

the choice

Published by the
Unitarian Church of Sharon
**A Welcoming Congregation
of the Unitarian
Universalist Association**
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FEBRUARY WORSHIP SERVICES

10:00am Family Service

10:30am Worship Service

For Zoom information [click here](#)

For Order of Service [click here](#)

February 4

10:00 AM Family Worship: Equality, Equity & Justice: What do they mean?

There is a common misconception that equity and equality mean the same thing and that they can be used interchangeably, but the truth is they do not — and the difference between them is crucial. Today we'll do an exercise that will help us explore these concepts and figure out where justice comes in.

10:30 AM Worship: Justice: Article II Sermon Series

Justice is one of the UU Values proposed in the new version of Article II of our UUA bylaws. Bryan Stevenson, the founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, said in a 2017 address to Unitarian Universalists, "hopelessness is the enemy of justice." In our worship today we will consider the place of justice in a life of faith, and how we can find our way to enduring hope. Rev. Jolie preaching.

February 11

10:00 AM Family Worship: Maddi's Fridge

We will read a book called *Maddi's Fridge* and discuss it together in worship today. This is a book about what happens when the insides of two friends' refrigerators look very different. It will open up a chance for us to talk about wealth and poverty, how to be friends across difference, and how to show up for a friend in need.

10:30 AM Worship: Friendship as a Matter of Faith

It's almost Valentine's Day, a good time to think about all kinds of relationships, not just the romantic ones. Friendships can be tricky - people change over time, we let each other down, it can be hard to find friends we really connect with. In today's service we will reflect on friendship and what it has to do with religion and spirituality. Rev. Jolie preaching.

February 18

10:00 AM Family Worship: A Woodson Family Story

Who are the Woodsons and what do they have to do with Black History Month? We will tell the story of an extended family who connected across race and time. For the white Woodsons, once they realized they had a historical connection to the Black Woodsons, it changed their whole story about who they were.

10:30 AM Worship: Coming to Our Senses

20th century historian of religions Mircea Eliade noted, "there can be no religious experience without the intervention of the senses." With help from a book called *A History of Religion in 5 ½ Objects*, today's service will explore how religions from around the world engage the five senses. We will also focus on what Unitarian Universalism can offer us as far as embodied worship. Rev. Jolie will also be leading a book study of this book in March, so consider this a teaser (or, for those who can't participate in the book study, a synopsis). Rev. Jolie preaching.

February 25

10:00 AM Family Worship: What is Beloved Community?

What if there was a place where everyone's unique gifts were celebrated, and where everyone had what they needed to thrive? Can our congregation be like that? In today's family service we will explore the idea of Beloved Community using story, discussion, and imagination.

10:30 AM Worship: Let's Talk About It Rev. Deborah Bennett, Guest

The list of topics that have become divisive in our country seems to be growing by the day. At the same time, our ability to engage in meaningful discourse about those topics seems to be moving proportionally in the opposite direction - sometimes even in our own congregations. Of course, hard conversations are not limited to social issues. In our personal lives, engaging in certain conversations can be equally challenging. In Unitarian Universalism there is a wonderful saying, "we need not think alike to love alike." It's a nice sentiment but often easier said than done! Join Rev. Deborah Bennett this Sunday and "let's talk about it."

Bio: Rev. Deborah Bennett is a Unitarian Universalist minister currently serving as the Interim minister at First Parish in Wayland, Mass. After graduating from Starr King School for the Ministry, Rev. Deborah served as a hospital chaplain and then as the settled minister for Emerson Unitarian Universalist congregation in Marietta Georgia. For over 35 years, Rev. Deborah's personal practice has been grounded in the yogic tradition and she credits these practices for her dedication to authentic conversations. Most recently she has taken up the spiritual practice of being a grandmother, welcoming her first grandchild into the world last October.

CHURCH NEWS

First Fridays are for Fellowship!

Monthly Potluck February 2, 2024 6pm. Bring a dish to share if you can and enjoy connecting with your fellow congregants.

Casual Music Jam Friday February 9, 2024 from 7-9pm

We'll be gathering on Friday, February 9th from 7-9pm at the Unitarian Church of Sharon (4 N. Main St in Sharon) for our monthly casual music jam. We'll be in Program A/B (head downstairs, then take a right).

