



THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

3 1/2 East Main Street, Canton, New York 13617-1417

Dear Friends of our Beloved Community,

On January 15, we celebrated Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during worship and also held a special blessing and sending forth for those who were going to the Women's March in Washington D.C. After the service, we had a congregational conversation on what we can do as a church to promote racial equity. Among other things, we talked about hanging a Black Lives Matter banner. During that conversation, a guest spoke about how she didn't know there was an organized religion that was truly about love. She held back tears as she said it was beautiful that we were trying to be love in the world. I only met her briefly and haven't seen her since, but I can tell we impacted her by being a religious community based on love.

This year's financial appeal theme is **Renewing our Commitment**. We have a history of nurturing the spirit of love. 20 years ago we became an official Welcoming Congregation. It was a long process that involved education, community outreach, and a congregational vote. It led to the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) certifying us as being welcoming to LGBTQ+ people. We carry that legacy with us today as we celebrate our anniversary, offer workshops on how to become more radically inclusive, and investigate how we can be a force for love in our broader community.

Part of being a Welcoming Congregation is offering *Our Whole Lives*, a UU curriculum that provides age appropriate, value-centered sexuality education. We currently offer OWL for middle school and high school age students. We would like to provide the complete lifespan curriculum. In order to do this, we need more resources to send volunteers to facilitator training.

We change lives by being a force for love, and sometimes our impact is subtle. After spending months studying governance, one Church Council member said this was "valuable not only in my service on Church Council, but in other nonprofits I am part of." It is important to remember we learn and grow here spiritually and take those insights with us and make the world better for it.

Our pledge goal for this year is \$245,000 which is roughly 8% higher than last year. Much of that increase is due to eliminating a separate Fair Share appeal letter. We don't have membership fees or dues here. We ask you to give from your generous heart. Enclosed you will find information on our goals, guidelines for giving, and what has been given in the recent past. Please watch for the schedule of Cottage Meetings which will be held in the second half of October. These small group meetings are held in congregants' homes and will give us a chance to talk about what it means to renew our commitment.

Being truly welcoming means we are open to people of different identities than our own. We are creating meaning together. We are being called further and further into the great web of connection, the spirit of love. The further we move into this calling, the better we are and the world is for it. I give to this community because we change lives by aiming to be love. Please join me.

Blessed Be,

The Rev. James Galasinski