



The Communicator

[Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Lake County](http://www.uuclakeco.org)

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Submit articles for the July Communicator by Thursday, June 25.

Welcome to another special edition of the UUCLC Communicator. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the UUCLC building is currently closed and all in-person programs are cancelled. However, **WE ARE STILL HERE!** We have Sunday services planned, committees are still meeting, and some groups and circles are starting to meet via Zoom. Check your weekly email blast for links to all of our Zoom activities. If you aren't receiving the weekly eblast, request to be added to the list at office@lakecountyuu.net.

- June 7:** Join our sister church, Tri-County UU
- June 14:** Rev. Sara Villareal Bishop
- June 21:** Virtual Animal Blessing—Rev Tracie
- June 28:** Saying Goodbye (Rev. Tracie's final service)



Minister's Message...



What a few months this has been! I am so proud of all of you who have been brave and willing to learn new technology for us to stay safely together. While Zoom can have its glitches, it has been a solid platform for us to provide space for committee meetings, covenant circles, check ins, and worship. Our volunteers are doing everything they can in conjunction with the work that Zoom is doing in the background to make sure that all of our online gatherings are safe. I can say that so far, we have not had any problems with security risks. I don't foresee any, either.

As my time with you winds down, I want to share a few important bits of information. On Sunday, June 21, we will be having a virtual animal blessing! Which means you don't have to hide your pets away during this service. We want to see them all! If your pets are shy or uncooperative, you are encouraged to have a photo nearby to share with us. If you have a beloved pet that has passed, we will also have time to honor them, so please have a photo or other token ready to share.

June 24-28 will be General Assembly. This year it is all virtual, and I invite you to participate in as much as you can via the UUA website (uua.org/ga). You don't have to register to attend many of the events, although you can if you wish to attend some of the workshops. I'm pleased that we have two delegates besides myself who will represent UUCLC during the business meetings. I hope you will check out what is going on in our wider UU world and see how connected we truly are.

Sunday, June 28th will be my last service with you as your minister. I hope you will come to that service so we can say goodbye to each other. I will also have open office hours in my zoom room on my last day (Tuesday, June 30) where you can pop in and out as you are able to say hi and goodbye. The link for that time will be sent in that week's bulletin.

You have been a wonderful congregation and I will hold you in my heart forever. My Professional Code of Conduct does state that upon leaving, I will need to cut all ministerial ties to this congregation. While that is sad and seems harsh, it is so that you all are able to grow and be able to create a relationship with your next minister.

Be well, my beloveds. While our futures are unknown during this time, I have all the faith that your future is bright and beautiful. May it be so.

~ Rev. Tracie

Rev. Tracie is available on Tuesdays and Thursdays (and Wednesdays with some lead time). Please make appointments (to make sure that I have the time blocked off for you) by either emailing me or at <https://calendly.com/revtracie>

Please know that during this time, scammers are trying to take advantage of people. In doing that, they create a gmail account that looks like it comes from the minister and then sends out emails asking for money or gift card donations. Know that Rev. Tracie will only ever email you from her official UUMA account (tbarrett@uuma.org) which has her signature block on it and will NEVER ask for a direct donation of money or gift cards. If you receive emails like this, please report as spam and delete.

President's Message:

Greetings

In these uncertain times, we are learning to adapt to change. Life is ever changing and one reason humans have been so successful in terms of thriving and surviving is that we can adapt. We are re-inventing ourselves. We are staying current and relevant. We are staying connected and active. And, we are doing all of this while following guidelines to keep us all safe. In short, UU's are amazing! Is this the new normal? ZOOM worship? Zoom discussion groups? Perhaps we will be doing less driving and connecting more on-line as the new normal long into the future. Perhaps this will help mitigate some of the challenges in controlling carbon emissions and give us a chance to have a positive impact on climate change. Perhaps there is more than one silver lining to all of this. It could make a positive difference not only with the environment but in our ability to reach out to more neighbors in our community.



