

Report to the UUTC Board
Rev. Bob Renjilian
May 2022

PERSONAL:

- I continue to sing with the Barbershop Chorus and the Gay Men's Chorus in Asheville. Music feeds me. The Asheville Gay Men's Chorus concert is coming up on Thursday, June 23, "Madrigals in Montfort". This is their first concert open to the public since COVID started. If you are interested, tickets are available at AVLGMC.org
- I got my booster shot, choosing Moderna this time as that was my doctor's recommendation. It left me lethargic for a few days. I got it about two weeks before Memorial Day so I'll have the best immunity as I go to a family picnic in the high transmission northeast. I'll wear an N95 mask while traveling, and also during my first days of return (so as not to bring the germs back to the congregation).

DON'T BE PHISHED or SCAMMED:

A fairly realistic looking email was sent to several at UUTC that made it look like I was asking a favor. But it wasn't from my email. A few quick thinking individuals alerted the office and RK Young sent out a note telling people to ignore it. I have reported it to Google, as the person was using a gmail address. This did not originate from my computer - it was a faked address.

IN THE COMMUNITY:

- I have attended the Chamber of Commerce meeting, and chatted briefly with a few leaders in the community including the new director for the Mountain Sun Community School, Lindsay Skelton, and Maureen Copelof, Mayor (and thanking her for agreeing to be a guest speaker in our pulpit). The presentation was on economic development. I like learning more about the wider community.
- I was at the May 3 protest at the courthouse about the leak from the Supreme Court draft opinion to overturn Roe v Wade, along with many other UUTC folks.
- I attended the Care Coalition presentation at the Transylvania Public Library on Substance Misuse and efforts for prevention as well as treatment. I've brought information back to staff, in particular to Kevin to see if Care Coalition might lead an educational event here at UUTC. The multi-viewpoint panel discussion was led by our own Jim Hardy, and included Missy Ellenberger, Director of Student Support Services, Transylvania County Schools; Dr. Jeff McDaris, Superintendent, Transylvania County Schools; Elaine Russell, Health Director, Transylvania Public Health; Wade Abram, Detective, Transylvania County Narcotics Task Force (including Sheriff's Dept. and City); Jason Chappell, Chairman, Transylvania County Board of Commissioners; and Maureen Copelof, Mayor, City of Brevard.
- The NAACP breakfast was postponed to June.

REFLECTION ON "NEXT NORMAL"

I've alerted staff and choir that the COVID prediction websites I monitor estimate that Transylvania County will rise to the CDC "Moderate" stage of transmissions in this next

three weeks with the wave heading down from the northeast. Surrounding counties are expected to be tipping into CDC “High” rankings by that time. I’ve consulted with the COVID/Reopening Task Force, and we’ve got a draft statement to include in the June Wayfinding newsletter. We are not going back to mask mandates, but can encourage people to follow CDC advice. The mask-optional situation at UUTC makes it possible for folks to enjoy Coffee Hour again, but of course we can adjust where coffee is served, or take a break if volunteerism dips or rising fears warrant it during the wave.

Key point: CDC recommends testing after return from travel. Between the lines, the idea seems to be folks should mask for the first few days upon return to be sure they are not contagious, and then test after those few days. Most breakthrough cases at UUTC seem to be from travel, or attendance at large social events, and show up about three days after return.

ADULT RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION:

You have seen the Sunday morning slides and other announcements about the ARE Ministry Team working to bring back Wednesday night food and presentations that fit ARE subjects. Rev. Ernie Mills agreed to present at the kick-off on June 1, and invited the Eclectics and friends to join him. More than 2/3rds of dinner reservations (5:30pm) are taken at this point - but reservations are not required for the event itself (which begins at 6:30pm). This event will not be available online - this gives the most flexibility to the musicians to choose what they want without licensing issues, and also re-emphasizes we’ve reopened and want folks to be drawn back to our great offerings. Future offerings for Wonderful Wednesday are in the works for July, August and the Fall. The July offering will be a movie and discussion.

