Dear friends,

Fifty years ago this month, several hundred Unitarian Universalists were among those who traveled to Selma to join Dr. King and other civil rights leaders and activists in a historic march for voting rights. As Chris Walton writes in a 2001 UU World article, “the Unitarian Universalist Association was not quite four years old when the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. sent an urgent telegram to its Boston headquarters on March 7, 1965, asking religious leaders and concerned citizens to join him in Selma, Alabama, where African Americans marching for their right to vote had been brutally attacked by lawmen. Two of the Unitarian Universalists who responded to King’s appeal (Rev. James Reeb and Viola Liuzzo) paid with their lives.”

This March, UU’s will again be among those traveling to Selma, this time to commemorate the now-historic events of 1965, honor those martyred, and to call for a renewed national commitment to voting rights, equal justice and racial reconciliation. For those of us staying behind, we are invited to commemorate Selma by watching the live streamed public events over the weekend of March 6-8 and to join in spirit in our worship services. Here’s some related info.: [http://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/297858.shtml](http://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/297858.shtml). Here at First UU, we’ll be honoring the memory of Selma during our March 15 Sunday services and through rekindled congregation-al racial justice work this spring, which you can read more about in the related article in this edition of *The Steeple*.

Many of us have begun the journey of commemorating Selma by taking in Ava Duvernay’s film of the same name earlier this winter. If you missed your chance to see the film while it was playing locally at the Roxy and are awaiting its release on DVD, and/or have been following the conversation about the film and its dearth of Oscar recognition, in the meantime, it’s worth googling Common and John Legend’s acceptance speech for the movie’s best original song, “Glory,” at the Academy Awards for some powerful words of inspiration.

I look forward to seeing you in the Meeting House this month as we kick off our celebratory 2015 Stewardship Campaign (don’t miss the March 21 all-congregation party!), explore our UU commitment to the Beloved Community in worship, and ready our spirits to welcome spring, even if our cold temperatures continue . . .

Love and lengthening light,
Rev. Mara
Seek and Inspire Theme: Action

One summer during college, I led tours at a museum-farm which had livestock and a large vegetable garden, which was surrounded by an electric fence to keep the animals out. On occasion, when my tour group contained a lot of teenagers, I would offer, when we got to the garden, to give them a “group shock.” I would stand near the fence and take the first person’s hand, and they would take the next person’s hand, and so on until all those interested were in a line holding hands. Then, first checking to see if they were ready, on the count of three I would touch the fence with my free hand. Instantly, a collective group yell punctuated the visual “pop” of our human chain as individuals sprung apart with arms outstretched.

It was awesome fun and what made it work was the group’s commitment. We all had to be all in: hand in hand in hand. Each had to commit with abandon – in the sense of abandoning individual uncertainties and hesitations in favor of the risk and reward of this shared surprise. And the longer the human chain, the more awesome it was.

Commitment is the “Seek and Inspire” theme for the month of March. First UU’s leadership has been planning and envisioning what it will take to create an awesome experience at First UU next year. What’s more, we have plans for enduring awesomeness which will far surpass the fleeting sensation of a jolt of electric current. But like a group shock, making awesome things happen here calls for collective commitment. We have to be all in. We have to trust the wisdom, hard work and care of our leadership. We have to clasp one another’s hands, and abandoning our individual frailties and hesitations, Go for It together.

There’s too much at stake not to give it our All:

Do all myriad of actions need to take place to reverse global warming? Yes. Do we all have more we can learn about unearned privilege and contribute to the work of racial justice? Yes. Can we find ways to redistribute wealth and create a just economy? Yes. Will we lend our voice and support for marriage equality nationwide and further transgender justice? Yes. Will we work and pray for peace and an end to war and terrorist attacks? Yes. Will your spirit be lifted and transformed when you join hands and hearts with your fellow UUs to help make the world a better place? Yes.

Join me in commitment. Together, Let’s Go for It!

