

June 14, 2020



A Publication of the Winchester Unitarian Society

The Mystic Messenger

www.winchesteruu.org 478 Main St Winchester MA 01890

June's Theme is Compassion

Compassion

By The Rev. Heather Janules



As many know, we partner with a Unitarian Universalist project, Soul Matters, to determine our monthly themes. Soul Matters provides a packet of materials each month, related to the theme. Every packet includes the etymology of the theme in question.

In general, I try to avoid drawing from the dictionary as I consider different ideas but, as we reflect on "compassion," I think the exercise is helpful this month. "Compassion" derives from *passio* (suffering) and *com* (with.) To have compassion is to "suffer with."

I share the origins of "compassion" as they speak to important distinctions. We may consider "compassion" a cousin to "empathy." However, if you think about it, these human experiences have significant differences. I understand empathy as an exercise of imagination, of putting one's self into another's situation and imagining how that might feel. But compassion goes the next step. With our growing awareness of another person's burden, we take action. We make a sacrifice. We give something in response – presence, resources, attention. We do

something so the pain is no longer an individual experience. We "suffer with."

I write this reflection as we navigate the many weeks of life amid a pandemic. This experience grants all of us opportunities to witness and practice compassion.

We know that wearing a mask benefits others more than it benefits ourselves. Every time you wear a mask, the small discomfort and awkwardness you bear is an act of compassion.

On June 7th, our worship service included the Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis who asked, "Are we willing to take a pay cut so someone else can eat?" Each time we donate to organizations sewing the big holes in our social safety net and providing basic necessities to those out of work, we are practicing compassion.

The pandemic has also moved us to become very mindful about our behavior and decisions. I am one of many people who has said "no" to doing things I want to do or feel I should do because I am trying to follow social distancing. In these times, we are all asked to consider our own physical suffering, even if it is hypothetical. And when we accept boundaries others set

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Lessons from the Youth



The following are excerpts from the senior statements that our 5 bridging youth presented to the congregation as part of “Youth Sunday” this year. Not surprisingly, our youth showed us once again that they are leaders and visionaries in our faith. During this particularly tumultuous time in our nation’s history, may we all learn and grow from the wisdom of our young people.

“During one of the ZOOMSYG meetings, I’ve been told that I’ve been one of the most engaged first-year seniors in a while, and I

don’t know why, but I felt really touched after I heard that. I was just doing my best to vibe and have a good time, and I had no idea how much it meant to them. I guess that, as a person who sort of sees themselves as a nobody, I’ve always assumed that the things I do usually go unnoticed. It just never occurred to me that what I do can be significant, and I am glad that people did appreciate me being here and involved. I guess my main takeaway for this year is, it doesn’t hurt to try to get involved or engaged or provide some input in something. **Take**

any opportunity you can and want to take; after all, living is all about doing stuff for yourself and others.” – Elizabeth Tian

“I am so thankful for WUSYG teaching me that **the more outside of your comfort zone you are, the more you grow from it.** This founding principle is the core motivation behind me choosing the more unknown path of a gap year. No matter how daunting this year will be, WUSYG’s strategy of growing from emotional experiences will always be with me. Right now, we are living through a revolutionary time, as much as we saw Nicaragua endure just two years ago. In a time of a life transition and a pandemic, WUSYG is my only security. In a time without closure, WUSYG provides solace. This community showed me how to absorb meaning from unprecedented times. I choose to learn from this, and I choose to inspire those around me to ‘Live to Give.’” – Charlotte Bradley

“Maybe I didn’t know it at the time but looking back the people in WUSYG became role models to me. They were so kind on Sundays after I’ve had a rough week, or month or year. They were also

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Lessons from the Youth

there to push me out of my shell and give me confidence throughout high school. I've changed a lot since my freshman year of high school and I owe a lot of it to WUSYG... **the lessons I've learned, experiences I've had and role models I have met make me confident that I can make the best of every transition in life.**"

– Elizabeth Sharon

"I am a different person than I was four years ago, thanks in no small part to WUSYG.

