

June 1, 2021



A Publication of the Winchester Unitarian Society

# The Mystic Messenger

www.winchesteruu.org 478 Main St Winchester MA 01890

## June's Theme is Many and One

### Many and One

By The Rev. Heather Janules

This may be a strange thing for me to say but, if given the choice between leading a wedding or a memorial service, I would choose the memorial. Perhaps it is the finality of death that often moves attendees to profound and sincere reflection. Weddings are joyful and fun but they are primarily about two people, the partners getting married, and their future which is yet unknown. Even though a memorial is focused on the life of an individual, it is always a powerful thing to witness how one person has impacted so many lives in the time they had on earth, a time that is now final.

Many have heard me talk about my friend Rita, an older woman who sort of adopted me when I was in seminary. We met when I became her dog-sitter for her rather difficult poodle named Honey. But Rita and her daughter would invite me over for meals outside of discussing dogsitting needs...just because.

At Rita's memorial service, the priest made a wise observation before the very full sanctuary: "We come from different neighborhoods, different faiths, different walks of life but so many of us were invited to her table. And so many of us had to watch out for the dog! We are all here today because we knew Rita." Of course, we were there because she had died but, in a profound way, through the connection her priest named, I sensed her presence. And, by extension, the presence of Honey, too. When it was my turn to speak, I took an informal poll

of the attendees. More than half the crowd, like me, knew the ferocity of Honey's small teeth.

This memory of Rita's memorial is a good example of "many and one." Soul Matters, the program the Winchester Unitarian Society partners with in thematic ministry, chose "Play" as the theme for June. However, as our Director of Lifespan Religious Education Rebecca Kelley-Morgan will be preaching for the last time at WUS on June 6<sup>th</sup> and we will be celebrating Flower Communion on June 13<sup>th</sup>, "Many and One" seemed like a more appropriate theme.

Rebecca would not be the religious leader she is today if she hadn't been at WUS for the past twelve years and we would not be the same congrega-



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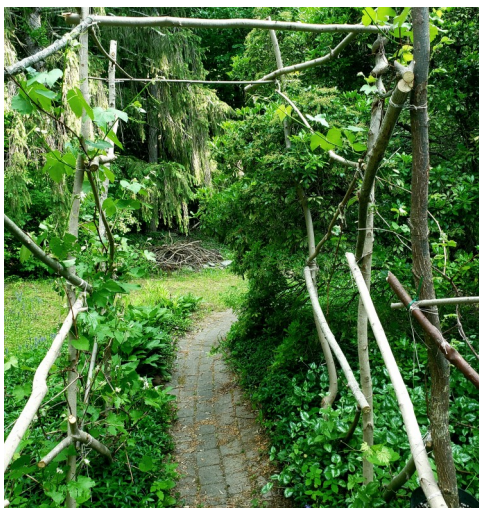
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## Scaffolding

By Rebecca Kelley-Morgan

Summer has come suddenly it seems, as it does every year. The incremental growth of early spring explodes into leaf and blossom by the middle of May. Plant growth is like that, bit by bit and then the explosion of green agreement all across the landscape. And other kinds of growth are similar, subtle, incremental and then jumping to the next level.



One of my favorite summer activities is to step out onto our deck in the early mornings to watch the day awake. On our suburban acre we cultivate habitat rather than “yard” and every summer I am delighted as another species finds its way to our backyard Eden. The diversity of offerings in the environment keeps insects, birds, reptiles and mammals coming. Yes, we have snakes. We may have an overabundance of one species at times, but within a few seasons the situation corrects itself. After the infamous slug invasion of the early aughts, the word got out among the avian population and in

the next very wet year, we had more birds, fewer slugs and finally – lettuce! (of course, the rabbits found us too, but I digress...)