Martha Dallas, Director of Religious Education

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Seeking Your Input on May’s Theme: Healing

We are now seeking resources and ideas to help us develop May’s “seek and inspire” theme of Healing. We welcome quotes; personal experiences/reflections; stories from books, media, or mythology; poems; music; and/or favorite hymns. If you send in a personal story, please indicate if it’s okay to attach your name when it’s shared. Some questions for reflection are:

- How would you define “healing”?
- What has brought or brings you healing in your life?
- What is the connection between spirituality and healing? What is the role of faith community in healing?

Please send your submissions to seekandinspire@uusociety.org by the Third Monday of the month (March 16). If you are not on email, you can drop off paper submissions in our Seek and Inspire boxes which can be found in the Parlors, Community Room and back of the Sanctuary on Sundays.

Thank you in advance for your contributions to our shared worship ministry!
Racial Justice Task Force

Reigniting FUUSB Racial Justice Work

There are all too many people who, in some great period of social change, fail to achieve the new mental outlooks that the new situation demands. There is nothing more tragic than to sleep through a revolution. — Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Many UUs, both within and beyond our congregation, and people of other faiths, have been deeply distressed by recent, much-publicized shooting deaths of unarmed people of color. As part of our spiritual call to address injustice, and as a deepening of the national conversation on race, FUUSB folks have come together to establish a racial justice task force, continuing the work of the former Anti-Racism Action Committee. We hope many of you will join us in educating ourselves further and growing our Beloved Community. First, alongside the book discussion group, we will read The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness; then, we will hold a facilitated discussion to reflect together on the issues the book raises.

Racism affects us all. Two FUUSB task force members share their reasons for working on racial justice:

Zoe Hart: “Following Ferguson (and New York, Cleveland …), I felt overwhelmed by the flood of intensely emotional social media posts — some were holding up #BLACKLIVESMATTER, and others were defending police. There didn't seem to be a safe place to ask questions, look for common ground, or find my way to what I believed. I hope our task force will create that place.

After hearing about yet another young black boy shot and killed by police, I found myself asking which boy? If so many young black people are dying that I can't keep track, then something’s terribly wrong, and I've got to do something about it.’

Monica Sargent: “I got involved now because I had been a long-time member and former co-chair of the Anti-Racism Action Committee during Rev. Kowalski’s ministry. We fundraised to provide grants, locally to schools for programs that addressed race and diversity, and beyond the state to benefit a UU-operated volunteer hostel in New Orleans after hurricane Katrina. It's great to see our congregation organizing again.”

Please join us in this important process. Watch upcoming Enews Blasts for an announcement about the arrival of the New Jim Crow books, details about the book discussion, a schedule of Task Force meetings that you can attend, and announcements about related events.

Our Mission:

“We gather to inspire growth, care for each other and our community, seek truth, and act for justice.”
Committee on Lifespan Faith Development

In our effort to fully engage learners, volunteers and staff in the children's religious education program we are constantly experimenting with new approaches. If you've passed by the Latimer room in the basement this year, you may have noticed some evidence of one of our larger experiments. The preschoolers and kindergartners learning in this room are the first classes in our congregation to experience the Spirit Play method. Spirit Play is a UU curriculum derived from Montessori principles, and so it includes a carefully prepared environment and puts emphasis on hands-on materials. A number of "story baskets" have been prepared by artists in our community, and these are used weekly to present stories of our UU values and history. The lessons not only more fully immerse the children in the story, but provide time for each student to choose between creating an art response, working with sensory materials, or revisiting a story basket from a prior lesson. More information about this unique program can be found on the Spirit Play website (www.spirit-play.com).

This year we've found that Spirit Play gives children a greater opportunity to follow their own spiritual paths and to ask the questions most relevant to them. Additionally, weekly preparation time for teachers has been reduced; adult volunteers are instead able to spend time learning and meditating on the meanings of the weekly stories. We hope to send a handful of volunteers to be fully trained in the Spirit Play method this summer, and are actively seeking teachers called to this type of work. If you'd like to learn more about this program, please contact Martha Dallas (martha@uusociety.org) or Rachel Schek (rmschek@gmail.com).