WUSYG is a place where I can laugh, where I can be who I am without fear of judgement. It's helped me realize that **being weird is not only okay, it's genuinely a good thing sometimes, and there is no need to fear the**

judgements of others because inside, everyone is weird too. At the start of my WUSYG career, I was the one receiving the light from others who encouraged me to open up. Now, I try to be a giver of that light, so that others who are like I was may feel its warmth." – Evan Forcucci

"Literally everything has changed since I first set foot in this church when I was 4. Ministers have moved on and been replaced. I've made and lost so many friendships. But I think **in times of change it's important to focus on the things that still remain, your rocks, and on the good things change has brought.** Even with Covid, I can still go to church, I can still go to WUSYG (which meets twice a week now), and my family

and friends who wouldn't have otherwise been able to come to this service today are now here in this service watching me read my senior statement alongside you. With the changes life has brought, I have been able to **savor the good things that last, and celebrate the new things that have taken the place of the old.**"

– Rachel Milt



Celebrating America! Ragtime Concert

By John Kramer, Music Director

It is one of our most recognizable musics, full of infectious rhythm and graceful melodies. On Friday, July 3rd at 7:00 p.m. I will be presenting a concert of Ragtime piano music for us all to enjoy. This will be our second Zoom concert – building off of the success of the first.

The heyday of Ragtime spanned the first two decades of the last century. Its roots lay in the reconstruction period following the Civil War with the music emerging in the 1890s, both as a performance tradition and in published form. St. Louis can be named as its birthplace, perhaps even the Silver Dollar saloon that was opened by the Black businessman John L. Turpin. In fact, John's son, Tom Turpin, wrote the first published rag, *The Harlem Rag*, in 1897. The undisputed King of Ragtime, Scott Joplin, played there from about 1885-1993 before moving to Sedalia, Missouri, returning to St. Louis in 1901. Joplin's biggest hit *The Maple Leaf Rag* had been published in 1899 and was to sell one million copies by 1914. Establishments like the Silver Dollar saloon were instrumental in the development of this music as it gave players an

audience and a way to share their music with other musicians. One cannot overstate the role the emerging Black middle class and Black owned businesses had on the creation of this new music.

Ragtime took the country, and the world, by storm. The early 1900s saw Ragtime in published form, piano rolls, phonograph recordings, and Ragtime "cutting" competitions (where pianists would square off against each other). The player piano, which came into production in the 1890s was vital to the dissemination of this new music. Many establishments had Ragtime players entertaining their guests and the music was arranged for all manner of bands. In 1900 John Philip Sousa included Ragtime selections in his band's performance at the Paris Exposition. This led several classical European composers, Claude Debussy and Igor Stravinsky in particular, to experiment with this music. Ragtime reigned supreme until the late teens when it began to be supplanted by jazz. However, it may be more accurate to say that Ragtime morphed into early jazz as so many players, such as Jelly Roll Morton and Duke Ellington, began their careers playing ragtime.

Ragtime fell out of favor in the 1930s and 40s but had a significant revival starting in the 1950s which blossomed in the 1970s, marked in particular by the popularity of the movie *The Sting* which featured a Ragtime soundtrack. It remains beloved by so many today, and deserves to be remembered and celebrated for many reasons. We should never forget that it is a uniquely African-American music, although white Americans have been writing and playing it since its birth.

My recital on July 3rd will feature selections of classic Rags from its heyday featuring Rags by Scott Joplin, Joseph Lamb, James Scott and Eubie Blake. I will also play some selections from the ragtime revival, including *The Dream Rags*, by William Albright which includes the ominously titled *A Night on Rag Mountain*. The sheer variety of innovation and rhythmic fun of the genre will be on full display. As we celebrate the birth of our nation, let us also celebrate some of its greatest music.

For more information please visit:
<https://www.winchesteruu.org/events/celebrating-america-ragtime-concert/>

A Testimonial from Kate Ebbott

By Kate Ebbott



Good morning it is so fantastic to see all of you again. For those who don't know me, my name is Kate Ebbott and my husband, Andy,

and I were members of the Winchester Unitarian Society for about 10 years. Almost three years ago Andy retired and we moved to Chicago.

