



# THE TOUCHSTONE

*A monthly publication of the Unitarian Church of Hinsdale*

February 2021 | Monthly Newsletter

## Deepening Connections: A Mercy



### Rev Pam Rumancik

As I write this morning, I gaze out upon newly fallen snow; see the deep blue sky with clouds wafting by; watch sunlight sparkle off snow still clinging to pine branches and maple boughs. The world looks

right but I admit to a low murmur of anxiety.

Have I just been on high alert for so long that I don't remember how to relax? Or could it be something deeper? It looks like a normal January, but the ongoing threat of climate change and other discontents continue to rumble. While we seem to have adults in our government responding to crises rather than ignoring or creating them, I can't forget that a record number of people voted to retain the previous administration. People I pass in the grocery store hold tightly to falsehoods I can't imagine to be true.

There was an Op-Ed in the [Chicago Tribune 1/27/21](#) asking "[How Do We Reach Today's Extremists?](#)" written from the perspective of a former extremist. Author Kristen Skedgell talks about walking a mile in another's shoes and says "standing in the shoes, more likely the boots, of one whose views we consider abhorrent and immoral, is no easy matter. The first step...is to acknowledge that our views are equally abhorrent and immoral to them." This first step is where we might find common ground.

Skedgell belonged to an extremist cult for fifteen years. She'd drunk the Kool-Aid and thought the rest of the world just couldn't see what seemed to make sense to her. Skedgell said it was her mom who allowed her space from which to come back. Her mom, who never stopped writing to her, who never gave up on her, and who believed that her daughter was smart enough and kind enough to escape the terrible realm she'd gotten swept up into. Skedgell writes there was a school chaplain and perhaps others who could have helped but didn't. Others who might have listened, might have asked her why she believed the things she did and how she saw the world instead of judging her harshly and writing her off, pushing her further into that dark exclusionary space.

Here at UCH, our February theme is Mercy. It's a word filled with religious baggage—goodness and mercy,

when a more punitive reaction is possible. Mercy means remembering the worth and dignity of every person, even when that person is lost, confused, angry or frightened; even when that person makes life difficult and scares the bejesus out of us.

I'm grateful our new president seems more interested in moving on and finding solutions than in judging or punishing. Accountability is important, but so is healing. And anyway, no one in government is asking me what to do right now. Clearly, I don't have control over our leaders, but I do have control over my actions and over my interactions with people who see the world differently. Each of us has that power.

We can listen. We can ask real questions. We can find out why something that seems incomprehensible to us makes sense to our family members and friends in the grip of this malady. We can remember that while their conclusions may seem wrong, their fear is very real. Pushing them away, judging them harshly, or celebrating their losses moves us further apart. Is there an alternative?

Mercy prods us to ask, "What do you fear? What do you experience to be true? Where do you find connection and hope?" Mercy listens and sees only another frightened human being trying to make sense of an alien and unpredictable world.

It is not easy work. It requires being okay with different answers and being committed to connection despite disagreement. Quoting Francis David, it means "loving alike without thinking alike." It means discovering if we are grounded enough in our own truth to be able to offer mercy to others.

It's easy to laugh, to ridicule, to push away people who are acting destructively – and to feel righteous as we do so. But if we really want to restore our communities, we must resist that temptation. Instead, we must learn to stand firm in objective truth while offering the mercy of a listening ear, a non-judgmental response, a presence that doesn't run away.

Fear makes humans do destructive things. Let's not contribute to fear. Let's trust that bringing open, gentle, and merciful hearts can make space for a new reality for all of us.

Have mercy on us, O Lord, all of us!

