compassion & kindness towards oneself are intrinsically woven into \textbf{M I N D F U L \textsc{ness}}

—Thich Nhat Hanh
FROM THE EDITOR
by Brittany Crawford, Communications Director

Throughout April, we’ll focus on “becoming a people of mindfulness.” Sunday, April 25, is also the start of Candidating Week, and we meet the candidate who will potentially join the Rev. Kelly Crocker as a minister of equal standing. Please mark your calendars for this important week in the life of our congregation, and be sure to join us virtually on Sunday, May 2, at 11:30 am for the parish meeting where the vote will take place. Learn more in the article included by the search committee, and check out all their updates and documents at www.fusmadison.org/search.

As we cultivate the practice of mindfulness, we’ve included the mandala below you can print out and color. The Treehouse Rock mandala was designed by Varda K. and made available through mondaymandala.com. If printing isn’t an option, check out the options of online mandalas at www.colormandala.com.
For years, Kelly taught the practice of mindfulness through a curriculum on kindness to kindergartners at her sons’ school. She would tell the children that mindfulness is simply being aware of what is happening right now. When she would stop and ask, “where are you right now?” she would be amazed at their deep insights. Some would say they were still at breakfast thinking about an argument with a sibling. Others would say they were already at the weekend thinking about a sleepover at a grandparent’s house. Many were often thinking about lunch or recess. It was always amazing how quickly these little ones understood our mind’s tendency to be anywhere but in this present moment.

One of the best parts of the year would be the mindful walk the class would take on the first nice day of spring to become aware of all they see, hear, smell, and feel. The children would hear the birds, feel the breeze, smell the freshness in the air, and speak of feeling happy and peaceful and alive. When asked where they were in that moment, there was always one answer: Here. Kelly remembers thinking that these 5- and 6-year-olds were so much wiser than she would ever be.

Teacher and author James Baraz says, “Mindfulness is simply being aware of what is happening right now without wishing it were different; enjoying the pleasant without holding on when it changes (which it will); being with the unpleasant without fearing it will always be this way (which it won’t).”

It is a very human tendency to want to hold onto that which is pleasant and to avoid anything that will bring us pain. Yet, in our attempts to avoid discomfort, we inevitably make things infinitely more difficult. The better path, all the studies show, is to learn how to sit with what is, to learn how to pause, pay attention, and breathe.

Many practices can help strengthen your mindfulness muscles: meditation, yoga, journaling, eating, or walking practices. The University of Massachusetts mindfulness training program reminds us that this isn’t something we have to learn from scratch. All of us have had experiences of being 100% present to this moment and this moment only without allowing our thoughts to travel without us, or layer on our interpretations or judgments. They say, “Fortunately, mindfulness is not something you have to ‘get’ or acquire. It is already within you—a deep internal resource available and patiently waiting to be released and used in the service of learning, growing, and healing.”

Mindfulness is already within you. It reminds us of the way Jesus described the realm of God, already within you. That teacher told us that it is within us, the size of a tiny seed, yet it grows into a large tree that could become a shelter with its shade. Even the tiniest practice of pausing, paying attention, and taking a deep breath can have long-lasting and far-reaching effects.

In the coming days, may we each find ways to increase our present-moment awareness, paying attention to just where we are now. Then maybe, just maybe, we can become almost as wise as kindergartners.

In gratitude and hope,
Kelly and Roger

Join us for a retreat on EXPLORING MINDFULNESS
More information on page 7
This year, during the ministerial search when issues of compensation are particularly timely, the Personnel Committee and Board of Trustees have prioritized discernment around equitable staff compensation. Together, we’re reflecting on the following question: Absent sufficient additional revenue, should FUS have a smaller staff that is compensated at levels reflected in the UUA Compensation Standards or a larger staff that is not compensated to meet the Standards?

At the February 21 Parish Meeting, Personnel Committee Chairperson Tim Conroy provided an overview of our current efforts and intentions and invited the congregation to a Parish Listening Session held on March 14. During the session, we further explored the ethical issue around staff compensation and heard your wide range of questions and opinions surrounding the potential adoption of denomination standards for compensation levels. A similar listening session was held in mid-March with the staff. Since that time, we’ve compiled a list of frequently asked questions that emerged from those three meetings to provide information we hope you’ll find helpful in our continued discernment process. This comprehensive document can be found by clicking here or visiting www.fusmadison.org/governance. I’d urge everyone to take a few minutes to read and consider the responses provided.

