

St. Cloud UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST Fellowship



September 2021

What to Expect as We Return to the Fellowship This Year

by Linda Saupe & Lisa Bershok (ReOpening Committee Co-Chairs)

While we all likely feel done with COVID, COVID is not done with us yet. The newsletter update on ReOpening looked very different just a few days ago. It was written to provide an update that we would be opening with hybrid services (in-person and Zoom options). However, a recent surge in infections in our county has altered those plans. This newsletter article will outline for you the ReOpening Guidelines that our ReOpening Committee created and was Board approved in May. These ReOpening guidelines allowed for summer activities to flourish, and we hope you were able to get outside and connect. These same guidelines outline how we can return in hybrid form indoors for our Sunday Services. To help us make decisions about COVID infection rates and when we can and cannot safely hold services in our building, we have decided to follow the MN Department of Health guidelines that were created for the school districts last year, following recommendations for the high school students (as infection rates/impact of virus is the same for late adolescence and adults). If the 14-day case rate per 10,000 people reaches 30 or more in Stearns County, in-person services and meetings will be suspended and that will be communicated to the Fellowship members. If this occurs, Sunday services will continue to be held on Zoom. As long as we stay under a rate of 30, we can offer hybrid services and in-person meetings with the rules listed below. The infection rate will be tracked weekly using MN Department of Health data.

Here is the Stearns County COVID-19 data (as of 08.28.21):

Week of August 14 – 20	258 cases
Week of August 21 – 27	281 cases
Two-week total cases	539 cases
Population of Stearns County	161,075
Cases per ten thousand	33.46

***Nearly all counties in Minnesota saw increases in caseloads this week. 61 of 87 counties have case rates above 30. That includes most of the metro counties except Ramsey.*

As we are above a 14-day case rate of 30, we will not be able to offer hybrid services yet. **Services will resume September 12th via Zoom.** If you do not have technology to access Zoom at home, please contact Tom Hergert so we can determine if a *few people* can meet safely inside to watch the service from the Fellowship. While disappointing, the good news is that we have a very in-depth plan to reopen and will do so safely when the infection rates go back down. Leadership will track the case rate every Friday. As it would be difficult to pivot

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within 2 days to change a service, the data each week will determine the follow week's service. Changes will be updated on our website and in emails to membership. Reminder that if you need to get access to the weekly Zoom link you can always check the main page of our SCUUF website.

For transparency and the possibility of changing a service option based on infection rates going back down, we do want to provide an overview of hybrid services and what to expect if you attend meetings or services in-person this year. **The following information is for when we can offer hybrid services.** So, what is a hybrid Sunday Service? This means we can accommodate folks who would like to attend services in person, as well as having a Zoom alternative for those who would prefer to continue participating from home. Some of our presenters will attend in person and some will continue to present via Zoom. We will hold our services in hybrid form regardless of where our presenters are. This means we may have services you decide to attend in person, and the presenter will be broadcast to us over the large TVs. The Program Committee will be adding the location of the presenter to their information in the newsletter and on the website as we know this may impact your decision of how you want to attend services. As changes occur in infection rates throughout this next year, we do want to be mindful that a presenter may change the location in which they will present from after this information is published in the newsletter and online. Over the course of this year, adaptability and understanding will need to drive how we support each other, our Fellowship, and our community presenters and ministers.

If you choose to come to the Fellowship in person, some rules have been put in place to make sure we have a safe environment for everyone.

1. Masks are required for everyone (ages 2 and up) at all times when in the Fellowship building.
2. You will be asked to "log in" with your name and contact information in case a member who attended in-person services is diagnosed as positive for Covid. MDH contact tracing requires this information.
3. You will be seated as a family/pod group (or individual) 6 feet from other families or individuals in both the Fellowship Hall and Sanctuary for the duration of the program.
 - We will use both the Sanctuary and the Fellowship Hall for seating as max capacity of each room is between 12-20 people based on distance between households.
4. There will be no food or drinks available or allowed (except for medical reasons) in the Fellowship building. This means after service snacks, drinks, and Soup Sunday cannot be offered at this time.
5. The collection plate will not be passed. There will be a labeled box available for the offering (or you can choose to mail it or use our PayPal pay option).
6. Our musicians are excited to still bring us music. Singing can occur as long as all congregants are masked. We will not be utilizing hymnals, and if needed lyrics will be displayed on the TV.
7. For sharing and discussion times, in-person congregants can write questions down and a designee will read them from the microphone. We will also make sure that those that participate on Zoom will be able to share and ask questions as well.
8. Nursery will be open, but not staffed by nursery attendants. Parents will need to stay with their children in the nursery room.
9. If you are sick, have had a recent exposure, or are COVID positive, we ask that you stay home and attend via Zoom.