Tai Chi

Tai Chi has been meeting in Room A/B on first and third Saturdays from 8 to 9 a.m. People are enjoying it, and contributing between \$5 and 10 to help defray the cost of the excellent teacher, Vince Jornales. Anyone is welcome to join us at any time. Never did tai chi? Come give it a try; it's fun, relaxing and energizing all at once., basically focusing the mind and body on simple movements and the breath.

Upcoming Performance February 28, 2024



Anya Hinkle & Andrew Finn

Magill Wednesday

Doors open at 7:00 and concert starts at 7:30.

Suggested donation \$25

Andrewfinnmagill.com

CHURCH NEWS

Bake Off

We are excited to announce the Great Sharon Bake Off on February 10, 2024 (snow date Feb. 11) at the Unitarian Church of Sharon from 3:00-7:00pm. This is a fundraiser for the church and the event is open to the public. The 32 Adult Division Bakers will compete in the categories of Cakes, Pies, Pastries and Cookies/bars. (Bakers can only compete in one category and the number of entries in each are limited.) Ten Bakers, ages 10-17, will compete in the Junior Division. Judges are community leaders and professional chefs and bakers and prizes will be awarded. For details and to register, visit <https://www.uusharon.org/happenings/the-great-sharon-bake-off/>

Committee members include: Pat McDougal, Rebecca Kinraide, Lindsay Drisko, Elaine Price, Lauren Grasso and Sarah Langmead.

Save the Date

Calling All Bakers

to the

Great Sharon Bake Off

A fundraiser for

The Unitarian Church of Sharon
4 North Main Street Sharon MA 02067

Saturday
February 10th, 2024
3:00 - 6:00 PM
(Snow date Feb 11)

For information and registration
visit [uusharon.org/happenings](https://www.uusharon.org/happenings)

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Est 2024
BAKE OFF

CHURCH NEWS



Stewardship Corner

Hello, I am Joyce Bramhall, Co-Chair of Faith Development. The Stewardship Committee has invited Faith Development to share our new structure, programming, curricula, and general room setups that encourage collaboration and exploration during our Sunday morning Religious Education. This program is your stewardship in action!

Join us at 11:45 on February 4, 2024 after services in the vestry. We'll take you on a tour of our classrooms and introduce you to our multidisciplinary creative arts and movement-oriented classroom space where the children's program comes to life.

We secured the funding to hire Christine Bulman as our settled Director of Faith Development, after she spent three years getting to know us, and all the while working with Jolie to develop Family Sunday Service messages. These messages are brought down to the classroom and explored in more depth. We have also been able to purchase Soul Matters Curricula and implement it in both the Family Service and our classroom activities.

As part of the "Interim" closure process with Christine, we had a number of church-wide retreats that were very helpful in our successful return (post Covid) to the building and Community we love. As a result, we have enlivened the committee and our program with these three maxims: keep it simple, keep it meaningful & spiritual and structure volunteering that aligns with busy lives. Your Stewardship of The Unitarian Church of Sharon has been supportive of so many Faith Development programs: Furnishing new classroom spaces, training for Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education, and SpiritPlay, Youth overnights, child-led social justice projects, and various books and curricula to enrich our programs.

Currently there are 23 families with 38 children and adolescents in our program. We have been fortunate to have dedicated youth volunteers teaching and facilitating in the program as well. Yes, we've been busy this church year but look at what has come from your efforts and support. And if you haven't yet, we invite you to volunteer to mentor, facilitate or guide a few Sunday mornings in A, B and C where we have the children's program!

Committee Members: Christine Bulman, Director of Faith Development, Caroline Dixon, Youth Coordinator, Joyce Bramhall & Karen Woods, Faith Development Co-Chairs, Alisha Sarang-Sieminski, Nick Giammaria, Chloe Kline, Amanda McGregor, Suha Roustom

Please, we encourage you to feel free to contact any of us with ideas, suggestions or concerns. We, as a committee, thank the dedicated AV Team who has enabled us to meet by zoom and be there for our fellow congregants.

