



The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Waynesboro

Fall Retreat

Each fall, Unitarian Universalist ministers across the country, chapter by chapter of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association, have a retreat. Many of the chapters are geographically analogous to the old districts of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

When I lived in Illinois, my UUMA chapter was Central Midwest and our fall retreat was held at a Catholic retreat center on Lake Michigan near Racine Wisconsin. Here, I am part of the South East UUMA chapter, and our fall retreats are usually held at The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center, near Highlands, North Carolina.



The Mountain, as its name suggests, sits at the top of a mountain. It is remote. And it is not luxurious. The food is good, but not restaurant food. The lodgings are adequate, but mostly in shared cabins, rather than hotel rooms. Its position ensures that outside interruptions are few. And, in addition to its long views, the Mountain, sitting at 4,200 feet elevation and perched atop striking granite

cliffs, is nestled in an ancient dwarf white oak wind forest. It is a great place to be.

But don't let the term "retreat" fool you. The four days of retreat do include social time and down time, which are crucial. Before bedtime, we may sing popular or even silly songs around a fireplace fire – if the forest is not too dry, making a fire dangerous. In spare hours, we may organize a hike on the retreat grounds or maybe even bundle into a couple of cars to go for ice cream in the nearby town.

But much of the four days of retreat are spent in continuing education, in sharing of ideas both formally and in casual conversations, in giving each other support for our professional and personal challenges. Our continuing education this time is on inclusion strategies for supporting persons with mental illness and dementia, presented and led by Nate Cannon.

Last year, I was unable to attend the SEUUMA fall retreat because of Walter's needs. But this year, in the pandemic, the retreat has gone 100% virtual, using Zoom as the technology for gathering. So this week I've been signing onto Zoom for days of lectures and presentations, large and small discussion groups, and worship with my fellow Unitarian Universalist ministers from Nashville to Atlanta to Fredericksburg. It is good to be together, even virtually.

Those who have a strong tolerance for online engagement gather in the early morning for spiritual practice and/or late in the evening

for social interactions. But we don't have meals together. And we are not engaging with each other casually in the in-between times, as we did on the Mountain. Like everybody else, we're doing our best in an unusual time. And like everybody else, if it weren't for an amazing but imperfect technology, we couldn't be together this year. We do what we can to protect each other in this unusual time.

Peace and Blessings,
Rev. Paul

The UU Church of Birmingham has made us aware of their film, *Bending the Arc*, about the struggle for voting rights for Black Alabamans in the 1960s and the important role Unitarians played as allies and martyrs to the movement. Just when Black voters have been instrumental in saving our democracy in 2020, the film is an important reminder of the sacrifices that so many have made.

This is the link to the 3-minute trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rb5zG9EFcGI>

Here is the link to the full movie:

<https://youtu.be/lfb0yevpsAA>



Many of our UU members and others came out on Saturday to support the UUFW/Red Cross blood drive. The Red Cross has reported that 29 units of blood were collected, seven more than our goal!

