwing starfish back into the ocean, working to save some though they know they can never save them all. We

always seem to come to the conclusion that while cumulative small changes may not save us, they could slow or lessen the degradation.

I recently learned of current efforts some groups are making towards land reparations. Many of the actions are small yet every single acre of land that is returned to the stewardship of indigenous people and every dollar given to restore damaged environments in their care makes a difference. If you'd like to learn more about this, one resource I recommend is *resource generation* (resourcegeneration.org). This program is geared towards young adults but the toolkit on the website does an excellent job of connecting to many resources. If you prefer listening, I recommend this podcast episode:

<https://forthewild.world/listen/corrina-gould-on-settler-responsibility-and-reciprocity-208>.

I'm not suggesting that this should be a new project for us, although as a former landowner I am considering donating to one of these projects next

year. I do believe this is a good time to consider whether there are some additional starfish each of us might want to help, especially a project or cause that brings no

obvious direct benefit to us as individuals but may mitigate prior wrongs and contribute to a better future.

## *From the President's Desk*

There's been a lot of good news lately. The recent national elections came to a decisive conclusion. Sort of. We'll see about a lot of things. COVID 19 vaccines are coming to us all during the early part of next year. Looks like the UUA was prophetic (sic) in telling congregations to suspend indoors services [until next fiscal year \(June\)](#). That should be about right. As the vaccine get out to the population the risk will lessen, the board will talk about it, the congregation will talk about it. We will come back. At the very least we will definitely have blessing of the animals around the peace pole, in person.

[The New York State Law that allows us to do our annual meetings by zoom also covers 2021](#), so if necessary, we can still do that. We'll see about a lot of things.

The building is coming along.

- The office and informal lounge will no longer have carpet, so we'll be able to bring beverages in there.
- Maybe we can get covers for the furniture too. The pit in front of the furnace will have a new hatch so we can access it. It's several feet deep about 4 feet wide and 8 feet long, and there's a big duct running under the floors from the north end of it. Nobody really knows what it's for, but we're going to try and keep it accessible. The kitchen ceiling needed some repairs from an old leak, as did the wall behind the sinks. In the process we have learned that the stove vent hood isn't connected to a vent in the roof, but rather it just circulates back into the building.



- The BLM banner is up, and withstood the recent heavy winds. We'll see how it does with ice.

We continue to do services on Zoom, about 2 per month led by Pastor Marty Pelham, 1 by Rev. David Weissbard, and the rest by others, mainly members of the worship committee. We have subscribed to a service called "Soul Matters" that provides a lot of materials to make this easier. And

Marty has created shared documents on Google that allow us to plan far in advance: we have at

least tentative titles and service leaders planned all the way to June, which never happened before: we usually were a month or two out, sometimes we scrambled at the last minute.

A president is supposed to have a finger on the pulse of the congregation, know what's going on, who is coming and going, write cards and things. Kind of like Harriet. Rumor has it that Louisa Cartier might be leaving us after all, Shannon Starkweather-Burke might not because Mr Kevin Burke has a job at the Hospice and ran for mayor of Sackett's Harbor, and April Huff almost certainly won't be leaving for good ever because her family is buying a "forever home," regardless of where the military sends Mr Huff.

But really, our service attendance is down from the 40 or so at the beginning of the pandemic to about the low 20s, a few die-hards, and there are very few visitors despite recent underwriting (advertising) on NCPR. Hopefully people will come back once we're in person, especially if there's pizza and cheesecake.

The board and I can delegate much of the attention to all these matters to the appropriate committees.

## *A Word or Two From the Wondering Center*

by Frances Mercer



December is often called the season of giving and receiving, the season of joy, the season of lights, the season of love and compassion. For many faiths there are special celebrations during this month: Christmas—the Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ; the Wiccan/Pagan celebration of Solstice; the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah; the African American/Pan-African celebration of Kwanza; Bodhi day, the celebration of Buddha's attainment of enlightenment; the Zoroastrian observation of the death of the prophet Zoroaster; Pancha Ganapati: a modern five-day Hindu festival honoring Ganesha. In the United States December is also full

of cultural and secular festive events, activities, and expectations. Needless to say, explaining the values and roots of this season to children can be complicated. Our words and their experiences become the base for their understanding and appreciation for this season of giving and receiving, joy, lights, love and compassion. As an individual, a parent and a grandparent, I still struggle with how to be aware and respectful of the different religious traditions and practices that converge during this season and how to give personal and spiritual meaning to those rituals that I and my family choose to engage in. However, I believe that sharing our personal stories of the season with children and others is a good way to create deeper understanding and appreciation.