The “Poetry and Meditation” class has continued through the first half of this month, but for the next few weeks is now on hiatus while a class member is away.

I led the Pronouns Workshop with UUs at College Walk in May, at their request, as they had not been able to attend between services at UUTC. The more we show our respect to (especially) youth on this, the better the mental health outcomes (reduction of depression, suicide, homelessness, etc.), and we show our values of acceptance of diversity in a political climate which has targeted Trans and NonBinary people.

PASTORAL CARE:

I’ve been in touch with folks and have been offering home or office visits. I’m not limited to meeting in those locations - I’ve gone for a hike, for instance. It is best when I can be sure an appointment is blocked off on my calendar, but I’ve also made myself

available when someone dropped in and needed to talk. We did not have a memorial service for Tom Bindrim, as he hadn't wanted one, but I know I (and LHHH) have been reaching out to Joan Lemire.

WORSHIP:

I've been consulting with Vanessa Cowie, John Austin, and the Worship Team to enact the summertime experiment of going to a single service, starting on Father's Day. I believe we are (more than) ready to try this, to give folks a chance to feel they see each other. The service will be at 10:00am during the Summer. We will evaluate as we go along, and have time to determine if it is still viable to do this in the Fall or if we find issues that need addressing.

In the meantime, we have used the time between services about twice per month. May 15, we had the congregational meeting between services (and then coffee was set out), and on May 22, Soul Matters discussion was between rather than after the late service, held in the large classroom (we will repeat that for the final, June, session and then take a break for July and August).

We will be including Rev. Ernie Mills, our Minister Emeritus, more often in the pulpit, as a paid guest speaker. He will fill in for me at the end of June, one Sunday in July, and again in August. This was a hope of those who forwarded a proposal to me to draw some folks from online to in-person, and I'm glad to have Ernie more involved for the good of the congregation and my efforts in ministry.

I have been working with worship team to be sure we are being fair with our compensation to outside speakers.

OTHER MEETINGS:

Team meeting night was only Adult Religious Exploration, as there was not a pressing agenda item for the Social Action Team.

In staff meetings we are hearing of Kevin Lausch's initiatives in conjunction with the community. Kevin reports that "TC-Strong" has approved the proposal that UUTC help start a LGBTQ support group for teens and family, and Kevin is looking to network with others, and is learning from a similar effort that already started in Spartanburg.

WIDER UU MOVEMENT:

I continue my work with the Unitarian Universalist Association Religious Education Credentialing Committee (on Zoom). I am glad to be of service to the wider movement.

Reminder that I will be busy the final full week of June as your registered ministerial delegate - as a virtual (off-site) UUA General Assembly participant, and for the UU Ministers Association annual meetings.

I attended the UUA Compensation workshop online, and note that our survey response to the UUA Compensation team is being submitted by RK Young (due this Memorial Day) as part of nation-wide data gathering to guide their work.

REFLECTIONS ON THE HORRORS OF MASS SHOOTINGS

I am revising what I was going to submit tomorrow for the UUpdate email blast, in light of the school shootings in Texas, close on the heels of other mass shootings such as in Buffalo. I chatted briefly with Bart Renner, who had been part of the Safety Team at UUTC a few years ago. I have gone to trainings for religious leaders on this issue in past years, most recently after the Synagogue shootings in Pittsburgh. Violence at religious organizations is very rare, but there are some things which can help keep it that way. Surprisingly, one is to keep aware of each other's pain. A network of care can assist before a crisis becomes imagined in the mind of an upset individual. If our community acts as a community - listening to one another, and getting interventions in place - it means the people who need mental health services are more likely to get them, the angry people feel heard, and the invisible loner isn't ever truly alone. I don't mean to make this feel simplistic, but I do point out it was the "experts" who said this is likely one of the reasons churches (and mosques, synagogues, etc.) are a positive force in our communities.