Until further notice, the in-person option is only available for people without technology. Congregants who need this option, you must arrange in advance to make sure a technology person is available to host you at the Fellowship. Depending upon schedules, this may not be an option for every Sunday service. Thank you to everyone who will join us this coming year for Sunday services and Fellowship activities. We appreciate your diligence in making sure our Fellowship remains safe and available for all that would choose to join us. If you have any questions, please reach out to Linda Saupe at linda.saupe@gmail.com.

Sunday Programs

All services are online at this time. Please visit www.uufstcloud.org for the Zoom information to join

10:30 a.m. Sunday, September 12: How We Heal, How We Fight – Rev. Ashley Horan (by Zoom)

As we begin to re-emerge after the pandemic, both literally and metaphorically, there is so much that must be healed, and so many injustices that must be addressed. How do we tend to the wounds of collective and personal trauma while also acting with courage and hope so that we don't "go back" to the status quo? As the Fellowship gathers (via Zoom) for this first service of the year, we'll take stock of where we've been, where we are today, and where the spirit of healing and justice is calling us now.

10:30 a.m. Sunday, September 19: Grieve Gently – Rev. Shelley Dugan (by Zoom)

Loss, grief and mourning rock our world. We are affected emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually. Our western culture is uncomfortable with grief and urges people to “get over it” and “move on” as soon as possible, making a difficult situation even harder. What’s a person to do? Join us as we explore the research about grief, its history, and how attitudes about grief impact our experience of it. We will also consider various ways to cope with grief and how UU faith can support us during our times of loss. While grief is unavoidable, we can pass through it with some grace and peace. Sometimes, we can grieve gently.

10:30 a.m. Sunday, September 26: Current Issues Affecting LGBTQ+ Community – Britton Mikkelsen

The presenter has worked to create the Queer Peers through Take Action Minnesota to develop shared political education, identities, and community spaces that centered LGBTQ+ people. She has fought for health care, worker’s rights and anti-racist policies.

Your September TOUCHSTONES Journal was sent as an attachment with this newsletter distribution

We are co-sponsoring the Pride and Peace Walk Wednesday, Sept. 15 at 5:30 p.m. Meet at Great River Regional Library and wear your SCUUF apparel.

September President's Corner

by Lisa Bershok

September is here and we finally get an opportunity to convene again in person for Sunday services. As you saw in the "What to Expect" article at the beginning of the newsletter we will be offering hybrid services which will allow for those that choose to reconvene in person and those that choose to continue to Zoom in to services from home. This will require us all to give each support and allow for adaptability as we try new technology and service formats.

Several days ago, this is how I started my President's Corner when I submitted it for our September newsletter. I think this also reflects how quickly life can still change during these COVID times. As you read at the beginning of the newsletter, while we worked very hard over the spring and summer to bring us back together again in person this fall, the infection rates are just too high to do that safely. This is based on our ReOpening Recommendations approved by the SCUUF Board, and also what we are hearing from our UUA representatives and our national leadership who are advising caution and a continued focus on safety and maintaining the health of our congregants. The good news is that we have a very in-depth ReOpening plan that has been created and we will be ready to open as soon as infection rates decrease to a safe level in our community. For perspective, last year all middle and high schools across the state would have been closed and required to do distance learning at this point. It may feel normal out there, but things are accelerating quickly. I would like to offer a huge thank you to the Program Committee, the Technology Committee, the ReOpening committee, and the Board for their hard work preparing for this coming program year with so many things still unexpected, changing quickly, and new (when we return in hybrid form). It is disappointing to all of us to have to pivot back to virtual only at the last minute.

In Board news, our rental liaison is still working with the Place of Nur in getting additional information for us to consider related to a long-term rental. Their process with the state is taking longer than previously expected, and we expect it may still take several months before we have enough information to make a final decision. Our Building and Grounds committee chair has determined, in consultation with the city of St. Cloud, that we would need to give at least one of our emergency exits an accessible path to a paved surface in order for our building to be approved for an adult daycare rental. The Board discussed and we determined this is something for us to consider as an improvement to our building to ensure the safety and accessibility of all our congregants. We have authorized our Building and Grounds Committee Chair to get estimates of this work for consideration.

Lastly, I would like to extend a big thank you to Louise Goetz, Mary Ness, the Social Justice Committee, Sonja Berg (friend of the Fellowship), and all other members who donated their time, money, and support to organize food and accommodations for the Treaty People Walk for Water group that is walking to the capital in protest of Line 3. Thank you for representing our Fellowship and demonstrating how our congregation lives our Principles. For more information, please check out the Social Justice Committee news in this newsletter.