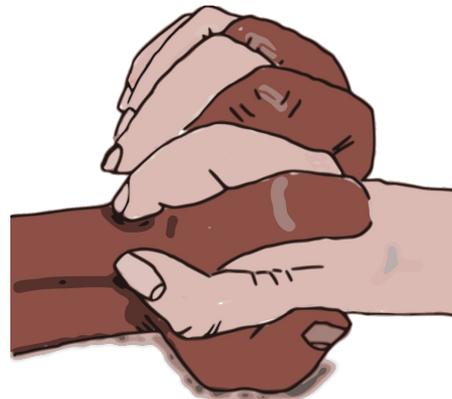
## Director of Programs News: Pam Fodor



We love our church home for many reasons. We can be ourselves here. We know that we will be respected no matter what we look like or who we love. No matter our race or ethnicity we can be at ease here at UCH. This is a safe place to learn and grow and express ourselves. We all have our reasons for why our church means so much to us. Our beloved UCH is also home to other groups that love it for similar reasons. Our commitment to being a Welcoming Congregation has benefited a cross-dressing support group and a Transgender support group that shares our space monthly. We have made space for them to come together with anonymity and respect. A number of AA groups and an Alanon group find comfort knowing that they can use our warm and welcoming spaces and not be judged or frowned upon. A theater school was looking for a space that would offer a welcoming space to an eclectic group of teachers and students. Our non-gender specific bathrooms and Welcoming Congregation signs were proof enough that they would be comfortable at UCH. The tutoring school hosts many groups and private classes and sessions to help young people grow and excel in their studies. All of these groups benefit from our UU principles and our church's mission and our continued effort to be a beacon of love out into the community.

## Uncomfortable Conversations with the UCH Racial Equity Team

Have you felt that you might want to increase your understanding of racial issues but don't know where to start? You may be interested in attending Uncomfortable Conversations with the Racial Equity Team. These monthly conversations last about an hour and a half and are currently being held virtually on the third Tuesday of the month, starting at 7:00 p.m. After a brief chalice lighting and check-in, we introduce a short video, followed by a discussion. We then open up the conversation to participants' concerns: perhaps an example of race or diversity in the news, or a comment made by a friend or relative where race was alluded to or where a difference was denigrated. The meeting ends with announcements of upcoming events related to prison reform, policing issues, wealth disparities, educational equity or other current social justice issues.



At the January meeting, we watched a video called *Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man, Episode 1*. (You can watch it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8jUA7JBkF4>.) In this video, Emmanuel Acho, former linebacker for the Philadelphia Eagles, discusses topics and questions sent to him by white people, such as riots, white privilege, the N-word, and crime, among others. He also explains why it's so important to have uncomfortable conversations about race. As he says in his book *Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man*, "Getting uncomfortable is the whole idea. Everything great is birthed through discomfort."

As people who identify as white, we know we need to take responsibility to learn about this issue from the people most affected by it. Therefore, we are reading books by Black authors and watching videos by people who are Black, Indigenous or People of Color. We aren't just talking about race, either. We can have uncomfortable conversations about wealth, gender identity, immigration, and politics, too!

At these meetings, you'll learn about the books your fellow church members are reading, the podcasts we're listening to and the videos we're watching. A few of the resources discussed in January:

- Trevor Noah's video commenting on the killing of Ahmaud Arbery, protests and the social contract: <https://www.facebook.com/TrevorNoah/videos/271546193965209>
- *All In: The Fight for Democracy*, a documentary on voter suppression (available on Amazon);
- Books including *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson, *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi, and *The Meritocracy Trap: How America's Foundational Myth Feeds Inequality, Dismantles the Middle Class, and Devours the Elite* by Daniel Markovits.

We believe that silence equals complicity. Many people want to speak up, but don't necessarily know-how. This group offers a "brave space" where we can practice with each other how to respond to problematic comments such as microaggressions, as well as learn about actions we can take to make the world more fair in our local communities. As Acho says, "I believe the majority of white Americans are now ready to help America become the land it dreamed for

itself." Be a part of the solution!

See you on February 16, and other third Tuesdays at 7 p.m. The Zoom link to join the conversations is [here](#) and you can also find it in News & Notes. (Meeting ID: 981 4074 2710 and Passcode: 589921.)

## Hot Cocoa Communion

May peace,  
love and  
cocoa  
warm your heart



Join us during worship on Sunday, February 14th  
with a warm cup of this cocoa.  
(or any other warm beverage)

Join us for a fun and new UU ritual of warmth, love and  
connectedness!

