

NUU NEWSLETTER

BELFAST

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THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF BELFAST
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WE ARE A VIBRANT, inter-generational faith community, inspired by thought and spirit and grounded in love. Our mission is to honor differences and to foster peace, justice, and sustainability in ourselves and in our world.

From Deane M. Perkins
*Minister of the Unitarian
Universalist Church of Belfast*

DEAR FRIENDS,

Life is, for me, its own pilgrimage, its own sacred journey. In Hinduism the last stage of life is primarily focused on spiritual matters, having fulfilled one's responsibilities with regard to family and career.

I have entered the last stage of life, and have decided to retire. I have submitted my retirement form to the UUA. This is my retirement letter to you, as members and friends of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Belfast.

I leave ministry—and my ministry with you—with a tremendous sense of gratitude, as well as deep sadness. I have loved this congregation since I first met you almost seven

years ago when we were both in search. Sue and I have made Belfast our home, and this congregation is our church. It breaks my heart to leave, and yet I know it is the right time for me to do so.

Sue and I will remain here in Belfast. But when I leave on July 1, 2018, I cannot return to the church for two years. Meanwhile, the Council will create a team to find an Interim Minister. It's not nearly as complicated a process as going into full search to find a settled minister. In fact, the search team will have completed its work by mid-May.

I'm not fully sure where the next part of my pilgrimage will take me, but know that you are a part of it, and that, at least for two years, Sue and I will miss you greatly.

With gratitude and love,
Deane



Steve Weston, our Choir Director and Ellie Daniels, our accompanist, playing a duet at the piano dedication ceremony on Sunday January 21, 2018.

Where to from here?

March 2018

By *Marty Daniels*

WE ARE AT A CROSSROADS.

[BUT WE'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE.]

There are three possible paths to follow:

One path would be to look at our minister's retirement and our financial shortfall and see them serendipitously: we can save money and recover financially by not having a minister for the two years that it will

take to call a new minister.

Another path would be to hire a half-time or three-quarter time interim minister, and again save some money. We can then decide whether to hire a full-time or part-time called minister.

The third path is to hire a full-time interim minister, recognizing that we will not save any money this way, and then figuring out how to make up our budget shortfalls going forward.

On the face of it, the first path

would seem like the most prudent. But to me, it feels like the path going backwards. This is both a "gut" feeling and based on history. Some years ago, in order to balance the budget, we decided not to pay our full UUA and regional dues. At the time, we were committed to getting back to being a "Fair Share Congregation" as soon as possible. It hasn't happened, and it is not going to happen in the foreseeable future.

My point is that once you make major cuts like that, it is really hard to go back.

I fear that if we decide now to not have an interim, there will be serious

consequences. The first of these is that we will have no pastoral leadership during our two-year search for a new called minister. Can we muddle through? Sure – we have done it before. But an interim minister can lead us through both that process and our grief at losing Deane. Indeed, that is exactly what they are trained to do.

Secondly, once we get used to not having to pay the cost of a minister, it will be really hard to go back. We know this from our experience with the dues. We get used to not having to pay certain bills, and those things fall by the wayside.

Thirdly, and most importantly in my mind, we lose a piece of ourselves.

We are the “can do” congregation. At many points in our short history, we have reached a critical junction and made a leap of faith. The first, of course, was the decision to start a UU church. Then we hired a quarter-time minister; then bought a building; then called Deane as a full-time minister; then embarked on the building renovation. Each of these

steps required vision and faith, and we have succeeded at them all. Do we really want to pull back now?

The second path, on the face of it, would again seem prudent. Why not save some money on an interim?

Again, our own history should guide us here. We hired Mary Wellemeyer after Pam Gross left as a three-quarter-time interim. Before the first year was done, she made it clear that she would only stay if we increased her to full-time. That was the “miracle at 37 Miller Street”, and it led directly to hiring Deane.

In addition, conversations with the UUA and the regional district about the interim process have illuminated a few facts that we would do well to heed. The first of these is that the pool of interim ministers is relatively small. Almost all of these candidates are seeking a full-time position. If we apply for a part-time interim, that dramatically increases the likelihood that we will get passed over by most, and have to settle for who is left or for no interim at all.

Having a full-time interim, in turn,

strengthens our position when we go into search. Again, most ministers are looking for a full-time position, leaving the weaker candidates to fill the part-time positions. Having a full-time interim is a sign of a strong congregation, and makes our church that much more desirable.

So despite our financial difficulties at this time, I would opt for the third path.

We hire a full-time interim and begin our search for our next called minister from a position of strength. Will this be financially challenging? Yes it will. But in the long term, I believe that we will be infinitely better served by continuing to move forward.