Pride in the Park

by Mary Ness

Pride in the Park returns on Saturday, September 18th from 11:00-3:00 at Lake George. Pride in the Park is an annual family friendly event featuring local food vendors, businesses, organizations, music, games and more!! The Social Justice Committee is a sponsor of Pride in the Park and has a table where we offer information about our St. Cloud Unitarian Universalist Fellowship and encourage people to check us out. This year, in addition to some give aways, we are offering a small box of crayons and a coloring activity for children. Please look for our booth, bring a friend and stop by to say hello.

This is the 12th annual St. Cloud Pride Week celebration. Our UUF sponsors the Pride and Peace Walk on Wednesday, September 15th at 5:30 beginning at the Great River Regional Library. Join local faith leaders to rally for LGBTQ and peace. You can check out the schedule for the whole week at stcpride.org.

Membership Committee News

by Marge Bates

It seems so long since my last Newsletter article, and it has been. As Covid 19 is changing, and may change again, my hope is that we are all vaccinated and waiting for the booster shot. The Reopening Committee and the Board have spent a great deal of time and energy developing the guidelines for future services and events at the Fellowship, and the only way we can support them is to follow these Guidelines without complaint. This means that there will be no food or beverages served in the Fellowship; if you need to eat please bring your own food, but remember that it must be eaten outside. There will be ample hand sanitizer in the building, so you do not have to bring our own. The kitchen has been cleaned, so no one should be in that area.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone again, and hope that soon our little part of the world will be able to fully return to where we were, oh so long ago.

The Caring Committee

The Caring Committee has been formed for the times in each of our lives when we need help from another person. The members of the Caring Committee are available to help members and friends of the St. Cloud UU Fellowship in a variety of ways. Feel free to contact any member of the committee:

Linda Saupe (Chairperson), Marge Bates, Hanni Epp, Doug Polley, Chris Smith, Charlotte Stephens, and Ron Syme.

For anyone with emergency needs, a wide range of services is available from agencies and organizations in the community. These can be accessed by calling 211 (or 800-543-7709).

8th Principle Learning Community

from Judy Foster

The MN UU Social Justice Alliance (MUUSJA) August Board meeting was postponed until Sept. 2 because our Executive Director has been so busy with the Line 3 Walkers.

However, I did attend the August meeting of the 8th Principle Learning Community. The primary focus was on voter suppression and the need to support the For the People Act, the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, and D.C. statehood. As I write this the U.S. House of Representatives, is voting on the John Lewis bill. It has a narrow margin for passage and unlikely prospects in the Senate unless the filibuster is reformed. Please follow the process on all three bills and urge your Representative to support them. We can also ask our Senators Klobuchar and Smith to work to reform the filibuster.

It occurred to me during the meeting that when we contact our elected officials, we should reference our faith values to attract more attention. Depending on who we are contacting, we might not want to mention our UU affiliation since that could alienate those who have a negative opinion of UUism.

Something else that came up is how our UU history and tradition of individualism can work against our efforts to build community both within and without our congregations. We need to be intentional about working together and forming relationships in the larger community to dismantle privilege. We dismantle privilege by protecting other people's rights. We should not separate our political actions from solidarity with others.

CRE News

by Jessica Beierman

The Children's Religious Education group made tentative in-person lesson plans for the months of September and October, but these are dependent on the decision to move from virtual to hybrid in-person services.

If the weather is decent when we can return to the fellowship, our first lessons will take place outside and we will reach out via e-mail to let families know the plan for each upcoming Sunday. We will do one trash pick-up day in the park by the Fellowship and a second lesson will be about the coronavirus.

On September 26th (Sunday), we are planning to meet for a hike at 4 pm at St. John's Arboretum (weather-permitting).

If you are not on the CRE e-mail list yet and would like to be included on future CRE related e-mail notifications, please let Melissa know via e-mail at woods.melissa11@gmail.com.

Nursery News – there will be no nursery attendant on Sundays, but the nursery will be open for parents with small children to use during the service as needed.

September Walking Meditation

by Lucinda Hudson and Helen Manion

On September 4th (a Saturday) at 10:30 a.m., there will be a gathering at Munsinger Garden to practice walking meditation. Anyone who would like to come is welcome to join. We will be meeting at the picnic tables. If you are facing the river, the picnic table area is a short walk to the left of where the gazebo is.

