



UUSC Justice Sunday 2024

Sample Worship Service

WE BELONG TO ONE ANOTHER — UUSC AND GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

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An annual spring program of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, UUSC Justice Sunday is a day of learning, commitment, and support for human rights. This year's service focuses on what it means to be in solidarity with human rights activists and front-line communities around the world.

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

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

Story for All Ages

UUSC and the Flaming Chalice — How UUSC Began

Good morning! I have a question for you: What is something that happens every time Unitarian Universalists come together on Sunday mornings?

Yes! We light a chalice! The chalice is very important to us as UUs. Every time Unitarian Universalists gather together, no matter where they are, they light a chalice. It's fun to think about how people all over the country and even the world are doing this just like we are.

But did you know that the flaming chalice wasn't always the symbol of Unitarian Universalism?

Today, I want to tell you a story about how the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee or UUSC began.

It all started over 80 years ago when Unitarians in the United States were watching what was happening in Europe and they were getting very worried. They were worried because a man named Hitler and the people he was leading, called the Nazis, were becoming very powerful and hurting a lot of people.

The Nazis believed some very mean and wrong things. They believed that the only people who were any good were people who were just like them. They wanted everyone to be the same as they were and if you weren't, well, they would kick you out of your house and take all of your things. They wouldn't let you work, and eventually, they started killing people who they thought were different from them. Jewish people, gay people, people with disabilities, all of them were targets of the Nazis during this time. It was very scary.



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Story for All Ages, ctd.

What do you think you would do if you saw something like this happening? Would you want to help? Would the people in your UU church want to help, too?

It was the same back then! The Unitarians wanted to help the people in Europe who were being targeted by the Nazis.

So a Unitarian minister and his wife from Wellesley, Massachusetts, Waitstill and Martha Sharp went to Europe to see how they could help the people there. They found lots of ways to help when they got there but they had to be creative because the Nazis were always watching, and it would be dangerous if they got caught. The Sharps helped get the paperwork people needed to escape to safer places. Sometimes, they would even sneak people past guards wearing disguises. They also helped people, including kids like you, get food and clothing in a time when it was hard to find both.

The Sharps were very brave but they didn't do this work alone. They worked with people in the Jewish communities in Europe. They worked with other Unitarians in the United States who sent them money and other supplies so more people could be helped. That is how the Unitarian Service Committee, now called UUSC, got started.

This is where the flaming chalice comes in. Many of the people that the Unitarian Service Committee was helping in Europe didn't have the papers that they needed in order to travel to safer countries. So the UUSC decided to make their own! The most important thing was that these papers needed to look official! They needed a seal to look official! So the Reverend Charles Joy asked a Austrian artist named Hans Deutsch to create an official seal for the papers that the Unitarian Service Committee was printing. Hans created the flaming chalice! This flaming chalice was printed at the top of all of the documents issued by UUSC to get people to safety. So, our chalice, the thing that binds all Unitarian Universalists together, was founded on our commitment to human rights.

Today, UUSC still works around the world to help people who are being treated badly find safety and have their human rights respected. We work with migrant communities who have fled their homes in Central America and are seeking asylum in the United States. We work with Rohingya Muslims from Burma who are facing inhumane treatment and displacement by their government. We work with people around the world whose home communities are threatened by climate change. And many more.

Both 80 years ago and today, UUs come together through the UU Service Committee to work with people who need it most. And we will continue to be there to help into the future because Unitarian Universalists believe in doing what we can to make the world a better and safer place for everyone. Thank you for the ways you help us do this work. We couldn't do it without everyone joining together. We are so grateful for you.

Thank you for listening to this story.



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Meditation: *We Find Our Salvation Here*

by Rev. Deanna Vandiver

Throughout time, our Unitarian Universalist faith tradition has held a thread of clarity: how we relate to each other creates the conditions of hell or heaven here on earth.

We may not know or agree about what lies beyond this life, but it's our conviction that our actions— and our inactions — have consequences for the web of all existence. While fascinating and mysterious, we do not place our hopes for salvation in what happens after death. We find our salvation here on earth: showing up for each other with mercy, respect, and compassion. How are we relating to our neighbors, friends?

As a people of faith, we are called to a love that is bold, to love beyond our skill and through our fear with courage and compassion.

As a faithful collective, we are called to offer sanctuary, refuge, and comfort to everyone afflicted by the systems of oppression in this world.

As faithful individuals, we are called to relationships of care and accountability.

It makes a difference in the quality of this world when people with access to privilege and power give voice to a vision of collective liberation and name the obstacles, within and without, that limit us.

Can we choose to live courageously, a people of faith, a people so bold? Can we faithfully challenge evil in the world and the sins of society that have become internalized within our beings?

Our faith does not require that we be unafraid — only that we do not lead with fear, or make our decisions from a place of fear.

Our presence matters. How we relate to each other creates the conditions of hell or heaven here on earth. May we remember and affirm that we are all in this together, friends: We are all in this together.

Amen.