### Soul Work - 2021

We've had some great opportunities for connection and spiritual growth over the fall months. Our SGM group has been meeting faithfully to practice deep listening and reflect on monthly topics, the meditation group gathers every Monday for contemplation of a Dharma talk and time to breathe, Linda Karlen has offered forest walks and a group gathered to publicly grieve over climate destruction in November.

2021 brings with it a number of new opportunities to compliment these wonderful offerings.

Join fellow UCH members on a walk in a forest preserve or natural area. Get outside for fresh air, social contact, and reflection on our natural world. Covid-19 guidelines observed. Walks last approximately 2 hours and vary in location. Contact Linda Karlen at 630.674.9052 or [lkarlenwalks@gmail.com](mailto:lkarlenwalks@gmail.com)

#### Upcoming dates:

**February 7**  
**February 28**  
**March 28**  
**April 25**  
**May 16**

### Animal Ministry Recipe of the Month



#### Photos Request

Animal Ministry is pleased to provide a different recipe free of animal products every month for you to try! Have a suggestion for your favorite plant-based recipe? Send non-copyrighted website links to [UCHAnimalMinistry@gmail.com](mailto:UCHAnimalMinistry@gmail.com)

This recipe of the month is submitted by Taylor W. and is an Italian Farro Soup! She says it is a real crowd-pleaser: <https://dietitiandebbie.com/italian-farro-soup/>

Animal Ministry is also collecting photos of church members with their companion animals to include on our section of the church's website. Please submit to the above email!

## February Worship

### February 7: Living Our Values

As we strive to be authentic and honest people in a chaotic and confusing world, it can be challenging to live the values we believe we hold. There is an art and a science to first naming and then ranking the many,

sometimes competing values we hold. Join us to engage the question - which values truly guide my life? ~Rev Pam

#### **February 14: A Love Worth Defending**

As we gather on St Valentine's Day, we examine the different ways love can be experienced and expressed in our lives. What is your love language? How can being really clear about what is important to you help you have better connections with those around you? ~Rev Pam

#### **February 21: Greed - Still a Deadly Sin?**

So many actions have been long agreed upon as undesirable and harmful to our communities. Since the 1980s, a "greed is good" mentality has overtaken our society. Can we recognize the wisdom of ages and agree to make greed bad again? ~Rev Pam

#### **February 28: Spoken Word - an Art for all of us**

Guest speaker Anita Jencks shares her love of spoken word with an exploration of the ways it lives in the world today.



zoom

## **Join us for Worship via Zoom**

The service will be uploaded to Youtube later. Past services are also available to watch on the church's Youtube Channel.



*Thrive with Pride*

AN INCLUSIVE ONLINE CAFE FOR OLDER ADULTS

## **Thrive with Pride Cafe Gatherings for LGBTQ+ Seniors**

### **UCH Tuesday Feb 16th - Discussion of Senior Rainbow Assistance Program.**

The December plenary featured the co-founders of Senior Rainbow Assistance Program, Jessica Jonckheere and Jennifer Jonckheere. Jessica presented on the history and mission of Senior Rainbow, and we had a Q&A session after the presentation.

Click here to view the presentation on our YouTube channel.

Details: Thrive with Pride Café

Time: Feb 16, 2021 11:00 AM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom

Meeting [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82329996123?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82329996123?pwd=RnhjdTlUSXlhL3E2R3I1a1ZTK211Zz09)

[pwd=RnhjdTlUSXlhL3E2R3I1a1ZTK211Zz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82329996123?pwd=RnhjdTlUSXlhL3E2R3I1a1ZTK211Zz09)

Meeting ID: 823 2999 6123

Passcode: 616471

Age Options created Thrive with Pride Cafes to combat social isolation among LGBTQ+ older adults. This network of community sites provides social support and vital information to LGBTQ+ older adults and caregivers in suburban Cook County.

Thrive with Pride Cafes are envisioned as safe spaces for older adults and caregivers to learn more about benefits, share their stories and discuss topics that matter in a safe and affirming environment.