Therefore, I am sharing a true story that I wrote many years ago — “A Memory of the Season”—in the first weekly post for December. Robert and I invite others to share their stories by sending them to Robert so that at least one story will appear in each of the Weekly Posts for December.

## Introducing a New Feature: OP EDS Opinion Page

### *One vs Five* by Robert South

This will be the first of (hopefully) many Opinion Pages appearing in this newsletter, and after this one I'm going to let others do them for a while. To be clear, this is not any sort of official position.

Since I went to GA and became President I've encountered higher echelons of the UUA a bit more. I never thought about it much and was quite happy just in the congregation. But I've come to the conclusion that because of the peculiar characteristics of Unitarian Universalism we are particularly vulnerable and that our structure doesn't really protect us. I'm fearful for what may come. Hopefully my fears are ungrounded. But one day they just bubbled over.

Originally, I wrote a President's report with a digression, which Harriet suggested I make a separate opinion piece. I wrote that in several drafts, including many hyperlinks. I kept cutting and adding and trying to keep it to one page. I thought I was done. I realized all the self-editing had impaired readability, but figured people would pick up on what I meant. Then I went for a walk and realized I needed to stop venting about all the things I'm worried about, to stop trying to cram it all in. I need to focus on just one theme. My theme is the seven principles.

The seven principles are arranged in a sequence. They run from caring about the inherent worth and dignity of each individual (tiny) to respect for the interdependent web of all existence (vast). It's like visual perspective. Smaller things close by appear to be the same size as larger things far away. So, if they are arranged in the right order, they are all the same size, all equally

important. That's why I think the proposed 8<sup>th</sup> principle should go between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>.

One of my big concerns though, is sociocracy, which is a complex utopian proposal for reforming organizational governance "beyond democracy." I may be oversimplifying, but one of the things sociocracy wants to do is basically weight votes by how much you care about the topic. It's designed to create minority rule the way the southern planters designed the US government to preserve minority rule. It's antidemocratic.

Someone said that my objection to doing everything in "rounds" (on the basis that sometimes people don't have anything to say) is a violation of the 1<sup>st</sup> principle. So, what we have here is a conflict between democracy and caring for individuals. I'm reading a lot about ancient Chinese philosophy and trying to resolve some logical contradictions in it, so this is familiar territory. Here's what I have to offer.

Respect for the inherent worth and dignity of every individual, within a democratic UU organization, comes from the respect for inherent worth and dignity that presumably lies in the heart of the majority of UUs. Every putative UU may not give the first principle enough emphasis, but on average you can bet your bottom dollar that a crowd will. So, by giving the majority of UUs the power in a UU context you are empowering the first principle. If they see someone cares deeply that may, consensually, influence their vote.

But if you weaken democracy, giving individuals extra power for claiming to really, really, care you are putting the principles in conflict, ultimately to service of neither. The crowd is probably of good will. There is no guarantee each individual will be. People's dignity and worth will be violated and democracy will also suffer. Our principles should not be squandered for an experimental fad.



## *From the Historian's Files*

### **Sarah O'Connell**



From the Looking Backward column in the Watertown Daily Times for November 18, 150 years ago: "In the United States just now there are twenty-seven young women studying theology, with a view to becoming preachers..." (It continued on to say "nineteen are studying law and sixty-seven are studying medicine.")

A report entitled "2018 State of Women in Clergy" noted that in the past 20 years, the percentage of women pastors in most mainline churches has doubled or tripled; overall, they are about 27% of the clergy. The percentage for UU churches, however, is over 50%. It's a very interesting study and looks at differences among different denominations and by other factors such as race. Two of the largest denominations in the country, however, don't allow women ministers, the Roman Catholic Church and Southern Baptist. However, in the Roman Catholic Church, more than 80% of the ecclesiastical lay leaders are women.

An article on the christiancentury.org website further noted, "The state of clergywomen is varied in historically black denominations. The report cites data showing that women are 50 to 75 percent of members in black Baptist congregations, but less than 10 percent of church leaders and as little as 1 percent of pastors. However, the African Methodist Episcopal Church has ordained women since 1960, and a 2016 report estimated they were 26 percent of congregational pastors in the global denomination."