CHURCH NEWS

Five Points Cluster Events

Did you know, we are part of a local group of UU congregations who collaborate and share with one another? There is a lot of good stuff coming up this month, so see what piques your interest, mark your calendars, and enjoy connecting with area UUs.

Sunday, Feb. 4 and 18, Souls Matters Group – Canton – 1st and 3rd Sundays, 12:15 – 1:15, in-person, Details: <https://fpuucanton.org/programs/happening-first-parish/#soulmatters>

Saturday, Feb. 10 – Sharon - Bake-off (in-person), 3 – 6 PM, Details: <https://www.uusharon.org/happenings/the-great-sharon-bake-off/>

Saturday, Feb. 10 – Foxborough - Pizza and Games night (in-person), 6 – 8 PM, Details: <https://www.facebook.com/FoxboroughUU/>

Sunday, Feb. 11, Stoughton - Chocolate Auction (in-person and online), 12:00 – 1:30 (in-person and online), Details: <https://firstparishstoughton.org/chocolate-auction/>

Tuesday, Feb. 13 (weekly for five weeks), Attleboro - Just Breath: A Mindful Breathing Class for Children (ages 2 – 5) (in-person), 10 – 11 AM in-person. Registration required. Details: <https://www.facebook.com/MurrayUUChurch/>

Saturday, Feb. 17, Canton - Spirituality & Social Justice Film Conversations: *Freedom Riders*, 1 – 3 PM, Details: <https://fpuucanton.org/programs/happening-first-parish/#film>

Saturday, Feb. 24, Canton - Welcoming Congregation Discussion Around Gender Identity – 1 – 2:30 PM (Zoom). Details: <https://fpuucanton.org/get-involved/welcoming-congregation-update/>

Wednesday, Feb. 28, Sharon - Coffee House (in-person), <https://notjustanothercoffeehouse.org/>

Saturday, March 23, Canton - Coffee House (in-person), 7 PM

CHURCH NEWS

Art Wall

The Art Wall beseeches you to add your artistic creations to the church show place. Please share your ideas with Dinah, if not your work. People enjoy seeing the art during coffee hour; please don't be shy.

Meditation Group, weekly on Mondays 7-8 PM

Join Carol Abrams, local meditation teacher, for a simple weekly mindfulness practice in our Vestry. All welcome.

Worship Committee Update

We are grateful to Beth McGregor and Gare Reid for their expertise in putting up and taking down our December holiday decor.

Thank you to those who are leaving parking spaces in the church lot for those with mobility issues. There will soon be signs designating parking spots for our minister and director of Faith Development, which will also then be available when we have guest speakers when our minister has the Sunday off.

The Worship Committee usually meets on the third Sunday of the month at noon. We are: Ellen Bordman (Chair), Peter Raskin, Tom D'Avanzo, Valerie Vigoda, Ashley Tson-gas, Hema Sarang-Sieminski, and Gary Webber. If you have suggestions or questions about Sunday services, feel free to reach out to any of us. We would also welcome new members to our committee.

See you in church!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Book Study! *A History of Religion in 5 ½ Objects* by S. Brent Plate (Beacon Press, 2014).

3 Sessions, alternating Thursdays. March 7, March 21, and April 4. Hybrid. 7 - 8:30 PM.

Rev. Jolie will lead this adult discussion group beginning in March on religions of our world based on a close reading of the above book. From the book jacket copy: "Arguing that religion must be understood in the first instance as deriving from rudimentary human experiences and from lived, embodied practices, Religious Studies professor S. Brent Plate asks us to put aside, for the moment, questions of belief and abstract ideas." Instead we are invited to focus on five ordinary types of objects - stones, incense, drums, crosses, and bread - with which we connect in our pursuit of religious meaning and fulfillment. We will reflect on how the religious experiences described in the book relate to our own lives, and to our experience as Unitarian Universalists.

I'm giving lots of advance notice so that you can request the book from your local public library, or order yourself a copy. I will also get a couple of copies to put in our UCS Library, so let me know if you would like to borrow one of them.