About the Author

As the Director of Justice Education, Deanna Vandiver manages the College of Social Justice (CSJ), a joint initiative of UUSC and the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA).

Deanna is affiliated with the Church of the Larger Fellowship UU as a community Minister of Love and Liberation and is the founder of Ever Unfolding LLC, a ministry of spiritual accompaniment and creativity for people, congregations, and organizations on the journey toward collective liberation. Before moving to the land of the Coast Salish people in 2018—now known as the Pacific Northwest— Deanna served as co-director of the Center for Ethical Living and Social Justice Renewal (CELSJR) and as a community minister for the Greater New Orleans Unitarian Universalists (GNOUU), the UU cluster who ordained her in 2012.

With an Undoing Racism™ analysis rooted in the work of the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, an Experiential Education and Leadership practicum with Tulane University's Center for Public Service, and Spiritual Leadership Coaching certification with Peace Ministry, Deanna is committed to the call of collective liberation.



Reading: *Beyond Borders: Community Care as the Deepest Act of Global Solidarity*

by Rachel Gore Freed

The struggle to build a world of justice begins with the intimate partnerships we build.

The times we live in are filled with stories of acute crises – the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic aftershocks; the constant barrage of climate-induced catastrophes such as fires, floods, and storms; and the ongoing impacts of systemic poverty and racialized capitalism.

There is another story to tell about these same moments of crises. It is a story of how networks of locally led civil society organizations create nimble mutual aid systems and provide the most radical forms of care and the political solidarity woven into these acts of resistance. These networks are run by volunteers, often without access to funding or resources who forge new systems through mutual collective action and collaboration. During a so-called crisis, these networks are organized despite current power structures, failed public institutions, and inept government policies. Through mutual aid, these volunteers are reclaiming and building community power.

Political borders are often areas where I've seen vibrant community-building and the coordination of collective needs by volunteers in place of systems or structures that do not serve to uphold human dignity. I've seen this at the borders of Serbia and Hungary where mutual aid networks served to support families during migrant pushbacks and I've heard about the networks near Mae Sot at the Thai-Burma Border where groups are organizing support to get folks out of Burma to safety.

During my time on the ground in Warsaw, Poland, I learned about a group called **Grupa Granica**, an informal network of Polish NGOs, activists and volunteers that formed in response to the humanitarian crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border to provide humanitarian, medical, and legal aid to migrants fleeing through the forests there. Many of the volunteers live locally and came together to organize care and refuge for those arriving. I

About the Author

Rachel Gore Freed is a human rights lawyer, resource mobilizer, philanthropic connector, community organizer, and social justice educator.

As UUSC's Vice President of Programs, Rachel leads the organization's approaches to advancing global human rights.

Rachel has spent her career working with communities organizing in the face of corporate capture, government inaction, and systemic injustice around the world. She has supported youth peacekeepers in Northern India, prosecuted rebel forces in Sierra Leone, and litigated against Exxon for violations of community rights in the United States. With ancestral ties in South Asia, Rachel's creativity and ability to build sound relationships connects UUSC's work with activists and advocates across borders.

Rachel co-chairs the International Human Rights Funders Network and is an adjunct professor of law at Northeastern Law school's Program on Human Rights and the Global Economy. She is an organizer in her local community and serves as an advisor to her children's school on diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.

Rachel holds an undergraduate degree with a focus in International Development from the George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs and a law degree from Vanderbilt University.



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Reading, ctd.

had the chance to witness a joy-filled reunification of two volunteers who were organizing together during this intense time in 2001 and who have since been supporting refugee receptions throughout Poland both prior to the Russian invasion and after.

I was invited to a UUSC-supported convening held by **Voices** in Poland, that brought together local feminist networks from across Moldova, Belarus, Ukraine, Romania and Poland. Activists from the region shared some of the same themes; many activists were on the verge of burnout and had a deep distrust of large international aid organizations and multilateral United Nations coordination mechanisms. They shared a sense of connection together during their time recharging and recentering their work. Together, the convening facilitators provided trauma-informed sessions and created space to identify shared frontline responses and to strategize about infrastructures and resources available to sustain their network's organizing needs ahead.

Resourcing these feminist and migrant justice organizing networks to continue their work of supporting community care and community-building is a vital way we can engage in global solidarity work beyond borders. We can tend to our own communities, keep our focus on global systemic inequities, and weave together our narratives, speaking truth to the power that comes with re-creating the world through the lens of equity and self-determination.

Reflection Video

Universal Human Rights and Global Solidarity: The History of UUSC and the United Nations

(8 minutes, 53 seconds)

please visit: www.uusc.org/hrvideo

Sermon Video

Belonging to One Another (23 minutes, 37 seconds)

by UUSC President, Rev. Mary Katherine Morn & UUSC Director of Justice Education, Rev. Deanna Vandiver

please visit: www.uusc.org/js2024



Sample Offering Language

Today we are celebrating the ways our Unitarian Universalist faith calls us to be in solidarity with human rights defenders around the world. One of the many ways we do this is through our support of 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.

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 uusc.org/uusc-sunday.

Many, many thanks.