### **February 2021: Advanced Planning to Protect Your Choices**

Join us live on Zoom on Tuesday, February 23 at 11am! Kelly Rice of Howard Brown Health's Aging Well program will join us to discuss how you can discern, document, and protect your future, with simple tools that make advanced planning easy and safe.

Click **HERE** to join us via Zoom on February 23 at 11am. You can also join by phone! Call (312) 626-6799 and enter Meeting ID 966 6129 4106 when prompted.

## Update from the BOT President Bob Daniel Wayman

Greetings from the Board of Trustees. It's been a busy January and I would like to share the fun and challenging work we have been doing.

With the beginning of the new year, the board kicked off planning for the next church year. We face important decisions about church leadership and budget priorities as we enter the budget and pledge cycles and we want to bring the best possible insights and perspective to those decisions.

To start this process the board is developing a five-year vision for our church. A strong vision allows us to focus on our most critical needs in a forward-looking rather than reactive way. This will inherently be a provisional vision subject to revision as circumstances change and it will evolve as circumstances and our insights evolve. It is actually a starting point for conversations with the church community and staff to incorporate your insights and perspectives as we develop a church-wide vision and budget. A clear view of where we want to go will also provide the best possible view of what we expect of our minister and staff.

To develop our vision the board started by considering the larger context that the church operates in. We considered the public health, social, economic, political, and environmental challenges our communities and members face. We followed up by discussing the current state of the church, considering its strengths and weaknesses. With our starting point laid out, we moved on to brainstorming what we would like to see in the future version of our church. Based on the future we wanted to see we then focused on defining the capabilities we will need to achieve our vision. Over the next few weeks, we will complete this process by identifying the first steps on the journey that need to be incorporated into the plan for the coming year. We will also develop a plan for collecting and incorporating your insights and vision in order to develop a church-wide vision.

We have a wonderful church with thoughtful, insightful, and caring members. At this critical time in our nation and world, I believe we have important contributions to make in our communities and congregation's lives. While there are many challenges in front of us, I am excited by all of the possibilities of what we can do together. There are great things ahead of us and we have everything we need to accomplish them.



## UCH Music in the time of COVID

Like everyone involved in keeping UCH programs engaging and inspiring during the pandemic, musicians have been challenged. Thanks to the talents of Music Coordinator Jamie Pastman, the challenge has been met. Not only has he added his creative piano arrangements of hymns, pop, and classical music but he has also composed lovely music as well. As if that's not enough, he's learned the technical skill of weaving videos and live performance into each service.

The Celebration Singers love singing together in one room, but have summoned their courage and virtually recorded lovely music on Zoom for Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve, with the help of Jamie and K. Mooney. We will continue to provide virtual music while eagerly awaiting the time when we can be together again. Completing these vocal contributions are the solo and family gems from John Cooperrider; K Mooney; Tim Hays and his son, Eric; the Teppema and Budziak families. And who can forget the lovely flute solos from Carolyn May. Remember the children singing Jingle Bells before Christmas --and Nora and Luke Makdad playing flawless piano? We so appreciate these gifts of music from our church family. They'll keep us inspired until our family is back in our church home.



## A Little Help From Your Friends...



The pandemic crisis has been going on for many long months now and even with an end in sight, many folks have been affected in ways great and small. If you are facing challenges right now, know that your church is here to help. An emergency relief fund exists at all times for church members experiencing financial difficulties.

Help with groceries, utilities or other unexpected events is available by contacting [Rev Pam](#). You are loved and cared for. If you are in trouble, let us know so we can help. That's what community is for!

## Monthly Share the Plate: Third Unitarian Food Pantry



## Third Unitarian Food Pantry

The ongoing pandemic continues to create food insecurity for too many of our fellow humans. Third Unitarian Church is located within the Austin neighborhood of Chicago and has created a food pantry to support their neighbors. The need is great. Please be generous in supporting their good work.

You can donate through our website or by mailing a check to UCH, 17 W Maple, Hinsdale, IL 60521 - mark Feb Food Pantry in the memo line.