The opportunities that are in front of us are only limited by our imagination. I think this is a very exciting time and I feel so lucky to be alive to see where all this might lead. Yes, the unknown is scary and yes, the COVID-19 pandemic is very real. These are uncertain if not possibly dangerous times. But if we keep an eye on the future and look for the possibilities, the future can be brighter than what it would have been if the pandemic had not occurred. UUCLC will be re-inventing ourselves. We will come out of this more connected and even more determined to be inviting to those searching for a liberal faith than ever before. I have little doubt that our congregation will live long and prosper.

In June, my term of office as President of the Board will be ending. I am pleased to be handing the baton of President to an experienced leader for UUCLC! I have known Russ Littlefield for many years and have even served under him as a Trustee when he was President once before. UUCLC is in very good hands. The new Board will be instrumental in leading our beloved congregation into the future. I have no doubt that UUCLC will grow and thrive under Russ's leadership. Please join me in welcoming Russ Littlefield to the Board of Trustees.

Best wishes to all UUCLC members and friends for a safe and joyous summer.

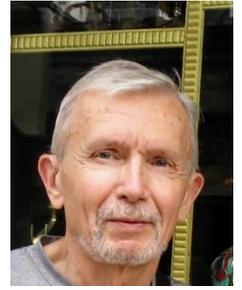
Betty Emery



Incoming President's Message:

The Challenges We Face

Before anything else, I want to personally thank Betty Emery for her service to UUCLC. What an amazing woman. While working full-time as head pharmacist at Winn Dixie, she managed the Board and this church through two challenging years as we transitioned from a very small congregation with rented facilities to an enlarged congregation with a building and a contracted UU minister. And despite the enormous pressure I am sure she felt, she did this with skill and diplomacy. We all owe her our gratitude.



And I also want to thank our departing minister, Rev. Tracie Barrett. For three years, she has shared our journey and given us counsel as we transitioned into our new home. For many, she has been a personal help and abiding presence when they needed it. We were her first church and we have grown together.

So now we continue into a new congregational year with a reconstituted Board and facing an existential crisis.

There is a concept in Buddhism that one's greatest enemy can be one's greatest teacher. COVID-19 is such an enemy. It has humbled us in many ways. It has forced us out of our building. And like many other faith groups, we have had to rethink how we do our worship and conduct the business of the congregation. It is likely that, even when we return to our building, our religious life will never be the same.

We are challenged now to make our UU lives as safe and as meaningful as possible. This is challenge #1 - Safety. With Rev Tracie's help, we have struggled through learning the Zoom app. And we will get better at it.

We have made some discoveries. COVID-19 has made us realize how "virtual" the world really is. It is clear to many of us that if our faith is to endure and even thrive, we will need to get better at not just using Zoom, but other social media tools as well. So, a subset of challenge #1 must be to upgrade our electronic media skills.

Ted Fessler and Val Rosado have put out a call for those with interest to become engaged with Zoom during our Sunday services and other events. As disappointed as we have been by not being together in fellowship, we have learned that Zoom is not as deadly as we might have suspected. For one thing, we have learned that we have a vehicle for our members who go north to join us for service and meetings. For another, it sometimes even allows for a kind of "intimacy." I have personally found this to be true through my Buddhist study group as well as through the Covenant Circle that I am a member of. The ability to see faces close up can be quite powerful.

Besides the Coronavirus's threat to our individual and religious lives, we face a number of other challenges. We would face these challenges even if COVID-19 did not exist, of course, but the disease, has intensified the difficulty. So, here they are.

Challenge #2 - Money. This is always a challenge; COVID-19 has intensified things. We were just getting started with our pledge drive when the virus hit. Despite the changed nature of our drive and

of our giving, many have already stepped forward to pledge for the 2021 fiscal year. We need many others. Our new budget is still in development, but it will likely be in the 100,000 dollar range. Our pledges so far are getting us closer to the half-way mark. Not too shabby. Now is not the time to pull back, though.