For those of you strapped for time, I’d like to call to your attention one of the questions which seems particularly essential for all our members to consider, “What are the staff’s thoughts on this issue?” I believe that ensuring representation of those predominantly impacted by a decision or policy is the guiding principle of effective justice work. That said, the reply below was crafted by the Board of Trustees and is based on what we heard at the Staff Listening Session. It does not account for the wide and diverse range of feelings and opinions of our staff.

“On the one hand, staff appreciate that the Board of Trustees is challenging the congregation to adopt a concrete plan to move toward fair compensation. On the other, staff do not believe that there is an adequate understanding and appreciation for the importance and value of their work. Even in normal times, their work often takes place outside the public eye. The level of commitment, resilience, and responsiveness of the staff have been especially tested over the last year. Staff appreciate acknowledgment of their work and look forward to the time that they can see volunteers once again engaged in the ongoing work of the church. At the same time, their compensation should be brought into line with the skills and complexity of their work, and with the value of having staff whose compensation allows them to support themselves and their families.”

Synchronistically, I am writing this article on March 24, and Gov. Tony Evers reminded his social media followers that it is Equal Pay Day. He shared that “In 2019, Wisconsin women, on average, made 81 cents for every dollar paid to their male peers. This gap is even worse for Black, Latina, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and Native American women. It’s time for equal pay for equal work.” As an employer, FUS is not immune from this unfortunate precedent in inequality. I believe it is imperative that the congregation, staff, and Board of Trustees continue to grapple with and reach decisions on policies and procedures that address inequities with our principles at the forefront of our minds and hearts. As president-elect, I look forward to keeping you engaged with and informed on our progress.
The Ministerial Search Committee recently completed a long weekend with each of our three pre-candidates. The process was the same for each: a social gathering with the search committee, the candidate, and Kelly on Friday; a three-hour interview on Saturday; and a wrap-up meeting on Sunday afternoon. Each pre-candidate conducted a worship service at a neutral pulpit. Additionally, Kelly had a lengthy conversation with each pre-candidate.

Interview questions were based on the information you shared in the survey and cottage meetings. Your input was invaluable. Each pre-candidate also had questions for us, a good reminder that this is a two-way interview process.

What happens next?
The search committee will hear Kelly’s impressions and thoughts. After discussing, we will continue our discernment by ranking the three pre-candidates. We will send those rankings to the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Transitions Office. Our pre-candidates will likewise do the same for the congregations with whom they interviewed. Finally, the Transitions Office will notify us of mutual selections, and we will make an offer and finalize the terms of the contract with the candidate.

At that time, we will announce the candidate, and you will then have a chance to get to know them during Candidating Week (April 25-May 2). During that week, our candidate will conduct the service on Sunday, April 25, meet with as many of us as possible in virtual meetings, and conduct a second service on Sunday, May 2.

Following the May 2 service, there will be a special parish meeting to vote on the candidate. Members will vote “yes” or “no” on the following question: Does FUS want to call this candidate to be our minister of equal standing with Rev. Kelly Crocker? Typically, a ministerial candidate will not accept the call unless the vote is near-unanimous. If we do not have a near-unanimous vote and the minister does not accept the call, the search process begins anew.

This is an exciting time ripe with possibilities for our congregation as we look toward our future. Candidating Week is very important. The candidate we will present to you has been selected through a long, intentional, and intensive process. Rev. Kelly, Rev. Roger, and the Board of Trustees join us with high hopes that all FUS members will schedule a time to watch the two services, attend at least one meeting with the candidate, and vote at the special parish meeting on May 2.

Everyone will have the chance to sign up for a time to meet with the candidate. Look for the Candidating Weekend schedule and sign-ups to be released by email the week of April 12!

Mark Your Calendars:
CANDIDATING WEEK
APRIL 25-MAY 2

Catch up on all the search news at www.fusmadison.org/search
Looking forward has seldom felt so good as it does these days while we plan for next fall’s classes. First on the agenda is a name change for our program! Children’s Religious Education is now Children’s Religious Exploration—a subtle change, but one that profoundly reflects our program’s commitment toward nurturing curiosity and collaborative learning. When we’re lucky, we have a child for eleven years before they age out of our program. During that time, we hope to provide many opportunities for them to explore the galaxies of ideas and beliefs that surround us. It is a constant quest to find meaning, connection, justice, and self-awareness, and to put our gleanings into living our UU values.

