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A Welcoming Congregation

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Saturday, January 9, 2021 **UUFBC E-News** Edition 17, July 2020-June 2021

Greetings and well wishes to all of our members:

It has been an eventful week here in Bay County, in the state of Georgia, and in our nation's capital. I hope you have gotten more sleep than I have this week. Our county scheduled its first appointments for the COVID-19 vaccine, which caused a fair amount of chaos and frustration. According to the newspaper, tens of thousands of seniors are trying to schedule an appointment for the one thousand shots to be given. On Monday night, I woke up numerous times wondering when and how they would make the appointments available and checking my phone and laptop. Well, it's no surprise that, even with sincere effort, I did not get an appointment.

There was no time to dwell on the mystery and frustration of the vaccine distribution. By Tuesday night, I was swept up in the election results in the Senate races in Georgia, with numbers coming in continuously, but giving new meaning to the phrase, "too close to call". Once again, I had to stay up very late to assure myself of the results.

But no time to rest, only a few hours later, it was time to certify the national vote. As if there wasn't enough acrimony in the Congressmen's and women's challenges to the vote count, there was an insurrection at the Capitol Building, the very same place where our national leaders were assembled. Once again, to assure myself that the wheels of democracy would continue to turn until the votes were certified and that no more violence was at hand, I was up late again. It was just about 3 AM when certification was finally achieved.

So, let's review: vaccinations have begun; two democratic senators have been elected in Georgia; the national vote for President and Vice-President has been certified and I got no sleep. A pretty good trade off I would say.

This is a classic case of the glass being half full. I would argue though that the glass is at least 75 percent full. There were problems big and small all week, but the right things happened. Given what this country and all of us have endured, this is cause for celebration. Just a few months ago we were still anxiously hoping we would soon have a vaccine that was effective. Let's concentrate on the miracle of having a vaccine, no matter how slow the roll-out may be.



With two new senators on their way to Washington, D.C. we can be hopeful. We can allow ourselves to believe that cabinet members, judges, and other administrative appointments will be made, funds will be authorized, legislation will be passed by both houses and programs will be implemented. WOW!

Finally, there are no more legal challenges or opportunities left for the current administration to halt the transition of power. Like many, I will be holding my breath until it actually happens. I am not naïve enough to believe that our problems are over, but I do think they may be receding.

We have all been through an experience like none other. We have had as many as four thousand people dying each day in this country due to the corona virus and the anemic, disorganized federal response. But there are many reasons to believe that things are going in the right direction and we will survive the ordeal. Wash your hands, wear your masks, socially distance and do all the things that will keep you safe. We will soon see the better new year that we have all hoped for.

Jo Shaffer  
Social Justice Team  
1/7/21

**Joys and Concerns:** Healing thoughts and prayers for Bob Gilmore's Aunt Helen and Cousin Margie who have contracted COVID-19 with symptoms. The two are managing their illness at home at this time.



Yvonne Petrasovits, Executive Director, Doorways of NWFL with Jo Shaffer, UUFBC Social Justice Team, transferring donations for the homeless. Yvonne will speak at tomorrow's service.



**Sunday Worship Services:** Our virtual Worship Service begins at 10:30 AM. We invite you to join us on Zoom for the service by clicking the link below. Please join in by 10:25 AM, so you don't miss the beginning. We will also stream the service LIVE on Facebook and have it posted to our YouTube channel shortly after the service is over. In whatever way you choose to join us, thank you for being with us!

Click on this link: <https://bit.ly/3hWkhEI> - **Remember, please join a little early.**

**"Coffee Talk"** will take place immediately following the service on Zoom, so stay connected to enjoy another half hour of fellowship. If you're watching on Facebook, you're welcome to join us for Coffee Talk by clicking the link above after the service has ended.

**January 2021 Monthly Theme, "Imagination"**

*The practice of waking up to possibility.*

*The healing practice of putting ourselves in other people's shoes*

*The practice of completing the world by conjuring up its missing parts.*

*The practice of allowing hope to widen our view.*

**January 10<sup>th</sup> Yvonne Petrasovits "The Evolution of Homelessness in our Community"**

Historically, the panhandle of Florida has not had the services necessary to help all those in need, especially those who are homeless or living in unsafe conditions. After Hurricane Michael, the problem became much worse. Many more families found themselves without housing. Hear about the challenges facing Bay County, some potential solutions and how Unitarians can support affordable housing for all.

The speaker, Yvonne Petrasovits, is a veteran now retired from the army where she served in military intelligence. She has held administrative positions in nonprofit and for-profit corporations before moving from New York to Bay County to become the first full-time Executive Director of Doorways, formerly the Homeless and Hunger Coalition, five years ago.

**January 17<sup>th</sup> Reverend Melanie Morel-Ensminger "What I'd Tell President Biden"**

When this presentation is made, there will be three days to go before the new president is inaugurated. Reverend Melanie takes some time to give UU-inspired advice to the new administration. Reverend Morel-Ensminger is a Consulting Minister and has presented to our Fellowship in the past. Her home UU church is in Ellisville, Mississippi

**January 24<sup>th</sup> Penni Beitzel "Imagine No COVID Fear"**

Penni Beitzel is a professor of Microbiology at Gulf Coast State College teaching future healthcare students about infectious disease. She has been a microbiologist for 35 years, also working in clinical microbiology in the hospital system. Ms. Beitzel has led numerous women's bible study groups over the years as she blended her faith with science. She has always been fascinated by epidemiology so she follows the COVID crisis with great interest.

**January 31<sup>st</sup> Cindy Wilker "Detours"**

Contact us at [info@uuofbaycounty.com](mailto:info@uuofbaycounty.com) or call us at 850-615-4127 for more information about our services or with any other question you may have. Please let us know if you have a joy or a concern that the Service Leader may share during our worship service.



**Social Justice:** Over the years, members and friends of our Fellowship have celebrated Martin Luther King, Jr. Day with service to our community. We have completed countless Days of Action on this day and many other days throughout the years. The Social Justice Team would like to thank everyone for the great memories and accomplishments, a few of which are documented below.

It is worth noting that one year ago on Martin Luther King Jr. weekend, commemorated at the Prayer Breakfast, UUFBC became a Lifetime Member of the NAACP. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the NAACP has called off public celebrations this year. UUFBC continues to maintain social distance with no organized events. Instead, let's commemorate this Martin Luther King Jr. Day with our best selves and each find a way to contribute to and honor our country and our democracy.

- **January 18, Martin Luther King Jr. Day** President-elect Biden, Vice President-elect Harris, and millions of our friends across the country will participate in a national day of action to lift up our communities and serve our neighbors.
- **January 19**, there will be a Memorial to Lives Lost, honoring the neighbors, friends, and loved ones we have lost to COVID-19 while paying tribute to the strength, courage, and patriotism of the healthcare and frontline workers who have risked their own health to serve those in need.
- **January 20**, we honor the peaceful transfer of power as the President-elect and Vice President-elect are officially sworn into office. The inaugural presidential escort will take place that afternoon, followed by a televised celebration hosted by the new President and Vice President later that evening.



*Chris May creating a community garden for foster youth.*



*Cheryl Kellogg scraping paint on a home in the Glenwood community.*

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