Will this be difficult? Yes.

Are we weary, in the third year of a capital campaign and having just moved back into our renovated building? Yes.

But ultimately, what do we want for ourselves? And when have we ever chosen the path of least resistance?

We are the “can do” congregation. And we CAN DO this.

A reflection

To quote Godspell, “Where are you going? Where are you going? Can you take me with you?”

In the wake of the news of Rev. Deane’s retirement, many of us may be left reeling unsure about the future or how we will find our way now. Where are you going?

There may be a sense of panic when we consider all of the changes we’ve already faced with our new building, new staff members, partnerships with sister congregations and pre-schools, and now we need to work with a new minister as well? Can you take me with you?

What is important to remember,

however, is that we are a church that is built upon change and challenge. We’ve emerged from a living room into this wonderfully renovated building. We did that! We are the little-church-that-could.

In the last seven years we have been blessed with the guidance from Rev. Deane. We’ve learned from him the importance of our staff, to take a step back and consider what really matters to us as a faith community, and to embrace our families and children. He has been a calm and reassuring voice that we have the power to weather any storm.

Let his teachings be a reminder that we needn’t be scared about the road

ahead. We are ready to face whatever changes come our way. We should be comforted by the fact that we are a faith community and together, we shall walk, side by side, toward our next great adventure.

Blessed Be

Danielle Bannister, DRE

Membership Sunday

New members will be officially welcomed at the morning service on Sunday, March 4. Let’s make our newest members feel welcome to our warm and friendly congregation.

Our can-do congregation

by Sarah Nicholson

Gathered in the lumpy circle created as more and more people joined and added their chairs, our beloved community opened our hearts to one another on Sunday after church. We gathered to share our gratitude and memories from the seven years of our shared ministry with Deane Perkins as we continue to process the news of his retirement decision. We also began the process of together facing and wrestling with the news that we have significant financial challenges ahead. What a convergence of hard news!

Over the years we have prided ourselves on being a “can-do” congregation, and we have accomplished incredible things. On the heels of all the doing we did to get the building project started and finished (kind of) it feels hard to see the goal posts moved again. It is, honestly, daunt-

March Sunday Services

All services start at 10:00 AM at our church! Please call 338-4482 for more information. Children, infants and new faces are always welcome. Please join us!

Our church-wide Soul Matters Theme for January is Balance!

March 4	Rev. Deane Perkins
March 11	Steve Weston, <i>music director extraordinaire</i>
March 18	Rev. Deane Perkins
March 25	MUUSAN (Maine UU State Advocacy Network)

ing to think about having to gather in over \$20,000 before the end of this fiscal year, and to increase our budget for next year by a similar amount, too.

And on top of that, to have to pay off or amortize something like \$60,000 of building debt, even without accomplishing any more “finishing” of our building. It could be

tempting to try to be smaller, to quietly slip away or even to just throw in the towel.

There is a quote from Aly Juma in this month’s Soul Matters packet: “When you feel like quitting, think about why you started.” What I saw on Sunday was a group of people remembering who we have been together, a community taking seri-

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ously and bravely this hard news, a beloved congregation touching again the web that we have been weaving all these years feeling in it once more the power of connection and our own transformation.

Our task over the next four months is to say a fabulous goodbye to our ministry with Deane and to tackle these financial challenges. These two tasks are in truth intertwined and will be accomplished through the same means: turning towards one another and re-owning that there is so much we have done, but also lots that we haven't yet been brave enough or smart enough or bold enough to do.

And then, loving each other anyway, to call on all those resources, gifts and strengths named on Sunday as held by our congregation. To ask one another and ourselves to wholeheartedly show up and give all that we have to give, Time, Talent and Treasure. All of it.

I have no doubt that if we remember why we started, and are brave and bold and kind, we will succeed.

We will
Sarah Nicholson

From our Minister

DEAR FRIENDS,

At the Congregational Conversation we had on Sunday, Feb. 18, we talked about both my retirement and our financial situation. We have gone, and continue to go through many, many changes at church. While change can often be difficult, I also see change as providing new ways to grow. And this is my hope for our church.

This year we have emphasized individual spiritual growth and spiritual leadership at church. The other part of our ministry, or mission, is to help heal the world—the inner and the outer need to be in concert. These are our tasks, our calling as a faith community. So our vision and mission need always be foremost in anything we do.

There is always the temptation, however, to allow finances to dictate mission and vision. In such a case, financial “sustainability” takes priority over ministry. I contend that it is mission that needs to drive finances. When that occurs,

mission and money are never at odds. But it takes will and commitment on the part of the members and friends of this congregation to make it so. In a very real way, the historical “Miracle at 37 Miller Street” needs to take place every few years as a reminder of our passion and compassion, our will and determination, our hope and dedication to “care for the soul”—our own and that of our world.