We’ve nurtured this environment since I moved here many years ago. Originally an old quarry, the property surrounding our home was mostly sand and gravel. For ten years I couldn’t get anything to grow. So I began to sheet mulch, and whatever biomass I could get my hands on got tucked under the mulch. . One of the key strategies was to establish scaffolding plants, which anchored the whole thing for any new and unaccustomed species to find a safe and protected niche. It was, and continues to be, an exercise in trial and error, a fair amount of physical labor, hours of trying to explain to our confused neighbors that monoculture lawn is not habitat, and no, I don’t need them to mow “the lawn” It is a long term hope filled exercise, tending this land while waiting for life to find its way to us. And finally my surroundings are becoming as I envisioned years ago; a rich and diverse landscape. As permaculturist Toby Hemenway writes, ‘some would say a spirit has come to inhabit the land’.

Although I am always tinkering with something as the seasons warm and change, it is mostly sustainable, low impact, and a joy to steward. This landscape has become a self-correcting system, one that finds its own balance in spite of my impatience with population surges of ants or slugs or voles

from year to year. As trees come down and the light changes, one garden gets decommissioned and another emerges.

I write of our backyard transformation, because there is a metaphor that can be applied to congregational life. As I write my last Mystic Messenger column, I write of lessons from my backyard Eden.

It is tempting to define ourselves by what is “NOT”. I had no topsoil to speak of when I moved into this place and for the first years, everything I tried to plant, died. With the unfortunate exceptions of poison ivy and bramble, I was surrounded by what I considered wasteland, but that’s not all it was. One of the principles of permaculture is that all we need is here. When I began to look at the wasteland as something valuable, I began to see and use the possibilities already here. This concept is true of social permaculture as well. It is tempting to define the congregational experience by what is “NOT” rather than what “IS”.

I know as I leave, the congregation is faced with membership and financial trends that seem to predict a very different future for the Winchester Unitarian Society. There has been anxiety around the places where it appears there is not enough. I would encourage an equal amount of energy around what “IS”. “IS” tends to go along with little or no attention until it disappears. Don’t wait to find

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# Scaffolding

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what “IS” by its absence. Look around. What is easy? What’s working well? What “IS”?

For some time leadership has been considering ways in which to invite more participation and raise the congregation’s profile. Those who develop programs and lead worship also reflect on what most serves the spirit of liberal faith for the children and adults who come through the doors.

And then that pesky global pandemic came. Context matters. This is the world in which the congregation functions now. With the COVID-19 pandemic it seemed that for many, common sense and the global community were abandoned or ignored. From people jumping ahead on the vaccine lines to militant anti-maskers, to the taxpayer funded incentives trying to induce eligible adults to be vaccinated. I wonder what the people of India think of that entitlement as they desperately seek vaccines to halt the COVID-19 carnage. We cannot begin to return to a post pandemic world until we support the common good. It is not always about the “me” in the equation.

We cannot begin to turn toward a post pandemic future without nurturing critical and creative lives in all the generations. We cannot begin to turn toward a post pandemic future until we can build communities where the health of the whole is rooted in our diversi-

ty and our capacity to co-exist. While Unitarian Universalism has long been a place for individual growth and good, it is time for us to keep other commitments. To the whole. To patiently create the environment that invites a diverse and sometimes unexpected population. And in doing so, to understand that it won’t be perfect and it won’t be immediate, and it won’t always be according to plan.

So what do you do NOW to support congregational health and growth? There is a lot of “NOT” these days. Not meeting in person, not having communal worship, not sharing food, or hymnals or hugs. But what “IS” is you. You can show up. Zoom fatigued, over it, tired, cranky, hopeful. You. If you are a member and you won-

der why you should participate in virtual worship, or a caregiver and wondering why you should put your kid in front of yet another screen - remember the scaffolding concept. The strong, native and durable are shelter for all the others who could take root. Start with the scaffold, add a healthy dose of patience, a willingness to play with trial and error. Believe that life will find its way. And when you think this is taking too long, or wonder if healthy diversity really can happen, or think that just showing up can’t accomplish anything, think about me outside at sunrise, watching the birds.

Blessings and gratitude to everyone, as our paths diverge.

