

UUSC Sunday 2020 Sample Worship Service

CELEBRATING 80 YEARS OF UUSC: BRAVE LEGACY, BOLD FUTURE

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Since UUSC's founding in May of 1940, Unitarian Universalist congregations have been fundamental partners in our work to advance human rights. As part of UUSC's 80th anniversary celebration this spring, we invite congregations to join us as we explore key highlights and lessons of UUSC history – and look ahead to the next 80 years.

Suggested Hymns and Responsive Readings

from *Singing the Journey*

Hymns:

- #1024 When the Spirit Says Do
- #1028 The Fire of Commitment
- #1060 As We Sing of Hope and Joy
- #1074 Turn the World Around

from *Singing the Living Tradition*

Hymns:

- #108 My Life Flows On in Endless Song
- #131 Love Will Guide Us
- #298 Wake, Now, My Senses
- #318 We Would Be One

Responsive Readings:

- #579 The Limits of Tyrants
- #584 A Network of Mutuality
- #646 The Larger Circle
- #662 Strange and Foolish Walls

Recommended Reading and Story for All Ages

What is hope? by Rubem Alves, Brazilian Liberation Theologian and Poet

It is a presentiment that imagination is more real
and reality less real
than it looks.

It is a hunch that the overwhelming brutality of facts
that oppress and repress
is not the last word.

It is a suspicion that reality is more complex
than realism wants us to believe
and that the frontiers of the possible are not determined
by the limits of the actual
and that in a miraculous and unexpected way
life is preparing the creative events
which will open the way to freedom and resurrection . . .

The two, suffering and hope, live from each other.
Suffering without hope produces resentment and despair,

hope without suffering creates illusions, naiveté, and
drunkenness . . .

Let us plant dates
even though those who plant them will never eat them.
We must live by the love of what we will never see.
This is the secret discipline.

It is a refusal to let the creative act be dissolved
in immediate sense experience
and a stubborn commitment to the future of our
grandchildren.

Such disciplined love is what has given
prophets, revolutionaries and saints
the courage to die for the future they envisaged.
They make their own bodies the seed of their highest
hope.

Suggested Story for All Ages: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/river/workshop12/178734.shtml>



“Celebrating 80 Years of UUSC: Brave Legacy, Bold Future”

Sermon by Rev. Laura Randall, Heather Vickery, and Josh Leach

When we think of social justice and human rights, we often think of words like resistance, bravery, fortitude, and transformation. “Imagination” is not usually one of the first words on that list, but it is actually essential to our work for justice. Imagination is an act of courage, because it means daring to envision and strive toward a world that does not yet exist. It means thinking not just of how we can work within the current systems and norms but what new, regenerative systems and norms we can create.

80 years ago in the face of rising Nazi repression, Unitarians imagined a different world, a different response from U.S. isolationism. They knew there was a beloved community that cared about human rights across the country and around the world and then they asked themselves what they needed to do to get closer to that different world. They asked themselves who else shared their vision for the beloved community. And they asked themselves what they were willing to risk to live their values in the world. They chose to form and support the Unitarian Service Committee.

Now I realize I keep saying “they”, but in reality, *we* chose to form and support the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee – *you* chose to form and support the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. Those people 80 years ago were not separate or different from us, from you – some of them may be in this room today. They were regular people, living average lives, worried about their jobs and children and bills just like us, just like you. They were overwhelmed by the state of the world in a time of fascism and war, antisemitism and racism, just like us, just like you.

And when the opportunity arose for them to make a difference and affirm the inherent worth and

About the Authors

As a member of UUSC’s Development team, Rev. Laura Randall (she/her/hers) facilitates partnerships to strengthen the impact of UUSC and the social justice reach of UU communities. Through preaching, teaching, relationship building, and fundraising, Laura connects the work of UUSC to Unitarian Universalist congregations.

Heather Vickery (she/her/hers) is responsible for developing and maintaining relationships with UU Congregations, State Action Networks, program participants and regional staff in order to expand engagement with UUSC and the UU College of Social Justice. As the Coordinator for Congregational Activism, she manages the workshop offerings and group visits to the UUSC/UUCSJ office and assists with the communications for the Activism and Justice Education Team.

Josh Leach (he/him/his) supports UUSC’s programs and campaign work through strategic research, analysis, writing, and organizing. As the policy analyst for programs, research, and advocacy, he works closely with program leaders and the research team to identify partners, develop program strategy, and engage in research and advocacy initiatives that advance UUSC’s mission and vision, with a particular focus on the human rights of refugees and migrants.



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dignity of all people across this world, they took action with their time, with their money, with their influence. Just like us, just like you do every time you write a letter to a politician, go to a protest, volunteer your time or give your money to UUSC and our partners.

For 80 years our Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, your Unitarian Universalist Committee has been working in partnership with those most directly impacted by injustice to imagine a different world, a beloved community where every person's rights are honored and protected. We joined with migrant workers in Texas in the 1940s as they fought against exploitation. We launched desegregation projects in Georgia and Florida in 1960. In 1978, UUSC sponsored the first Congressional fact-finding mission to El Salvador as violence there escalated. In the 1980s we sent emergency funds to ease the Ethiopian famine long before the story reached mainstream U.S. news. We sent emergency medical equipment to Rwanda in the 1990s and then launched the Drumbeat for Darfur campaign in the 2000s to help end the genocide in Sudan. In 2010, we went to Haiti to assist with immediate relief after the earthquake and remained to partner in long-term recovery.

