

Powerline

*First Unitarian Universalist
Church of Niagara*

September 2021

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Learn, Love, Build a Better World

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The Powerline is a monthly publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Niagara. It is free online to anyone who wishes to subscribe- members, friends, and anyone else anywhere in the country and beyond.

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Many thanks to our contributors Betsy Diachun, Andrea Galipeau, and Erica Kopp.

Sunday Services

September 12: "Putting Up Roots"

How long does it take to put down "roots" in a geographic area? And how can being rooted in a place give us a deeper understanding of ourselves?

Speaker: John Snodgrass
Coffee Hour Host: Board
Usher: Betsy

Adult Education Class 12:30 – 1:30

Religions of the Great Plains, Part 1: An exploration of Native American beliefs and traditions from the midwest.

September 19: "Welcoming Refugees"

Our country is in a process of welcoming refugees from Afghanistan. I will discuss efforts by our local churches to assist those coming .I will also speak about the idea of refuge and what one seeks in it.

Speaker: Susan Frawley
Coffee Hour Host: Patty and Bill Lisk
Usher: Andrea

September 26: Picnic and Religious Education Clean Up

Instead of a service, we will work together as a congregation to clean out and prepare the Religious Education room to prepare for a relaunching of our RE program.

Coffee Hour Host: Board
Usher: Marie

President's Report

In my first message to you I would like to express my sincere appreciation of our congregation. Albeit small in size, we are bursting with talent, dedication and genuine humanity. I am truly happy to have found a home here at FUUN.

We will be concluding our summer lay-led services next week with a picnic at the church and John Snodgrass will kick off our fall with a water ceremony the following week. Despite the usual informality the warmer months bring to our congregation, several of our members shared a variety of interesting topics with us and kept us entertained from week to week.

Our newly-elected Board of Trustees met last week for their summer retreat. Even with the stifling weather, we made some very good use of the hours we met to revisit our past year, discuss the current state of affairs at FUUN and look to the year ahead. There was a resounding appreciation for the Blessing of the Animals service led by Rev. Susan Frawley last year and we are excited to continue with that as tradition again this October.

Our focus on the physical aspect of the building will be to rectify the issues of the outside walls and windows as Peter Diachun had explained at the beginning of the summer in his walk-through around the church. We will also be taking inventory of improvements that can be made inside the church in an effort to revitalize our building. Our first effort in these endeavors will be to host a work party on September 26th, in lieu of a service, to clean out and prepare the Religious Education room so that we may once again offer an RE program to our littlest members.

The conversation continues around whether or not to adopt the 8th principle, the text of which below, and will be brought to the congregation so that we can decide together how we will proceed as is the spirit of our 5th principle. In its essence, the 8th principle reflects a commitment to active anti-racism, accountability of ourselves, and fulfilling the potential of our existing principles.

The 8th Principle of Unitarian Universalism states,

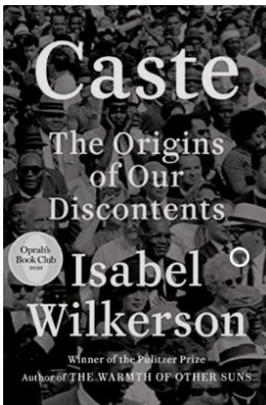
"We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions."

Whether or not we should decide to adopt this principle, the board looks to continue the vitally important work that Peter has committed to striving to understand white privilege, and standing against white supremacy. Erica and I will be looking at curricula offered by the UUA to bring to our congregation and community workshops designed for these goals. Combatting racism is a difficult process but one that is rendered easier when working together.

With all that is to come this year, I am genuinely excited for a FUUN 2021 - 2022!

Andrea

Book Group



Our next meeting will be on Thursday, October 28th from 4:30 PM to 5:30 PM at the church. We are going to try to Zoom these meetings if people are interested. The book we are reading is “Cast: the Origins of Our Discontents” by Isabel Wilkerson.

UUA

Thriving Among the Thorns

By [Tomo Hillbo](#)

September 4, 2019

We don't experience things as they are, we experience them as we are.

—Anais Nin, paraphrased

My house came with a mess of a garden. It was as messy as the divorce I was going through at the time: a forest of thorny, 6-foot-tall thistles with a rusty fire pit and an old plum tree. Cleaning up this garden and keeping it tidy gave me a sense of control I desperately needed.

For several years I diligently weeded, added plants, grew vegetables, hosted alfresco discussion groups for church and s'more parties for kids. My garden became a healing place for one of my daughters as she recovered from a long illness. Little did I know that it was healing me, too.

I remarried, and when my daughter regained enough strength to launch herself back into life, I took a full-time office job. Gardening time shrunk to zero. My workload is especially heavy during spring, right when Chicago flora wakes up from deep winter slumber. By the time I get through it, it's already July and my garden is too much of a mess to deal with. The space that I had kept immaculate and neat was now weedy and unkempt. Echinaceas were getting weaker and eaten almost to the ground by rabbits. Bee balms were withering, Russian sage was shrinking, and last spring the old plum tree didn't wake up. I felt so guilty for letting it all go. In three years it reverted back to being a thistle forest, now without the plum tree. I felt defeated. I kept the curtains drawn toward the remnant of my garden.

This year, after the spring madness at work had passed, my husband coaxed me outside to clean up. The ground was moist and we could pull the tall, prickly thistles without much effort. He counted: 291.

To my great surprise, the garden was thriving among thistles and other “weeds.” Thriving! Tall, skinny thistles not only didn't shade other plants, but also were acting as support structures for perennials that needed some hand-holding while growing. Pesky [creeping charlie](#) turned out to be fantastic ground cover, keeping the soil cool and moist and controlling other kinds of “weeds.” Accidental [green lantern plants](#) were lifting [false indigo](#). And the echinaceas were growing to be full height, supported and protected by everything around them.

I realized it is my inadvertent letting go that made this wild, interdependent beauty possible. And at that very moment, I knew I didn't need that sort of control anymore. How liberating it was!

We left a grove of the thistles in one corner—an altar for my husband who loves thistles, and for me to thank them for welcoming me back to their garden.

Prayer

Spirit of Life, Mother Nature, thank you for reminding us that we are intertwined in something much larger and beautiful and supported by it, even when we can't see the whole picture. Grant us the strength to disrupt our routine ways of thinking and the courage to let go of any sense of control. And may we all learn to love the thistles of our lives. Amen.



Tomo Hillbo serves as the Director of Communications at Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago. She is from Japan, a graphic designer, singer, mother, and wife of a Mennonite pastor from Sweden.

<https://www.uua.org/braverwiser/thistle-forest>



Return Service Requested
September 2021

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First Unitarian Universalist Church of Niagara
Facilities available for Wedding Services,
Receptions, and Celebrations



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