-Rachel Schek, Chair of the Lifespan Faith Development Committee
MARCH WORSHIP

March 1 — 9 & 11am — Building the Beloved Community
Worship Leader: Rev. Mara Dowdall
Worship Associate: Wendy Coe

We begin our spiritual theme-month on "commitment" with a three-part series on our Unitarian Universalist commitment to building the "Beloved Community," a term coined by Josiah Royce and later expanded by Martin Luther King, Jr. In this service, Mara’s sermon will explore what that commitment asks of us on an individual level. Drawing on the Book of Esther, which is at the heart of the early-March Jewish observance of Purim, we’ll consider the courage and dedication it sometimes takes to live out our commitments.

March 8 — 9 & 11am — Building the Beloved Community – AMONG
Worship Leader: Rev. Mara Dowdall
Worship Associate: Kristin Kany
Special Musical Guests: Isla Duo

Kicking off our annual stewardship campaign, we will celebrate the Beloved Community we seek to build among the members of First UU. What are the qualities that transform any congregation into a “Beloved Community”? At this point in its more-than-200-year history, how can First UU fully embody such a spirit? How do we create such a care-giving, spiritually-inspiring, justice-making, truth-seeking community together?

March 15 — 9 & 11am — Building the Beloved Community – BEYOND
Worship Leader: Rev. Mara Dowdall
Worship Associate: Stephen Rainville
Music: First UU Choir

In March of 1965, at the height of the civil rights movement, thousands of Americans joined Dr. King and other movement leaders in Selma to stand up for justice and to risk their lives for a vision of a better world—a true "Beloved Community" on earth. Fifty years later, while we know progress has been made, our world continues to fall terribly short of the world that King and his contemporaries prophesied. In 2015, how do we live out our commitment to “Beloved Community”? As a congregation, how can we make a difference beyond the walls of our Meeting House?

March 22 — 9 & 11am — Spiritual Awakening at the Megachurch
Guest Worship Leader: Mark Redmond
Worship Associate: Rebecca Gurney

Ten years ago Mark Redmond went to a local church to pick up some donations for Spectrum; he admittedly entered with a dismissive attitude, especially after someone had warned him, “We call this the Hollywood church.” He left one hour later a very changed person, and with the realization that there is suffering, and redemption, even in a “Megachurch.”

Mark Redmond is executive director of Spectrum Youth and Family Services where he has served since 2003. He is the author of The Goodness Within: Reaching out to Troubled Teens with Love and Compassion and has had articles published in the New York Times, Forbes, and the Huffington Post. His talk, “This Church” was recently played on NPR’s “Moth Story Hour.” He has a bachelor’s degree in business from Villanova University and a masters in public administration from New York University. Mark and his wife Marybeth live with their 12-year-old son in Essex.

March 28 — 9 & 11am — Our Song to Sing
Guest Worship Leader: Matt Meyer
Worship Associate: Woody Fulton

Matt Meyer will lead us in an energetic exploration of rhythm, music, and justice. What does the experience of music tell us about how we live out our faith in the world? What does it tell us about the community we build together? Join us this Sunday for rhythm and song, quiet reflection, and an experience of the holy in music.

Matt is a musician and community organizer who has lead hundreds services for UU congregations across the country. He has a degree in music and has studied abroad in Cuba, Ghana and Central America. Matt is also a founding resident of the Lucy Stone Cooperative in Roxbury.
Notes from the Board

Our Board has been engaging with the congregation over the past few months to discern our common values as a community. We’ve hosted workshops, visited a number of Small Group Ministry meetings, posted a Survey Monkey and spoke with members on the phone to get input on the questions of how we see ourselves as a community, what motivates us to action, and how we want to be seen by the larger community. Perhaps it’s not surprising that even within our diverse community, a few common themes emerged again and again. A task force collated the data and has created the following phrases of our values at First UU Society.

Love: nourishing lives with love, compassion and caring.
Service: building a community for justice and equality through empathetic action.
Openness: celebrating the wonders of life and spiritual transformation with boldness, joy, courage and openness.
Respect: engaging all with kindness, understanding & mutual respect as faithful democratic stewards of all we hold dear.

These values statements will be used as the basis to create our Ends statements, which is the policy-based governance version of medium- and long-term goals. These Ends will be used to prioritize programming and resources over the next few years, and will be the yardstick we will use to measure how successful we are in making a change in the world.

We’d like to thank everyone who participated in this process, and welcome feedback about how well we captured what we heard.