Challenge #3 - Ministry. How do we handle our ministerial vacancy? First, we must realize that ministerial leadership is broader than just the minister we hire. We have several ministries. Our worship committee (WRaP) is a ministry. Social Justice is another. And so is Hospitality. And Finance. And Care and Connect. We all share in the ministry of this church. We must talk more about what this means to us as a faith. Having said that, you also need to know that we have a ministerial search committee that has been in touch with the UUA about finding another UU trained minister for us. It may be some time, however, before we fill that vacancy. While this increases the work of WRaP, it is not their challenge alone. It belongs to all of us. Every member of this congregation shares in the responsibility and joy of ministry.

And, finally, one more challenge. Challenge #4 - Vision. We badly need to revise our Vision statement. Here is our current one:

VISION: Within the next 5 years, UUCLC will be located in our congregational home, where our mission and growth in membership can be accomplished.

Clearly, this statement does not work for us now. We have a home.

And while we are still mission-driven, and we still care about growth, we may want to consider whether our statement of mission is what we want it to be. Our mission reads:

MISSION: UUCLC is an inclusive non-creedal fellowship that works for a just community and to foster a lifelong search for personal fulfillment.

In order to have a sound spiritual base to operate from, we need to update these statements. Some spade work has been done, but we must buckle down as these statements provide the foundation for all that we do.

So, dear congregation, we have work to do. But I am confident that working together we will face down the Coronavirus and continue to live UU lives for ourselves and for the wider community.

Yours in the UU Faith, Russ





*Feeding the Body, Educating the Mind
and Lifting the Spirit of All Individuals.*

Give To Lake Cares

During this crisis time, one of the most urgent needs of our community is for food. The Social Justice and Environment Committee has sent money in UUCLC's name to several organizations in this community to meet the food challenge. Also, this Congregation, through the money that we collected at pot lucks, recently sent \$700 in the Congregation's behalf, to Lake Cares Food Pantry.

Individuals may also send donations in UUCLC's name to Lake Cares. Recently, June and I did just that. All you have to do is make out a check to UUCLC and send it to our church at P.O. Box 1761, Eustis, FL 32727. Just be sure to put on the memo line, "For Lake Cares." We will see that it gets there. Thanks for caring.

Russ and June.

YOUR NEW OFFICERS EFFECTIVE 6/14/20

PRESIDENT: Russ Littlefield
VICE PRESIDENT: Janeane Reagan
TREASURER: Kristen Hughes
SECRETARY: Wendy Pacek
TRUSTEE: Pete Conde
TRUSTEE: Suzie Lockwood
TRUSTEE: Lois Sanford



BUILDING DEMOCRACY ONE VOTE AT A TIME

PART I

Our Democracy, as we know it, is under attack from the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of our government. Our forefathers created this system of checks and balances, so none of the branches could wreak havoc on our democratic way of life. Unfortunately, just as when our founding fathers created our democracy, the country is again governed mostly by wealthy, white men. The balance is skewed, representation of the people, by the people, or for the people, is nonexistent. Our lives are being governed by a small number of uninformed, monied, privileged individuals.

What can we do to save our Democracy and make it stronger than ever? Only through the voting process can we make the necessary changes to bring some stability back into our democratic processes. During a recent town hall meeting hosted by Unitarian Universalists, Senator Elizabeth Warren stated “voting is the beating heart of our Democracy.” For this reason, she said it is imperative we protect our voting system, whether voting in person or by mail. The other notable speakers were Senators Amy Klobuchar, Ron Wyden, Representative Hakeem Jeffries, and Washington State Republican Secretary of State Kim Wyman. If there was one continuous thread through the discussion, it was the belief the safety of our voting system was and is of utmost importance.

Senator Klobuchar also reminded us of the many issues being disregarded by the folks in charge -- critical issues, such as climate change, the environment, gun control and equality; all concerns near and dear to the hearts of Unitarian Universalists worldwide. Senator Wyden discussed protecting the vote by mail (VBM) process especially during this difficult time, since scientists and health care experts believe this deadly virus can return with a vengeance in the fall. Five states already use VBM without any major issues, including Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington and Utah. Further, Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York, believes early voting at multiple sites must be available if we are going to be consistent with the values and principles of our founders.

Secretary of State Wyman shared that, unbeknownst to me, Washington State has been voting solely by mail for decades. She shared that citizens have confidence in the system and they have assurances the voting is fair and impartial, whether voting at polls or VBM.