To read more about the study, visit [eileencampbellreed.org](http://eileencampbellreed.org).

## *People News*

### **Meet Wendy Wynn**

Wendy Wynn joined our membership just prior to our annual meeting. She answered questions about her life for our newsletter.



**Where are you originally from?**

I come to Watertown from Toms River, NJ, where I lived for almost 20 years.

**What is your occupation here in Watertown?**

I work at the North Country Family Health Center in Watertown as the Executive Assistant to the CEO and the HR & Compliance Director.

**What are some of your hobbies/interest/specialties?** I have simple pleasures- spending time with family, reading, going for walks, traveling, etc. I am a fairly new Grandma, and that is a great joy.

**How did you get to All Souls?**

I came to All Souls through joining my mother to services when I would visit. I enjoyed the people and the fellowship, and the message of the Church so much I joined a bit after I moved here.

Other comments about our church community?

I can really relate to the activism in and outside of our community, and the caring and positive message we carry for various and important current events, and social issues. Even if everyone may not agree or understand, they support the right to any differences.

## *Around the Church*

### **Building and Grounds**

Some quick examples of progress from the flood repair. Things are moving along nicely and on schedule. We have had some unexpected change orders but... this is to be expected. Any questions see anyone from B&G. –Till Fritzsching





More repair/renovations photos, thanks to Rebecca Carr.

## Unitarian Universalist Association

The Watertown Vet Center, at 210 Court Street, Suite 20, has asked us to let everyone know that they are available to assist Veterans, Active duty, National Guard, Reserve, and their family members. All services are free and confidential. You can receive counseling services by phone and VA Video Connect by utilizing a computer, smart pad, or phone. . Do not hesitate to contact them if you have any questions: (315) 782-5479. There will be virtual information sessions November 4th and 25th from 2:00 - 3:00pm. Register for the virtual session by contacting Mike Walling or Steven Waldner at (315) 782-5479 or email [steven.waldner@va.gov](mailto:steven.waldner@va.gov)



## Every Month at All Souls

### CUUPS (Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans)

meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays. . 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.

### All Souls UU Church Board of Trustees

President: Robert South	<a href="mailto:Roberts.asuuc@gmail.com">Roberts.asuuc@gmail.com</a>
Vice President: Heather Winn	<a href="mailto:heatherw.asuuc@gmail.com">heatherw.asuuc@gmail.com</a>
Secretary: Karen Hall	<a href="mailto:karenh@asuuc@gmail.com">karenh@asuuc@gmail.com</a>
Treasurer: Eleanor Allen	<a href="mailto:eleonor.asuuc@gmail.com">eleonor.asuuc@gmail.com</a>
Trustee: Rebecca Carr	<a href="mailto:rebeccac.asuuc@gmail.com">rebeccac.asuuc@gmail.com</a>
Trustee: Shannon Starkweather-Burke	<a href="mailto:Shannonb@gmail.com">Shannonb@gmail.com</a>
Trustee: Catherine Burns	<a href="mailto:catherineb.asuuc@gmail.com">catherineb.asuuc@gmail.com</a>
Trustee: Joanne Harter	

### Staff

Office Administrator:  
Music: Tony Zygodlo  
Childcare: Chris Coughlin  
Religious Education: Frances Mercer  
Sexton: Chris Coughlin

Newsletter Editor, Harriet McMillan,  
Office Administrator T, F, 10-12

Board meetings are held the third Thursday at 9:30 AM on Zoom. Meetings are open to all members of the congregation. Call the church office to get the link.

[harrietm@allsoulsuu.org](mailto:harrietm@allsoulsuu.org)

Phone (315) 788-2742

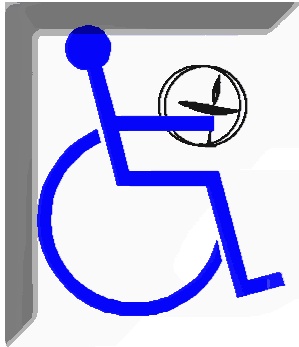
E-mail: [allsoulsuuchurch@gmail.com](mailto:allsoulsuuchurch@gmail.com)

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

PLEASE SUBMIT ITEMS FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER NO LATER THAN THE 15<sup>TH</sup> OF THE MONTH.  
ITEMS ARE APPRECIATED AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE.

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ALL SOULS NEWS December 2020

## 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.
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### 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.