## Who Should You Call?

January's Touchstone gave a detailed explanation of our new staffing structure and the reasons for change over the past year. Please read about it [here](#) if you still have questions. UCH is in a process of evolving to fit the

changing needs and opportunities presented by the march of time. The chart below illustrates the staff member covering each area. You are always welcome to contact [Rev Pam](#) or [Pam Fodor](#) if you have questions.

Staff Member	Support Area	Contact information
Rev Pam Rumancik	Worship, Pastoral Care, Theological exploration, general support	<a href="mailto:minister@hinsdaleunitarian.org">minister@hinsdaleunitarian.org</a> (440) 570-9812
Pam Fodor	Religious Education – All ages Membership, Caring Committee, Space Sharing / Events	<a href="mailto:re@hinsdaleunitarian.org">re@hinsdaleunitarian.org</a> (630) 323-2885 ext 110
Lily Field	Bookkeeping – Pledge reports, reimbursements	<a href="mailto:finance@hinsdaleunitarian.org">finance@hinsdaleunitarian.org</a> (630) 323-2885
John Cooperrider	Heating/cooling issues, property maintenance	<a href="mailto:grounds@hinsdaleunitarian.org">grounds@hinsdaleunitarian.org</a> (630) 435-0164
Cherita Axel	Communications – articles for News & Notes and Touchstone, Press releases, Facebook events	<a href="mailto:communications@hinsdaleunitarian.org">communications@hinsdaleunitarian.org</a> <a href="mailto:socialmedia@hinsdaleunitarian.org">socialmedia@hinsdaleunitarian.org</a> (224) 388-0957
Jamie Pastman	Musician, Worship Technology	<a href="mailto:music@hinsdaleunitarian.org">music@hinsdaleunitarian.org</a> (847) 651-4324
Julia Beckman	Choir Director – joining choir, ideas for musical events	<a href="mailto:choirdirector@hinsdaleunitarian.org">choirdirector@hinsdaleunitarian.org</a> (630) 605-7069

Due to continued high Covid rates, our staff is working from home and the office will remain closed.

We look forward to vaccinations and the opportunity to be with you again soon!



## Staff Info & On-Site Days:

<b>Director of Programs:</b>	Pam Fodor - <a href="mailto:RE@hinsdaleunitarian.org">RE@hinsdaleunitarian.org</a>	<i>Tuesday</i>
<b>Bookkeeper:</b>	Lily Field - <a href="mailto:Finance@hinsdaleunitarian.org">Finance@hinsdaleunitarian.org</a>	<i>Wednesday</i>
<b>Minister:</b>	Rev Pam Rumancik - <a href="mailto:Minister@hinsdaleunitarian.org">Minister@hinsdaleunitarian.org</a>	<i>Thursday - by Appt</i>
<b>Facilities Manager:</b>	John Cooperrider - <a href="mailto:Grounds@hinsdaleunitarian.org">Grounds@hinsdaleunitarian.org</a>	<i>Friday - as needed</i>
<b>Choir Director:</b>	Julia Beckman - <a href="mailto:ChoirDirector@hinsdaleunitarian.org">ChoirDirector@hinsdaleunitarian.org</a>	
<b>Music Facilitator:</b>	Jamie Pastman - <a href="mailto:Music@hinsdaleunitarian.org">Music@hinsdaleunitarian.org</a>	
<b>Social Media Manager:</b>	Cherita Axel - <a href="mailto:Socialmedia@hinsdaleunitarian.org">Socialmedia@hinsdaleunitarian.org</a>	
<b>News &amp; Notes:</b>	<a href="mailto:Communications@hinsdaleunitarian.org">Communications@hinsdaleunitarian.org</a>	
<b>Touchstone:</b>	<a href="mailto:uchtouchstone@gmail.com">uchtouchstone@gmail.com</a>	
<b>Board President:</b>	Bob Daniel-Wayman - <a href="mailto:President@hinsdaleunitarian.org">President@hinsdaleunitarian.org</a>	