From the Minister



Dear Ones,

In late January, I had the pleasure of attending a workshop, along with Forbesy Russell, on Music and Worship, led by drummer Matt Meyer. Matt Meyer is a Unitarian Universalist musician, educator, and worship leader. He has led worship and worship in hundreds of congregations, including our own, and he shares his message of love and justice through rhythm and song wherever he goes. Matt and I go way back: about 15 years ago, we lived in a big vegan co-op house together, along with 10-12 other people. It was not a UU house, but three of us happened to be UUs, making the house rather disproportionately UU (though we are mighty, us UUs certainly do not comprise 25% of the US population). It's not that we all

knew each other before moving in. Something about our UU beliefs in building the world we wish to live in drew us all to the kind of intentional-utopian-sustainable-lifestyle that a big vegan co-op house promises. My memories of that time include the sounds of the drumming lessons that Matt gave, emanating from our basement. We walked around that house with an extra beat in our step whenever drumming class was in session.

Anyway, Forbesy and I agreed: the Music and Worship training was an absolute delight. This was a workshop for ministers, music directors, and lay worship leaders from local UU congregations. We focused on the role of music in creating transformative worship experiences. Matt is interested in how music can help us go deeper when we gather together as a religious community. We explored techniques such as congregational songleading, weaving music and liturgy (words for worship), using music to facilitate seamless transitions throughout a worship service, and the choir's role in all of the above. Forbesy and I came away with a few ideas of how we can bring these concepts to our own congregation. I hope to discuss these ideas with our whole worship team, which includes Christine, Mel, Jennifer, Forbesy, and the Worship Committee.

The opportunity to support our new neighbors who are staying in temporary shelter in a hotel in Sharon continues. As you will read further in this newsletter, and as you will hear in our worship services in February, we are focusing our February Brown Envelope on resources for these immigrant families. The proceeds from our month-long collection will go towards purchases for their basic needs and wellbeing, including Uber gift cards, diapers and wipes, certain over-the-counter medications, and the [Virtual Baby Shower](#). Anyone who is moved to make purchases for donation, in addition to or instead of contributing to the Brown Envelope, is welcome to do so - you can leave your "pharmacy" donations in the blue bins in the Vestry or in the case of the Uber gift cards, in my box in the main office. Thank you for your continued support!

Yours in faith,
Rev. Jolie

From the President



Signage! Banners. Yard signs. It didn't occur to me that these would be difficult issues as I began my fourth term as your president. But they are.

First off, in case you were worried that we have stopped being a welcoming congregation, the reason the progress pride banner is no longer between the columns under the BLM banner . . . is not a policy change but the winter wind!

And speaking of Black Lives Matter . . . our Social Justice Committee and the antiracism working group have flown a BLM banner for years, and rededicated it too. But since a couple BLM groups elsewhere have made statements which some have interpreted as pro-Hamas there has been some objection within and without our congregation to our continuing to display it.

We were moving towards addressing that contentious issue when the tragedy of our loss of Brad Larson distracted us. Since then, Rev. Jolie and I have had a Zoom meeting with a representative of the UUA New England Region, and there have been several discussions about the issue at monthly board meetings. The board decided that we need a policy and procedures for deciding about displays. Jolie is polling other area congregations about theirs. The board is establishing a task force for proposing said policy and procedures. Who decides? How do you propose a sign? What do you do if you object? Does the policy extend to notices of upcoming events like the coffeehouse or Bean Supper or Great Bake-off? (Unlikely.)

Stay tuned . . .

On a more mundane note, I hope you will notice that the sanctuary level bathrooms are warmer now! Thanks to B&G, we discovered that the electric baseboard panels were turned off!

Valerie White

FAITH DEVELOPMENT

February Faith Development

As we move through the Article II values each month, February's theme is Equity and Justice.

Grades 5 & 6: Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education begins February 4. Classes run from 10:30 - 12:00pm. Thank you to facilitators Lionel Schanz, Kate Barber, Andrew Plumridge and Karen Zelevinsky for making this possible!

Family Services and Grades K-4:

Feb.4: What is Equality, Equity and Justice? We'll explore what these all mean and dive a bit more into equity as a process not just a concept.

Feb 11: Building Better Relationships What does equity and justice look like within our friend and family relationships? Exploring identity and intersectionality.