So change is happening rapidly, and we have important decisions to make. I hope those decisions show a commitment to ministry—both professionally and congregationally—and the growing of our mission and vision. I hope we see how truly significant and meaningful our congregation is to each one of us personally, and to our community. I hope we experience the “fire of commitment” deeply in our soul, because, I am convinced, the world needs us.

With my love,
Deane

March 4th Sunday Potluck

March's monthly congregational potluck falls on March 25th, when we may be seeing some signs of spring! Come and bring a dish to share! Or just bring yourself. The amazing thing about potlucks is that there's always plenty for all!

Remember that the work of the potluck is shared among those attending, so help with setup and cleanup--many hands make light work!

From your Congregational Life friends

Council members address what's up ahead:

Fundraiser Slam...Dunk!

by Sarah Nichols

Five new fundraiser ideas developed and scheduled this church year with a target fundraising goal of \$18,000!! Pretty impressive to accomplish before noon on a Saturday morning!

Focused and fun, about 20 of us spun out close to 40 ideas, and picked five that felt achievable, inspiring and with “big bang,” high return for the effort. While they are now roughed out and have dates attached, there is work to do by the

whole congregation to make these the smashing success they have the potential to be. The most important thing is to participate, to bring your friends, to spread the word, so keep an ear out and jump in!

Here are brief descriptions of the planned events and some of the ways that you can help each one.

Two events are variations on familiar auction items: camp rentals and special dinner evenings. Do you have a camp you'd be willing to allow the church to rent out for a

week? A weekend? Even a night? You help set the price and name the dates, we'll do the rest! Talk to Marty Daniels FMI.

How about hosting a fun, fabulous dinner and/or evening's entertainment at your home for a small group of members/friends? It can be a theme dinner, or a special game night and snacks: thai food? A bar-beque? How about Dominos and chicken wings? Movie and a pizza? Looking for hosts, now, guests soon! FMI see Sarah Nicholson.

Memorial Day Weekend Lobster roll picnic is a new event, capitalizing on an Art Walk night, but maybe repeatable to serve other festivals or events in town. It's experi-learning! This intrepid team is looking into lobster sources, how to draw people in, etc. Want to help make it a success? Talk to Deane.

An evening of music, nothing fancy, but plenty enjoyable, and a way to continue to bring folks into our sanctuary. To help plan or to offer your talents, see Patty Heath.

And finally, a crazy fun wild raffle idea that nets a UU church in Massachusetts \$45,000 every year!! So awesome, just wait...and get ready to help sell tickets. It'll take some effort, but the tickets should sell easily, really, we promise...FMI, Amy Fiorilli can direct you...

Other ways you can help: Add your house to the UUB&B program. You offer a guest room that can be made available on request (when it's convenient for you), provide a breakfast as simple or elaborate as you wish; the church gets \$50-\$100/night. How simple is that? FMI and to offer your house, see Muzz. Last year she had to turn down multiple requests for lack of homes to offer. Sign up now!

Finally, interested in joining an event promotions team? Work with our new admin Sarah Hewitt and help Spread the Word on all these, and other, fabulous events. FMI, see Sarah Nicholson or Muzz. How about being a volunteer coordinator for our fundraising events? Set up a sign-up system, be the point of contact for getting volunteers and win the deep, eternal and undying appreciation of every single event organizer...sound intriguing? See Sarah Nicholson or Muzz.

Thank you, truly, to those of you who took the risk and the time to show up...those of you who didn't missed out on a fun Saturday morning, but don't miss out on helping to make these fun new events a success. This is work we can do, now, together, to meet the financial challenges we're facing this year and next. Watch for more information!

New to UU Class in April

Come join us during the month of April as we explore our own spiritual journeys and our Unitarian Universalist roots. The spring New to UU Class will be held on four Sunday afternoons in April. The reverend Deane Perkins, our ministerial intern Amy Fiorilli and lay teacher, Ian Howard will lead these classes.

The classes will be held from 1:00-3:00 PM on April 8, 15, 22, 29. If you are interested in becoming a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Belfast or if you just want to know more about what being a UU means, these classes are for you!

For more information contact Teresa Piper at teresapipe@gmail.com or Marion Brown at merry-oneb@me.com

For the most part I felt welcomed, and I soon realized this was a village prepared to work diligently toward its hopes and expectations, while still attending to its frustrations and disappointments. Through hard work and acceptance of the present at any given time, a "can do" movement was underway. Today, I feel us extending this journey in harmony with our history.