Next on the agenda: CRE registration. We are proceeding on the assumption that we will once again have in-person classes this fall. Registration will begin on Thursday, April 1, at 8 am. You can register online at www.fusmadison.org/cre/classes. If you are only interested in virtual classes this fall, please email me at leslier@fusmadison.org with your child(ren)’s name and age(s). If there is enough interest and volunteers are available, we will be happy to make a virtual option available.

And with the return to in-person classes, we are also planning to return to pre-pandemic levels of volunteer needs. That means that we will once again need about 100 volunteer teachers! If you’ve been missing the intoxicating energy and curiosity of children and would enjoy being a part of a community that nurtures our children within a UU-framework, then please consider becoming a CRE teacher. You can learn more about becoming a teacher by following the web link above and going to page 13 of our brochure. Or, please feel free to contact me. You can sign up to teach when you register your child for CRE. No kids to register? Then please send me an email about your interest in teaching. You don’t need to have a child registered in CRE to join forces with one of our wonderful teaching teams!

To say we are looking forward to seeing you all again this fall is an understatement. We can’t wait to get back to the business of exploring together, in person, in community!
Wheel of Life
It is with heavy hearts that we share the news of the passing of Denis Collins on February 25. Denis was a long-time lay minister here and you may remember his warm smile and welcoming presence on many Sunday mornings. We send our love to his family, Dianne, Seth, and Anna. Dick Goldberg recorded a podcast with Denis on the lessons he learned in his life and you can find that here: www.dickgoldbergradio.com/lessons-about-life. We are deeply grateful that Denis’s wisdom and compassion live on.

Candidating Week & Special Parish Meeting Announcement
Mark your calendars for this important week in the ministerial search process. The candidate will lead our virtual services with Rev. Kelly on Sunday, April 25, and Sunday, May 2. A special parish meeting will be called on Sunday, May 2, to vote on calling the candidate. More information about Candidating Week and how to participate will be emailed during the week of April 12.

First Friday Film on April 2 @ 5:45 pm
“Growing Cities” is a documentary film that examines the role of urban farming in America and asks how much power it has to change the way we eat. In their search for answers, Dan and Andrew take a road trip and meet the people who are challenging the way this country distributes its food. Limited to 300 participants. Click here to register by 5 pm on Friday, April 2. Link to film and after-film discussion will be sent to you by 5:15 pm on April 2 at the email you provide. Start film by 5:58 pm and be ready to join us for the after-film conversation led by local urban farming, food justice, and “Save the Farm” proponents at 7:30 pm. For more information, call Tim at 608-630-3633.

Relational Covenant Brainstorming Sessions
Wednesday, March 31, at 7 pm & Sunday, April 11, at 11:45 am
The Relational Covenant Task Force warmly welcomes everyone to attend one of the upcoming relational covenant brainstorming sessions. A relational covenant is a written articulation of how we at FUS aspire to interact with each other. Rather than a set of laws or rules, a relational covenant is a statement that can be used for individual and group self-reflection. A relational covenant will help us more consistently embody the beloved community by calling us back to mindfulness about how we interact with one another. These two 75-minute Zoom sessions are opportunities for everyone to brainstorm ideas for the relational covenant. The Task Force will take your ideas and create a draft statement. In May, we’ll have one or two rounds of sessions to invite your responses and suggestions for the draft covenant. If it feels like a document is emerging that generates a lot of enthusiasm, we’ll present that to the parish meeting in June. If you have questions, please contact Rev. Roger at rogerb@fusmadison.org. The Relational Covenant Task Force includes Esme Hill-Gorman, Ava Rochester, Ann Schaffer, Roz Woodward, and Roger Bertshausen.