Feb 18: Building a Better World Looking at justice and equity in society. It's Black History Month and we'll learn about Blacks who have led the way to a more just society in the US.

Feb 25: The Gift of Joy and Beloved Community What is Beloved Community? It can be hard work to create, but when we start to feel it, it's joyful!

Small Group Ministry for Classroom Volunteers

February 13th and 27th @ 7pm in A/B

Did you know that the Sunday morning children's program is a theme-based ministry? This year we are focusing on the Article II values. Check out the children's religious education [packet on Justice and Equity](#) We use these stories and activities as "building blocks" to create our Sunday morning sessions.

We know that volunteering in the classroom on Sunday mornings means missing the worship service, a time you likely cherish. To make up for that, we'd like to offer some spiritual nourishment by inviting you into an adult small group ministry that allows you to explore the same themes the children are exploring, more in-depth. The content comes from Soul Matters and we have ordered the adult small group ministry packet for February on Justice and Equity.

Our adult sessions will be on February 12th and 26th at 7:00pm in Program A/B. Both sessions will be facilitated by Christine Bulman.

[Sign-up Genius for Volunteering](#)

Faith Development Committee Meeting - February 7 @ 7:00 pm

Curious? These meetings are open to all. Please check the calendar on the UCS website for Zoom details.

SOCIAL JUSTICE NEWS



The Social Justice Committee encourages you to visit the UCS website (uusharon.org) for information about the social justice programs at church. The Social Justice pages are a great source for information about opportunities to engage, resources, and links to partner organizations and groups that we collaborate with in our work.



Brown Envelope Collections

The December Brown E donations of \$1065 during regular services were directed to the **Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's Emergency Response Fund** (uusc.org). Of this, the first \$800 was collected and delivered in time to meet a 1:1 match at UUSC, so our support became \$1865 in total.

Donations of \$675 during the Christmas Eve service at UCS this year will be given to **Father Bill's & MainSpring** (helpfbms.org) in Brockton, whose guests are experiencing homelessness. (We continue to provide MainSpring House bag lunches each month to help feed individuals and families facing housing crises.)

The January Brown Envelope collec-

tions will once again support the **6 local food pantries** in our surrounding communities of Foxboro, Walpole, Norwood, Canton, Stoughton/Sharon and the First Congregational Church of Sharon's local pantry.

[The January Brown E collection will build on our extraordinary 4 year effort since Covid struck that focused on support for local food insecurity, which has raised over \$66,000 to date.]

In February, the Brown Envelope donations will continue our ongoing **support for immigrant families** currently in temporary housing in Sharon. There are over 200 folks in transition, comprising 64 families, from Chile, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, as well as from within the US. Our financial support will be directed to help with transportation expences, toiletries, and other essential needs. More information can be found on the Sharon Town website at [MIgrant/Homeless Families in Sharon page](#). Our own Meg Dussault is currently chairing the town's task force to support the new families. Your donations are greatly appreciated and will be sent to Jolie's Minister's Discretionary Fund and then released as needed. Thank you for your support.

SOCIAL JUSTICE NEWS, continued

February Justice Film Series 2024

At First Church and Parish in Dedham

Sundays at 2pm and additional watching and discussion on Tuesday Night.



February 4, 2024, 2 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. Human Flow (2017)

PG 13 - 2 hours and 20 minutes.

Over 65 million people around the world have been forced from their homes to escape famine, climate change, and war in the greatest human displacement since World War II. Human Flow, an epic film journey led by the internationally renowned artist Ai Weiwei, gives a powerful visual expression to this massive human migration. The documentary elucidates both the staggering scale of the refugee crisis and its profoundly personal human impact.

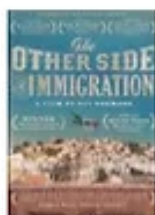
February 11, 2023, 2 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Double Feature:

Out of Many One: The Immigrants Story (2019) 34 minutes

In this short documentary, a group of diverse immigrants discuss their personal journey to pass the immigration test.

&



The Other Side of Immigration: (2009) 55 Minutes.