I am an Olympics junkie, so a motto for this year's winter games, SYI - Start Your Impossible - has been repeated many times in the last couple weeks for me to hear. Ten years later from when I came to UUCB, I still feel a part of the "just do all that you can, and we will be the best together" village. We are seeking another "miracle on Miller St." I want to be a part of the solu-

Through My Looking Glass

by Susan Coe

"Just before you pass through the looking glass, you are looking at your own reflection," writes Paul Theroux of the Daily Beast.

When I joined the UUCB in 2008, we were preparing for transition, soon to be hiring an interim minister, seeking the best path forward. We

were outgrowing our identity as a family size congregation, and edging forward to some combination of a pastoral and program size congregation. As I looked at my reflection deciding to become a member of the church, I determined that I wanted this church in my life because it gave me a steady seat when I felt disconnected from the rest of my world.

Congregational Life apologizes for needing to cancel the Valentine card and cookie making event in February. We cancelled due to snow!

Our next event is sledding, cross-country skiing, marshmallow roasting and hot chocolate drinking! It's scheduled for Sunday, March 4, at Jan and Dean Anderson's home. Their address is 93 Kaler Road in East Belfast. Think SNOW!!

Your CongoLife Committee
*Sue Cobb, Jane Morgan,
 Teresa Piper and Cheryl
 Richardson*

tion. That will show itself differently that it did ten years ago - today I am more involved and I look outward; back then, I was simply looking in, trying to understand the vision this

church had. Today my perspective of our work is inspirational, fascinating, heroic, and risky - sort of like those Olympians who jump from the sky trying to carve a new personal best at what they do. As they chase their dreams, the barriers to success are removed.

This is a church that decided to rebuild literally. I had to decide how I would participate. The UUCB offers many ways for me to contribute my time, talent, and treasure. Would it be through music, RE, fundraising, business and finance, membership, or some other way? I had to decide, as I looked into the looking glass, how I would feel passion and comfort, be aware of how I could offer something in return, all the while venturing further along on my own spiritual journey. And I have found the ways I can create a balance of time, talent and treasure that

works for me.

Sure, I hope we get flooring, I hope the sanctuary is finished, I hope we have enough money to do all that. And concurrently, I want us to strive to open our doors further, welcome the larger community, provide for the needy. Personally, I hope we find a full time interim minister that will help us to secure our finances, support collaborative ministry, advocate for our youth, and help us to adapt to 21st century religious programming. I recognize the costs involved - in dollars, time, and anxiety; I also see the value in the results. I try to convert my concerns to gifts; as opportunities to reflect and, one step at a time, pass through my looking glass, enriched by spirit, embodied in grace, and grateful to everyone who gave their time, talent and treasure to "start our impossible" as a renewed village.

Leap of Faith

by Karen Wigglesworth, president

It has long been said that the only thing constant is change. And true to the old wisdom, our church once again finds itself at the threshold of change.

In mid-February, congregants and friends received a letter from our minister, Reverend Deane Perkins, sharing the news of his plans to retire at the end of this church year. July will bring us to the bittersweet time of celebrating with gratitude the seven years of Deane's ministry and then saying goodbye.

What comes next is very much a work in progress. A team has already come together to explore the process of hiring an interim minister, which is a relatively brief process of concentrated effort, in which we will receive guidance and assistance from the staff of the UUA New England

Region. In keeping with the tenets of our denomination, our congregation is free to pursue any option of ministry we decide upon, however after thoughtful consideration it is becoming clear to me and others in leadership that there are compelling reasons why we would want to choose to hire a full-time interim minister. It is an important decision and one we will have opportunities to discuss in the days to come.

Another work in progress is the work of taking a hard look at our finances now, at the completion of Phase I of the building project and near the end of our first full year back in our newly renovated building. We are now able to fill in some of the previously unknowable blanks in our operating expenses, and it is becoming clear that our operating budget will necessarily be higher this year and going forward, and that we

are currently on a trajectory toward a significant deficit by the end of the church year.

This deficit, combined with the money needed to service the building debt, presents a formidable challenge at a time of so many other challenges. I am encouraged by the efforts of the dedicated folks looking after our finances, who have turned their good minds, experience and resourcefulness toward this work and are coming up with solid, workable options for our congregation to consider together.

Faced with these challenges, it would be easy to become discouraged and lose heart, or to respond with fear of what the future brings, but that is not what I see in the character of this church.

As someone who considers herself still somewhat of a newcomer to the congregation, I feel myself in a

unique position to hold a mirror up to what I see when I look upon our beloved community: I see a congregation of love, passionate convictions, talent and creativity beyond measure, and always a deep well of willingness to serve. I see a community with big dreams, long vision and tremendous courage.

