

Minister's Board Report

November 11th, 2022

Rev. Dr. Leon Dunkley

North Universalist Chapel Society

For Brave Lights information, please see the Brave Light Update which is attached.

Hats off to Sherry Belisle and her team! The Membership Committee has done a masterful job of gathering new members. We had a small gathering behind the church. We ate sandwiches and had fellowship. We exchanged names and laughter about our favorite soups. Then, I shared a bit about myself and my own path in Unitarian Universalism. I asked about their backgrounds and their hopes, their aspirations. They asked questions and I responded, hopefully in ways that inspired future questions.

The Membership Committee drew eleven names from a larger list of fifty candidates. These eleven names belonged to those who had expressed continued interest in North Chapel. Those people were invited to the three-session format that North Chapel has used in the past. That cycle of classes will have to be changed because of

the health issues that the leaders are struggling with. A strategy needs to be devised to approach those who have expressed interest in North Chapel but who have registered their interest only once or twice. I will be working with Sherry on that as we move forward.

After checking in with Diane, I have contracted with a musical group called Low Lily. They will be offering their talents on December 18th to help us with our Solstice Celebration.

Several of us are hurting right now. I have reached out pastorally to many of us who are hurting but surely not all. I need everyone's help. Please share with me (with their permission whenever possible) the names of people who are seeking pastoral care. It is time to resume the Healing Circles. I will meet with Joanne to work out a schedule.

I need your witness. I need your understanding and I need your help with something. Do you remember where you were on April 19th at about 5:00pm. I remember where I was. I remember where many of you were. I was at home. So were many of you. We were all online together and a jury in Minneapolis had just found Derek Chauvin guilty of the murder of George Floyd. I was barely able to stay on the

Zoom call. I had my microphone muted and the sound was turned down so that I could attend the meeting and listen to the news at the same time. When the judgment was handed down, I was numb...and depressed...and relieved...and quite a bit re-traumatized. I had a host of other feelings and emotions for which there is no language.

Years ago, I was asked to champion the work of racial justice as part of my ministry here at North Chapel. Doing that work through protest and social organizing is what non-religious, non-profits do. Doing that work by faith requires my best witness of the truth. It requires me to be vulnerable and honest in a way that serves the needs of this community and is accountable to those with whom I racially identify.

This process is fraught, complex, dangerous, tenuous, arduous and holy. We need to develop a means of sharing our understanding of the challenge that we face and the opportunity that is before us. TEDx HartlandHill was an early step on that journey. The first step goes back years ago to the challenge that Chris and Denise presented to me (for which I continue to exceedingly grateful). If we had the time, I would show you how quickly contemporary racism (or NewRacism) works in the world today. I would show how Nancy Grace

does it without ever offending anyone. I would show FOXNews does it the blink of an eye.

The success of this work requires me to be present to energies that were (and are) extremely harmful to me. This has an impacts on church life that are both positive and negative. Kathy and I began to explore this in our meeting last week. Clara and I have been in conversation about this for some time. I will be move forward intentionally to make this work real and beneficial to North Chapel. It will require a lot of trust from this community and, fortunately, we are wealthy in this respect. More later. Probably more than you bargained for.

The SE Program under Chloe Powell is flourishing, even in her absence. Many thanks to Monica Horowitz, Adrian Tans, Amy Wheeler, Claire Kowski and Blake Whitehead who have helped us or who were willing but unable to help us out with the care of our children.

At this year's UUMA—NNE Retreat, I was called upon to deliver the program and worship service for the bi-annual gathering of Unitarian Universalist ministers in Northern New England. It was wonderful.

Lastly, I have made an intense study of the By-Laws and I look forward to sharing the results with all of you. Huzzah!

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