Today, UUSC works with organizations in Central America, Mexico, and the United States on the forefront of migrant justice as we seek security for people who wish to remain in their home countries, safety for those traveling along the migrant trail, and justice once people reach the United States. We partner with First and Indigenous communities in the South Pacific, Louisiana, and Alaska who are on the front lines of the climate change crisis as their homes and way of life are threatened by rising sea levels and rising temperatures. We are working with Rohingya leaders as they seek justice and healing for their communities following genocide and forced displacement from their homeland by the Burmese government. And we are joining with the minority Haitian community in the Bahamas after the devastation of Hurricane Dorian as they seek to rebuild their lives with no access to government assistance.

I know sometimes – maybe a lot of the time – things can feel hopeless, like the world is moving farther and farther away from our values, from all the progress we have tried to make. At the time of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's founding, when it was officially known as the Unitarian Service Committee, the world gave few signs of moving in a better direction. The work of USC began in 1939, when Hitler's Germany was dragging all of Europe into war and laying the groundwork for the Holocaust. Thousands of refugees were already displaced from their homes and forced to flee religious and political persecution as the Nazis took power. When Martha and Waitstill Sharp opened the first office of the USC in Prague, they met an embattled Unitarian community at the *Unitaria* church that had to preach their opposition to the Nazis in double meanings. During the German occupation of the city, the Nazi secret police began monitoring every sermon given at the Unitarian congregation, listening for subtle messages of dissent. A few years later, they found what they were looking for. In 1941, the minister of the *Unitaria* congregation, Norbert Capek, was arrested and deported to the concentration



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camp at Dachau, where he was killed with poison gas the following fall. Capek had been personally named by Hitler on a list of 10,000 "politically suspect" persons, slated for murder.

Capek wasn't the only figure associated with the founding of USC to make the ultimate sacrifice for human rights. USC's early work in Prague involved helping refugees apply for visas and process the other paperwork they would need to seek safety abroad. Similar to UUSC's current model of partnering with directly impacted communities, many of the Service Committee's first employees were Jewish refugees, working to protect the rights of their community. At the time, Jewish people in Prague were already facing persecution under the Nazi occupation, and all the warning signs of the coming genocide were already in place. They therefore knew the risks they took by staying in the city to help others. Nevertheless, historian Elizabeth Subak writes, they "delayed their own emigration efforts to help other refugees." Ultimately, "none...were able to emigrate or avoid deportation" to concentration camps.

In the face of genocide, religious persecution, political assassination, and all the worst atrocities the human imagination has ever devised, it was an act of indescribable courage for these women and men to hope for a different world. It's a hope born of courage that can best be described in the often-quoted phrase by the Rev. Jeremiah Wright: "the audacity of hope."

These words we are so familiar with today originally appeared in a 1995 sermon, in which Wright was reflecting on the ravages of racism and apartheid in South Africa. Wright took as the text of his sermon a painting by the Victorian artist George Frederic Watts, whose depiction of "Hope" shows a blindfolded woman playing a harp. Wright analyzed the message of the painting in these words: "The harpist is sitting there in rags. Her clothes are tattered as though she, herself, had been a victim of Hiroshima or Sharpeville. ... [Y]et the artist dared to entitle this painting Hope. [...] See, in spite of being on a world torn by war; in spite of being on a world destroyed by hate; in spite of being on a world devastated by distrust and decimated by disease; [...] in spite of being on a world where apartheid and apathy fed the fires of racism [...] – in spite of all these things, the woman had the audacity to hope. She had the audacity to hope and to make music and to praise God on the one string she had left."

We have come as far as we have because justice-seekers throughout time have continued to have the audacity to keep reaching toward another imagined possibility. At UUSC, we have joined with audacious, imaginative, regenerative people for the last 80 years and we will continue this vital work for the next 80 years. And the 80 years after that. We will continue to go where justice calls, partnering with those most affected by disasters and human rights abuses. So long as Unitarian Universalists, people of conscience and moral imagination, continue to join with us, we will be here to join in the struggle. To lend our weight to bend the arc of the universe towards justice. To keep turning courageous hope into action.



UUSC Sunday 2020 Sample Offering Language

Today we are celebrating the 80-year legacy of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, better known as UUSC.

UUSC is an international human rights organization, grounded in Unitarian Universalism, that has been a powerful force for justice since its founding in 1940 in response to the rise of Nazism. UUSC's work is based on a partnership model that centers the experience and leadership of the people who are most impacted by injustice.

This partnership model includes financial support given in the form of grants, to some of the most resilient, creative, and courageous groups of people you can imagine, who are working for justice often under very dangerous conditions. In addition, UUSC also supports and flanks their efforts in other ways. They arrange and fund convenings, so people in similar struggles half a world away from each other can meet and compare strategies and learn from each other.

UUSC does innovative research that bolsters partners' claims with hard data and with powerful personal stories about what they're living through. They help educate and then mobilize our members – people like us – to make us more effective advocates and activists, whether by lobbying Congress in Washington or accompanying asylum-seekers in our own communities.

And through the UU College of Social Justice, UUSC brings delegations to learn from our partners, and sends volunteers with particular skill sets at their partners' request. Over the past year, for instance, UUSC has sent well over a hundred Spanish speaking volunteers to the border, to help with the ongoing humanitarian crisis there.

If some or all of this work intrigues you, now is your chance to be a part of this vital justice movement! UUSC is able to do all that it does because people like you support its mission. A contribution at any level allows you to become a member of UUSC. And your support ensures that in these perilous times, with threats to human rights expanding on all sides, our response, too, can expand.

Checks can be made out to UUSC. Please put "UUSC Sunday" in the memo line. You can also make a contribution online by going to uuscsunday.org.

Many, many thanks.