Walking meditation is about being fully present with the experience of walking. We will be practicing in a relaxed and light-hearted way. This will also be an opportunity to chat and catch up with each other and enjoy the gardens. We'll have a brief reading at the beginning and a modified version of Joys and Concerns. For the walking meditation part of the gathering, we'll each be walking at our own pace, in whatever way is most comfortable for each of us. If walking is difficult for you, it is totally fine to come and simply sit and rest for part or all of the walking meditation time (about 20 minutes). Children and families are welcome too. You can bring a mask if you'd like (optional), and we will be practicing social distancing for this activity.

Starting in September, Helen Manion will be facilitating our meditations. If you would like further information, please contact Helen at hmanion@yahoo.com.

Social Justice Committee Action on Line 3

by Louise Goetz and Mary Ness

With the Enbridge Line 3 tar sands pipeline being 3 weeks from completion and 18 million Americans depending on clean water from the Mississippi River, it seemed like an easy "yes" for the UUF's Social Justice Committee (SJC) to contribute to the success of those protesting Line 3 in mid-August. Our Fellowship was contacted in late July by MN Interfaith Power and Light (MNIPL) to assist the Treaty People Walk for Water with accommodations and meals when they passed through the St. Cloud area. On August 7th, the Walkers began their 256 mile protest walk from the headwaters of the Mississippi to the capital in St. Paul on August 25th. Linda Peck, Mary Ness and Angela and Ted Stevens will be in St. Paul to celebrate the Treaty People's arrival to bring their message to our governor.

There are many reasons to oppose Line 3. Among them, Line 3 violates the treaty rights of the Ahishinaabeg by endangering critical natural resources protected in the 1854, 1855 and 1867 treaty areas. Line 3 also threatens the many wild rice beds along the path of the pipeline. Wild rice is sacred and a way of life for native Americans. And also, Line 3 will take a new route and is a replacement of the current Line 3 which Enbridge estimates has 900 integrity "anomalies".

But instead of fixing the problem, they will abandon the old line, leaving tribes and landowners to the financial and ecological liability this poses. Enbridge has a history of 800 spills in the last 15 years, including a big spill near Grand Rapids, MN and a larger one on the Kalamazoo River in Michigan.

Our SJC gathered support from members and allies in the community (homemade delicacies from Hanni Epp, Julie Peters, Wendy Schoen, Julie Hiemanz, Ruth LaDuke, Mary Ness, Linda Peck, Mary Pierce-Slocum, Angie Stevens and Mari Walker), and Sonja Berg hosted them at her home for a picnic, yoga session, media interviews and showers, providing a total of 5 meals for 40 participants over 3 days. For the coup de gras, Wendy Schoen rode her horse to deliver her homemade raspberry/white chocolate scone and fruit to them Friday morning at Lake Maria State Park.

About a dozen walkers have walked the whole way but others joined along the way for shorter distances. The number had tripled by the time they got to St. Cloud and took leaps after they left our area. There were walkers from several states and Mexico as well as many Minnesotans. Many organizations supported the Walkers and Karen Wills, executive director of Minnesota Unitarian Universalists Justice Alliance (MUUSJA) was a key supporter throughout the walk. Locally, Malcolm and Mariana Nazareth and St. John's Episcopal church coordinated with us to provide meals, although the Episcopalians had to drop out due to a COVID exposure. Mary Ness, Sonja Berg and Louise Goetz had the privilege of participating in a sage and tobacco ceremony/meeting where each of the 35 participants, including us, could speak their minds and received encouragement by leader, Joe Morales. Malcolm gave a prayer in Sanskrit with an English translation. The ceremony was very meaningful for those of us who were guests.

The Line 3 protestors have been holding vigil to protect our waters since December. Our UUF social justice committee is honored to support them. More information about line 3 and the protests are available on Facebook posts by the Giniw Collective, Honor the Earth, MN350 and through MUUSJA at their website, muusja.org. Over 700 people have been arrested while peacefully protesting Line3 and some have experienced rubber bullets and pain control techniques in Hubbard County. If you wish to donate to support the protestors and their legal expenses, please contact MUUSJA at their website, muusja.org.

Calendar Reminders

AVOID ZOOM CONFLICTS: We encourage you to use the Zoom licenses for video conferencing, but please follow the standard reservation process to ensure the Zoom "meeting room" (license) is available at the time you would like to make use of it and to allow others to see planned meetings on the calendar.

Please check the online calendar on our website for scheduled Zoom meetings at www.uufstcloud.org/calendar. A meeting event/room reservation button to submit a form for reservation requests can be found below the calendar on the website. This same button can be used to schedule any Zoom meetings. Please reach out to Jessica Beierman at calendar@uufstcloud.org if you have any questions.

Tom Hergert and Jim Hixson have agreed to be the contacts for the Zoom License and will provide a tutorial for anyone needing to learn how to host a Zoom Meeting. Their contact information can be found in the new UUF Directory.