I just wanted to let you know how grateful I have been to join you in worship these past few weeks. We travel in retirement quite a bit, so I have not joined a spiritual community in Chicago. A few weeks ago, Allison Kirschgasser was kind enough to reach out, letting me know that you were doing Zoom services. Thank you all so very much. The services are both reassuring and a call to action. They remind us that we are not alone; that despite the extreme hardship many are facing, there is much beauty and love in

the world to give us strength; and that there are a wide range of actions that we can take to continue to make a difference, even when we are socially isolated.

I am especially grateful for the zoom format. As I have said, the beautifully crafted services provide much needed solace and inspiration, but for me to see the faces each week of the beloved community that I have held so dear for so long is a great source of joy. And to share in your joys and concerns makes me feel one with you all again. Thank you all for welcoming me home.

Join us for worship every Sunday morning at 10:30 AM EST by clicking on www.tinyurl.com/wusworship



PCA Announcement

Did you miss the program by the Pastoral Care Associates team, **Being Prepared in the Time of COVID-19: End-of-Life Planning?**

Any time is a good time to consider what medical procedures you would choose during a health crisis when you cannot communicate and to "get your affairs in order." The current pandemic, posing unique medical challenges to some patients, makes the need to consider these questions and raise tender issues with your loved ones even greater.

Visit the WUS website to access resources related to this workshop. This page includes pdfs of documents explored in the discussion plus an edited video of the workshop so you can follow along: <https://www.winchesteruu.org/members/pastoral-care-associates-present/>

Our work together will be on-going. Contact the Pastoral Care Associates team with your questions or suggestion for future related programming at pca@winchesteruu.org



Summer 2020 Worship Services

All worship services for Summer 2020 will be held online via Zoom. Please use the following link to access Sunday Worship Services:

<https://tinyurl.com/WUSworship>

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| June 21 | Going First
(Martin Newhouse) |
| June 28 | UUA General Assembly Sunday
Worship—LOG ON AT 10:00 AM |
| July 5 | Life, Liberty, and the
Pursuit of Happiness
(Judy Lipperman) |
| July 12 | The House of Peace
(Carrie Schuchardt, House of
Peace Director) |
| July 19 | Life After Covid-19
(Dirck Stryker) |
| July 26 | Climate Change
(John Keller) |
| August 2 | I Am Because We Are
(Kye Flannery, Summer Co-
Minister) |
| August 9 | TBA
(Kye Flannery, Summer Co-
Minister) |
| August 16 | Unitarianism in Transylvania
(Sam Berliner III) |
| August 23 | Religion and Evolution
(Peter McEntee) |
| August 30 | In Search of the Sweet Spot
(Ivan Correia) |
| Sept. 6 | Animal Blessing
(Rebecca Kelley-Morgan) |



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for themselves, even when we draw lines differently, we practice compassion.

And this time invites us into other ways to “suffer with.” As you know, WUS offered hospitality to those in Winchester who wanted a place to bear witness to the need for social change in the wake of the murder of George Floyd by police in Minnesota. Like many gatherings, organizers decided to set aside a specific amount of time – eight minutes and 46 seconds, the amount of time it took police to extinguish Floyd’s life – to pause.

When it became time to pause, bells rang from our tower. They rang from towers across town. The hundreds who gathered became utterly silent. A man standing before me “took a knee,” inspiring me to do the same. Thinking about what this time measured, the physical pain of my muscles locked in one position, I felt uncomfortable in so many ways. But this small gesture, honoring the life of a

stranger who we know should not have died as he did, was the least we could do to “suffer with.” I was again reminded that offering presence is not just a practice in pastoral care but one way we seek justice in the world.

I fear that American culture is a hard place to find an ethos of compassion. With so much emphasis on individual freedom, it is easy to lose sight of the needs and importance of others.

Yet, I often say that a faith community should be a counter-cultural place. I am thankful to you, the members and friends of the Winchester Unitarian Society, for teaching me and encouraging me to be counter-cultural in this way. And I hope we can be even more intentional about the practice of “suffering with” in this time.

May the summer season be safe, meaningful and restorative for everyone. However we gather, I look forward to reconnecting in September with our Water Communion.