Rebecca



# Young Activists Camp 2021

By Sam Wilson



A big highlight of WUSYG's year was our 3-day "Young Activists Camp" that we did in lieu of a traditional service trip due to COVID-19 regulations. The camp included 4 different modes of social action

(education, service, public witness & advocacy) and focused on 3 different justice issues (environmental justice, racial justice & LGBTQIA rights). We were thrilled to have 22 youth join us for Camp, which was mostly on the WUS property, from 11 AM until 8 PM each night. Day 1 included a Horn Pond clean-up with Rev. Heather, Day 2 included an Activist Panel (with Rebecca Kelley-Morgan, plus one of our own youth, Abby Nordan, and a queer black activist friend of mine, Dan Schaefer) followed by a Black Lives Matter public witness on the corner, and Day 3 was "WUSYG Pride," an affirming space for our LGBTQIA teens to have fun together (plus spend some time con-

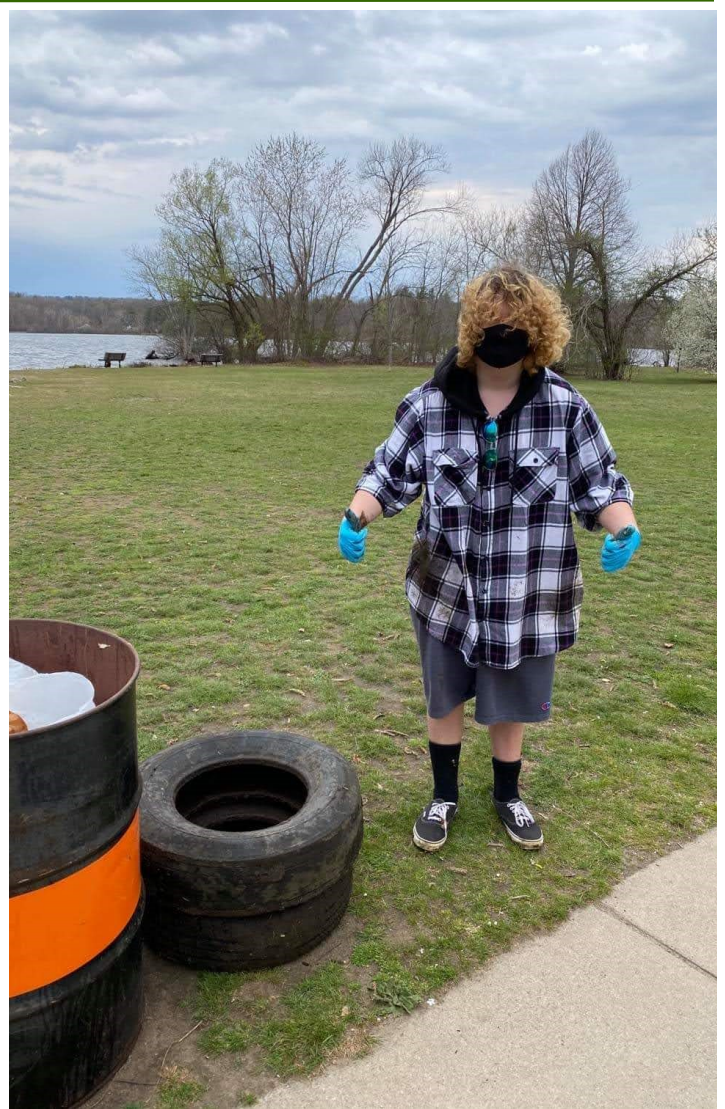
tacting representatives around the country about impending anti-trans legislation). We also got our own sweatshirts, did spiritual practices in the morning, worship and games at night, and lots of other things to make the experience feel like a combination of a camp and a typical WUSYG service trip. Here are some picture from us at Camp!



# Young Activists Camp 2021



# Young Activists Camp 2021



## Summer Minister: Welcome Back Kye Flannery!!



WUS regularly hires a Summer Minister when the settled minister takes vacation and study leave time in July and August. This year, we are delighted to welcome back past Summer and Sabbatical Minister Kye Flannery. Along with leading two summer services, Kye will have a regular presence in other Sunday services and will serve as a resource for our pastoral care ministries. As Kye still lives in Austin, TX, if there is a need for in-person pastoral visits by a minister, a local minister will be engaged to make the visit. Kye will serve in this role for about 10 hours/week.