Do you realize how far you have come? In just a little over two decades you harnessed your resources to start a church from scratch, purchase a building, call a full-time minister, and embark on a renovation of the building to turn it into a beautiful space which will serve the needs of the congregation and the community far into the future. You have created a church from the seeds of a dream, nurtured and grown it, and your energy and commitment continue to carry it into the future.

No doubt, looking back at the effort it took to bring each stage in the growth of this church to fruition, each mountain to climb, many looked daunting and some seemed impossible, but through leaps of faith, deep commitment and perse-

verance the church has become what it is today.

A leap of faith requires trust in the rightness of striving toward something for which there is no proof, a willingness to tolerate insecurity.

In *The Place Beyond Fear and Hope*, Margaret Wheatley describes the attributes of those brave souls willing to embrace the gift of insecurity:

“They exchange certainty for curiosity, fear for generosity. They plunge into the problem, treat their attempts as experiments, and learn as they go.”

This kind of insecurity is energizing; people become engaged in figuring out what works instead of needing to be right or worrying about how to avoid failure. Whenever they discover something that does work, there’s a huge rush of energy, often accompanied by laughter”.

I saw some of that energy and laughter on February 24, when more than 20 people came together on a Saturday morning for our first-ever Fundraising SLAM: part brainstorming session, part strategy summit, a

time to entertain any and all ideas on how we might leverage the abundant resources of our congregation to generate additional income.

Enthusiasm and creativity flowed, a handful of particularly juicy ideas were chosen for our focus and we came away with dates selected, plans begun and teams lined up. Stay tuned in the months to come for more details, we’ll be having fun with these ideas and there will be plenty of opportunities to get involved.

The following morning, the sermon by Ministerial Intern Amy Fiorilli was entitled “Love Liberates,” in which she asked us to consider the following questions:

What sustains us?

What brings us back?

What moves us forward?

The answers will be different for each of us but I believe that at the heart of it all is the love we feel for this beloved community, the love which makes this church our home and will guide us and sustain us going forward.

In fellowship and in gratitude.

From our intern

Dear All,

I really don’t know what I want to say. There is so much moving through my mind and heart. It has been a full month of ministry, connection and struggle. One of our beloved congregations has learned that their minister is retiring.

Reverend Deane Perkins of Belfast has announced that he is moving on to a new phase of his life at the end of this church year. I am sure the whole collaboration is with me in wishing him the very best and I know we all are ready and willing to support the Belfast members as they navigate this transition, which will

include four more months of saying goodbye well, of hiring an interim minister and of reflecting on who they are and who they are becoming. For my part, I am aware of what an honor it is to be supervised by Rev. Deane as his first intern as well as his last. I am proud and lucky to be walking with him and the Belfast congregation for the next few months.

There is a lot happening. The collaborative ministry team has been reevaluating their structure and work in our congregations. We want to do more, and we want to be substantive and real in the lives of our sister congregations. Planning for an incredi-

ble multi church worship service on the 3rd of June is underway. The theme is “How Will We Shine?” We have so much to offer each other, and the world. How will we share our gifts? How will we lift each other up out of darkness, fear and despair? We are more together than we could ever be alone. How will we shine?

I am also looking to begin a Collaborative Adult RE class on creating theology together. This is a pilot program offered through the FAHS initiative. The Director of Religious Education from Ellsworth, Anne Ossana, and I will be facilitating these sessions. This curriculum is

meant to help groups identify a common theology upon which to ground the work we do in the world. We all have personal beliefs that guide us; what would it be like to create a true shared theology that informs our social justice work, our congregational work and our work with each other? There will be a six-hour retreat in March held in Bucksport and then three more 2-hour meetings held in each of our churches. More information to follow. I hope you will join us.

Finally, I am completely done with

gun violence in our country. My heart is beyond capacity for horror and heartbreak. In truth, I've been done since December 14, 2012. I have been at vigils, I have written an editorial, I have been one of six citizen sponsors of a Mom's Demand Action Bill calling for common sense gun laws. I have called my representatives and signed petitions. I have talked and talked. I'm done trying to understand. I'm done trying to teach or reason or explain. People I love deeply are on the other side of this issue and I am done being care-

ful.

This is beyond my capacity for patience. There is so much more I could write here. But for now, I just need to be clear. My work of social justice going forward will be primarily focused on the work of preventing the massacres of our children. I am ashamed that I have not done more before now. The elections this year are vital to our survival. Let's become warriors. Our country, our children need us.

Yours in love and faith,
Amy Fiorilli