Based on over 700 interviews in Mexican towns where about half the population has left to work in the United States, The Other Side of Immigration asks why so many Mexicans come to the U.S. and what happens to the families and communities they leave behind. Through an approach that is both subtle and thought-provoking, filmmaker Roy Germano provides a perspective on undocumented immigration rarely witnessed by American eyes, challenging audiences to imagine more creative and effective solutions to the

problem.



Sunday, February 18, 2024, 2 p.m- 5:30 p.m.

A Thousand Pines (2023) 73 Minutes

Raymundo Morales runs a crew of 12 Oaxacan tree planters traveling the United States in this intimate portrait about the hidden world of guest workers regrowing America's forests. We follow them over the course of one season planting for the country's largest reforestation company, and we watch as Raymundo balances the job's demands with the needs of his men and their loved

ones back home. Through the voices of the planters and company owners, we learn how the industry turned from American to foreign workers, and how planting went from work people cherished to work people endure.

Sunday, February 25, 2024 2-5:30

New Immigrant and Refugee Visions: Films by and about Immigrants

The NIRV films include short stories about a Rohingya refugee who newly arrived in the US, Haitian healing with dance, Indian campaigning for city council, a Somali refugee family divided generationally, a Puerto Rican cultural activist, a Ugandan wondering why he's working in a nursing home, a Bhutanese Christian refugee helping other refugees and immigrants; an Ethiopian evangelical minister helping addicts; a Haitian fixing other Haitians' troubles; and, an undocumented Dominican mother and DACA designated daughter.



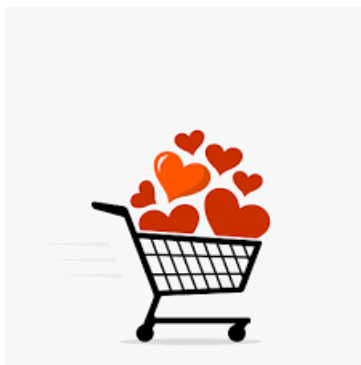
670 High Street, Dedham, MA 02026 / www.dedhamuu.org/
raliweaver@dedhamuu.org 617-459-5979 to register

SOCIAL JUSTICE NEWS, continued

MainSpring House House lunch making: once again our UCS Youth will take the lead as we assemble 75 brown bag lunches for the guests of the shelter in Brockton. On Sunday, 11 February, during the second service upstairs, the team will assemble the meals on our behalf. If there is still work needed to finish the project, give a hand during Coffee Hour. Thanks!



Youth-led lunch assembly line for guests of MainSpring House in Brockton



Curious how we fund the MainSpring House lunch making every month?

You too can help make the MSH lunch program a success when you shop for

your own groceries. We fundraise to purchase supplies for this effort with our **Shopping for Justice** program (S4J), where we ask you to purchase grocery cards from local chain stores for you personal shopping needs. We buy the cards in bulk, and get a 5% discount, which funds the lunch program (your grocery purchases are one-to-one, dollar for dollar, since the 5% donation comes from the stores). Stop by the Social Justice Table in the Vestry during Coffee Hour to learn more about this user-friendly program. The more of us who make this commitment to 'Shopping for Justice', the more hunger and homelessness programs we can engage with during these troubled times.

SJC Meeting for February: the monthly SJC meeting will be on Sunday, February 4th, starting at approximately noon. We will continue to offer hybrid-zoom participation, with some gathering in the physical Library for face-to-face conversation, and others on the small screen. Look for the zoom link in the UCS Calendar. All are welcome; please join us as we look for opportunities and challenges to work together as we make a difference in the world.

{Fair Trade goods at Coffee Hour - high quality chocolates and such, supporting fair compensation for farmers; Valentine's Day coming, just saying....}

SOCIAL JUSTICE NEWS, continued

Equal Exchange Offers Ethically Produced Chocolate

Equal Exchange, our fair trade partner, works with farmer cooperatives to bring the highest quality, organic products to congregations.

By purchasing chocolate from a fair trade alternative supply chain, you're helping farmers to stay on their land, produce their crops, and plan for the future. Also importantly, you are purchasing chocolate that doesn't involve child labor in its production.

Reports estimate that there are more than 2 million child laborers in the cacao sectors of the Ivory Coast and Ghana alone, countries which produce over 70% of the world's cacao. The root cause of this problem is poverty. Farm families make roughly \$2/day which is not enough to sustain them. The Equal Exchange alternative trade system is a different model that helps small farmers continue to produce cacao crops so that they can provide for their families.