As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, you can reach Kye at [Kye@winchesteruu.org](mailto:Kye@winchesteruu.org) ... Welcome back, Kye!



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tion. As Flower Communion reminds us, each stem – each individual – is unique and beautiful and contributes to a bouquet, a separate unique and beautiful thing unto itself. Each one of us is shaped by community, be it a family, a neighborhood, a city, a nation or a group we choose to join. And, in ways we can never fully grasp, we change the nature of all these communities through who we are and what we do. This is one reason why I often begin “incarnate” worship services – what some would call “in person” – with the observation that “we come to this sacred place, made more sacred in this moment by the presence of each and every one of us.” You would be astonished if you knew the full impact

you have on the lives of others. And I guarantee that that impact is more positive than you can imagine.

As we enter into this next season, a time when some of us will shift from more isolated living towards greater connections with others, I invite us to remember the needs of the individual and the needs of the collective with care. As the pandemic winds down, this may be the time when we feel the stress and pain of the past year the most. And people around us may be struggling in their own responses. For ourselves and for others, this is a time to both explore renewed freedom and to engage with life at a slower pace. There is no rush, moving towards a new wholeness. You, and we, are worth that focus and that

compassion.

I encourage all to take part in summer services, again led by amazing members of our community and organized by Lee Barton and Dennis Brett. Some services will also come from the greater world of Unitarian Universalism. Summer will be a good time to hear different voices and perspectives.

And I look forward to seeing you, either virtually or – pandemic willing – in person on September 12<sup>th</sup> for our Ingathering Water Communion. Don't forget to save water from your travels, be they far or near, as close as your kitchen tap. Again, the many drops will come together to make a mighty stream!



## Summer 2021 Worship Services

All worship services for Summer 2021 will be held online via Zoom. Please use the following link to access Sunday Worship Services:

<https://tinyurl.com/WUSworship>

<b>June 20</b>	<b>My Father, the Strong, Silent Type</b> (Linda Copeland)
<b>June 27</b>	<b>UUA GA - Ware Lecture</b> (2020 or 2021)
<b>July 4</b>	<b>White Supremacy Culture</b> (Karen Hirschfeld)
<b>July 11</b>	<b>Environmental and Social Responsibility</b> (Phil Coonley)
<b>July 18</b>	<b>Time</b> (Dan Hermes)
<b>July 25</b>	<b>“Religious Wars” in the USA</b> (Martin Newhouse)
<b>August 1</b>	<b>TBA</b> (Kye Flannery, Summer Minister)
<b>August 8</b>	<b>TBA</b> (Kye Flannery, Summer Minister)
<b>August 15</b>	<b>Power of Myth</b> (Matthew Bronski)
<b>August 22</b>	<b>Loved Into Being: A Stewardship Worship Service</b> (UUA)
<b>August 29</b>	<b>Why We are Polarized</b> (Lee Barton)
<b>Sept. 5</b>	<b>Animal Blessing</b> (TBA)





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The Rev. Charles Reinhardt,  
*Minister Emeritus*

## Concert series 2021-2022

**Friday, November 5th @ 8:00PM**

### Classical Chamber Music

Join us for an amazing evening of chamber music as Music Director John Kramer unites with the Resident Musicians at musiConnects for an evening of piano quintets including the Quintet in a minor by Florence B. Price. You can learn more about the artistic and educational mission of musiConnects at:

<https://www.musicconnects.org>

**Friday, January 28th @ 8:00PM**

### Jazz in the Sanctuary

Don't miss this amazing night as Jazz in the Sanctuary returns live to our sanctuary. We welcome Boston's best jazz players for an evening of incredible music.

**Friday, April 29th @ 8:00PM**

### Sensational Folk Vocal Quartet Windborne

We are thrilled to present the vocal quartet Windborne to our sanctuary. NPR host Brian O'Donovan calls them, "The best musical discovery of the year...Stunningly powerful vocal harmony...Windborne sets a new bar for folk harmony singing today." These up and coming stars should not be missed.

<https://www.windbornesingers.com>