The House of Representatives included the following in its most recent legislation:

- Allocating an additional \$3.6 billion in federal funding for states and territories to carry out vote-by-mail elections.
- Requiring at least two weeks of early voting.
- Permitting absentee voting for any reason.

- Requiring states to mail a ballot (with pre-paid return postage) to every registered voter.
- Instituting online and same-day registration in every state.

Of course, Mitch McConnell will never bring the House legislation to the Senate for a vote. Fortunately for Florida, we are all allowed to VBM, so everyone who is registered to vote, should consider it an honor and a privilege to either VBM or go to your polling station and vote. Consider it a civic responsibility – every vote counts. Only in this way will our voices be heard.

During the March primary, for the first time, Florida Democrats trained poll watchers (VotePro) to go to different precincts to ensure no one was turned away for any reason that could be corrected in real time. The poll watchers helped others, Republicans and Democrats alike, if they had issues that could be “cured” so their vote would count. The Democratic Party will be out in force in November to ensure, to the best of its ability, the accuracy of the voting process.

“UU the Vote 2020” is encouraging every UU to vote in 2020, as if our lives depended on it – and indeed it does:

Democracy is on the ballot in 2020. Winning progressive policies depends on a fundamental truth. We must fix our democracy first. Until we do, progress on any topic—from health care to climate justice will be blocked by the special interests who hold the power to thwart changes to the status quo.

Teeing Up Our Finances for the New Budget Year

The Finance Committee under the exceptional leadership of Chris Higgins has been meeting monthly via Zoom. They distributed pledge status reports to all members who are wrapping up their contributions by the end of the fiscal year June 30th. If you have any remaining pledge unpaid, please get it in as soon as possible. Payment can be made.

We need your pledges for the 2021 Fiscal Year. These pledges will be used to prepare the coming year’s budget. We will be continuing services and programs throughout this year as well as exploring new ways to reach our members and the community. The need for financial support has never been greater. Our social justice and charitable work will continue and has never been more needed. We are also searching for our new pastor. The ability to demonstrate strong financial and social activities will certainly be a factor as new candidates consider us for new pastoring.

Ways to give:

- By credit/debit card on our website: www.lakecountyuu.net Click the red **DONATE TO UUCLC** button and follow instructions.
- Mail a check to P.O. Box 1761, Eustis, Florida 32726.
ATTN: Treasurer. Your donation will support church operations unless you indicate otherwise in the memo line of the check.
- Set up automatic payments with your bank – Call your bank or set it up yourself online. Designate **Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Lake County FL (UUCLC)** as the payee, and have the check mailed to: UU Congregation of Lake County FL, P.O. Box 1761, Eustis FL 32726
- Text-to-give from your phone by entering the amount of your donation to: **833-571-1101**
- Download the APP “Give+” from the Apple App (Apple Devices) or GooglePlay (Android devices) to your smart phone or computer. Select our church in Eustis FL, follow instructions and enable regular giving.



UUCLC Worship Committee Working Hard to Bring Us Together

The Worship Committee (WRAP) has been working weekly in response to creating an enriching worship experience for all during this new pandemic environment. We have embraced our new communication tool, ZOOM, and are all learning how effective and easy it is to create a meaningful and delightful service for our members.

We have lined up sermons and music every week through mid-August and are working on continuing our virtual church into the fall, for as long as necessary. The first week of each month we will be joining our sister church at TriUU in Summerfield. Zoom links will be shared each week in our weekly communicator. Second Sundays through September, we will be joined for sermons by the Rev. Sara Villareal Bishop, a Lutheran (Progressive) pastor currently working out of Melbourne Australia. Other guest preachers will join us through July, August and into the fall.

We look forward to everyone joining us on Sunday mornings at 11 a.m. Just click the link on your computer, tablet, or smart phone. It's easy. You can also join by phone, simply by calling the number provided. Be brave. Wade in to the new world. It will be wonderful to see/hear and worship with you.



“Where there is injustice, may we not be silent. Where there is harm, may we be makers of peace. Where there is hate, may we be agents of love.”