Grown by small farmer co-ops:

Equal Exchange works with CONACADO, a farmer cooperative which produces organic cacao for its chocolate bars. Over the past 23 years CONACADO has grown from 700 members, organized in three locations, to over 9,500 members organized in 9 locations with 142 local community associations throughout the Dominican Re-

public. Each of the 9 groups has a similar organizational structure: an Assembly of Delegates, with two delegates per association, that meets once a month to report on work plan progress at the community level; a Governing Board that meets once a month to execute the work plan; and an Administrative Committee that meets once a week to follow up on the work plan to make sure it is going as it should. A General Assembly meets once a year to approve work plans and decide how fair trade premiums will be used. Today, CONACADO members produce approximately 25% of the cacao exported from the Dominican Republic and the organization has become a powerful alternative for small-scale producers.

Supporting alternative trade:

Equal Exchange works outside of the conventional system to build transparent and strong relationships with farmer cooperatives. They currently partner with four cacao co-ops in the Dominican Republic, Peru, Panama, and Togo. The sugar for the bars comes from co-ops in Paraguay and the vanilla from co-ops in Madagascar. Purchase and enjoy eating chocolate that reflects your values and provides farmers with a livable income.

ANTI-RACISM WORKING GROUP (ARWG) formerly 8th Principle**Anti-Racism Working Group (ARWG) REPORT**

February is Black History Month here in the U.S. And while the need for a specific month to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions Black people have made to our country and the world, demonstrates that we still live in a white supremacist culture, it's also a good opportunity to take some time to learn about Black history, the continued prevalence of racism today, and how we can be better anti-racists. While there are tons of resources to help, we have provided a few suggestions below.

StoryCorps. Stories to Celebrate Black History Month

Black History Month honors the achievements, adversities, and legacy of African Americans in the United States. At StoryCorps, we are amplifying Black voices in conversations about activism, love, joy, and leadership. Explore our collection of stories to reflect on our shared history and to celebrate the impact of Black historical figures and pioneers.

Side With Love - Week 4 (February 5-11) Resilience :: Democracy & Electoral Justice. Electoral Justice is key to the work of anti-racism and anti-oppression. Based on information from the Brennan Center for Justice, there is a large and growing pile of evidence that strict voter ID laws disproportionately impact voters of color. More restrictive laws have been enacted in 2023 than in the past decade, (excluding a wave of changes in 2021 after the last presidential election), with at least 14 states having enacted laws that will make it harder to vote.

NPR Podcast. A 20-minute podcast by Eric Deggans: 'Not Racist' is Not Enough. (Transcript also provided). Excerpt from the Podcast: "[F]or people dedicated to fighting racism, simply saying you're 'not racist' doesn't feel like quite enough. To effectively defeat systemic racism — racism embedded as normal practice in institutions like education and law enforcement — you've got to be continually working towards equality for all races, striving to undo racism in your mind, your personal environment and the wider world. In other words, you've got to be anti-racist."

And remember: Our own library has some wonderful books on these subjects, just waiting to be checked out.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2024



General Assembly 2024

Check out our new website page containing information about this year's 2024 Virtual General Assembly as well as information about the proposed Article II Revisions.

"General Assembly is the annual gathering of Unitarian Universalists, where we conduct business of the Association, explore the theological underpinnings of our faith, and lean fully into our mission and principles." **This year's theme: LOVE UNITES, STORIES IGNITE.**

The **key business item at this year's GA will be the vote on FINAL APPROVAL of the proposed ARTICLE II REVISIONS.** These revisions include replacing the 7 Principles currently contained therein, with a VALUE-BASED approach. Rev. Jolie has already addressed some of these values in past sermons and will cover the remaining values over the next months. The Committee on Ministry, along with Rev. Jolie, facilitated a discussion about the proposed revisions last month and had an interesting and productive meeting. We hope to schedule another meeting in the future.

UCS is entitled to 4 voting delegates at GA. If you're interested in serving as a delegate this year or would like more information about what it entails, please contact Rev. Jolie.