Exploring Mindfulness: A Retreat with Revs. Roger and Kelly
Friday, April 9, 6:30 pm-8 pm & Saturday, April 10, 9 am-2:30 pm
Exploring mindfulness in daily life can assist us in connecting to the life within and around us. Instead of living in the virtual world of thoughts, beliefs, judgments, and stories, we can notice where we are in this moment and learn to meet whatever it is with open-hearted awareness. In these days of uncertainty, mindfulness can give us the tools to stay centered and find clarity and balance. We will join via Zoom to explore mindfulness through various practices. We will engage in both large and small group practice and discussions along with breaks from Zoom for time on our own for reflection. For more information, contact Janet Swanson at janets@fusmadison.org. Visit www.fusmadison.org/adult-re to register.
Friends of the Meeting House Annual Meeting
The Friends of the Meeting House will be holding a short Annual Meeting via Zoom on Sunday, April 18, at 4:30 pm to be followed by our normal monthly Board Meeting. There will be no speaker this year; however, we will brief Friends members on what we have been up to this past year and nominate a new President to be approved by the FUS Congregation at its Annual Meeting. Members, please participate as we need a quorum to conduct this business. Interested in joining the Friends and/or serving on the Board of the Friends? Please contact President Rose Detmer at rdetmer@charter.net or by calling 608-274-9858.

Freethinker’s Hall in Sauk City
The Free Congregation of Sauk County was recently featured in the *Wisconsin State Journal* about their recent historic building renovation. Our Minister Emeritus Max Gaebler assisted the congregation after he retired from FUS. Thanks to member Ann Smiley for sharing this story. [Click here to read the article.]

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**enough**

*Enough. These few words are enough. If not these words, this breath. If not this breath, this sitting here.*

*This opening to the life we have refused again and again until now. Until now.*

-David Whyte
A Month of Services
Sunday @ 10 am at www.fusmadison.org

Easter Sunday, April 4
“Easter Celebration for All Ages”
with Rev. Roger Bertschausen & Rev. Kelly Crocker

This story for the service will be “The Light Princess,” the story of a princess afflicted by weightlessness. She literally and figuratively gets her feet on the ground when she opens herself to grief and learns to love others and the earth. It’s a tale that resonates with Easter. All ages are warmly invited to join us! Music by Bach and Grieg, plus some Broadway, and a song sung by Water Protectors.

Sunday, April 11
“What We Can’t Unknow”
with Rev. Leslie Takahashi, Guest Minister

Join our Guest preacher Rev. Leslie Takahashi, as she explores what we now know and must grapple with in these reemergent times. The pandemic has only heightened our awareness of what we cannot unknow. In a time when religion in all its institutional forms is changing, how do we as progressive people of faith take the lessons now laid so clearly before us and turn them into concrete actions. Music by Beck, Handel, and Shelton.

Rev. Leslie Takahashi serves as Lead Minister of the Mt. Diablo Unitarian Church in Walnut Creek, CA, a congregation that has been expanding its focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion for almost a decade and a half. She is the past chair of the Commission on Institutional Change and one of the primary authors of Widening the Circle of Concern, the COiC’s plan for addressing the challenges of inclusion and hospitality. Leslie was also the 2019 Berry Street Lecturer and is currently turning that address, “Truth, Trauma and Transformation” into a book to be published by Skinner House. Leslie lives in Martinez, CA with two rescue bully breed dogs and enjoys visits with her adult children, Liam and Garner, and their partners. Oscar Theresa, her first grandchild born in January, is her current obsession.

Sunday, April 18
“All Music Sunday”
with FUS Music Staff, Choirs, & Members

All Music Sunday celebrates Earth Day with music by Rodgers & Hammerstein, Paul Simon, Stephen Paulus, Frank Tichelli, Moses Hogan, and others. Performances by Cherub Choir, Choristers, Teen Choir; a vocal octet, Rachel Avery; Terri Pepper; and music staff.

Sunday, April 25
Candidating Service with Mystery Guest

This will be the first of two worship services featuring the candidate who will potentially join the Rev. Kelly Crocker as Co-Minister of FUS! The name of the candidate will be revealed in the weeks before Candidating Week begins. Rev. Kelly will also be part of the service. Stay tuned!
What We Need Is Here

by Wendell Berry

Geese appear high over us, pass, and the sky closes. Abandon, as in love or sleep, holds them to their way, clear in the ancient faith: what we need is here. And we pray, not for new earth or heaven, but to be quiet in heart, and in eye, clear. What we need is here.