



Rev. Mandy Beal
Senior Minister

When the staff and I set the topic for this month's newsletter, we had a rift. So far, we've all put out suggestions for topics and easily come to a consensus. This month, it just wasn't going to happen. Our more optimistic staffers gave good arguments for why the topic should be "Release": we're coming out of lockdown and it's great to be out in the word! And our more pessimistic folks also gave good arguments for "Re-entry": but we're coming back into the time before lockdown, which was and still is a time for caution! After some back-and-forth, I suggested that we use both writing prompts and approach it from our own perspective.

I don't want to shock anyone, but I was in the pessimistic camp. (I like to think of myself as being pragmatic, but if the shoe fits...) My resonance with the word "re-entry" has to do with my childhood connection to the space shuttle program. My dad was a ground navigator for NASA. His job was to ensure that the space shuttle's orbit was in the right location over the earth. He was responsible for that work during many shuttle missions. I remember turning on the local cable-access NASA channel to see him sitting at a workstation in mission control, just like the ones you see in the movies.

When the phrase "re-entry" was suggested for the newsletter topic, I immediately said, "We should do re-entry. That's the most dangerous time for the space shuttle." There was a good-natured peal of laughter. I know that's a weird thing to say, but it just popped out. But it's true! Space shuttles were at a particular risk of malfunction when re-entering earth's atmosphere. According to my dad, it was harder for NASA scientists to solve the difficulty of re-entering the atmosphere than to leave it. I assume that's true, but you know how dads are; there might have been a joke in there that I didn't appreciate at the time.

One of the things I really like about BUC is the high population of engineers. I grew up surrounded by engineers and love the mindset of relentlessly working on a problem, considering all possible solutions, until it's solved. The biggest issue with shuttles re-entering the earth's atmosphere was the heat. NASA engineers solved this problem by designing tiles that were incredibly light, but insulated up to 1200 degrees Fahrenheit. These tiles were a remarkable feat of engineering. Innovation and creativity are nearly universal engineering values. So is prudence.

I really do hope that you are enjoying greater freedoms as we come out of quarantine. But, as the resident Eeyore of our staff team, and someone who cares very much about each of you, I encourage you to remain cautious in the risks that you are taking during this re-entry period. Go have some fun, but please wear a mask.



Abha Dearing
*Co-Director
 Music Ministry*

Is it still 2020? These few months have seemed like a few years, and all of us seem to have aged significantly since then; some of us physically and some of us emotionally. That is not all bad—it just is. The wisdom and treasure I gained by being home is invaluable. I have discovered a new level of introspection, patience, and simplicity that would not have occurred if life had been “normal.” Outside, there is a hopefulness in the air, a promise of summer fun and relaxation as we greet our neighbors and friends who emerge from quarantine like bears, newly awakened from hibernation.

On the one hand, we want to rush towards each other in a slow-motion movie montage and on the other hand, we almost give ourselves whiplash by braking at the people we love, knowing we as a species and culture are not out of the woods yet. COVID-19 has wreaked havoc on our lives and I vacillate in a quagmire of intense emotions: anger, frustration, sadness, fear, hope, elation, and more, trying to be content with the significant progress we have made from full-quarantine to partially venturing into the world again and seeing those we have missed.

This is limbo. Sure, we can breathe easy, from 6-10 feet away from anyone outside our household. I believe in science and the qualified experts tell us that we must remain vigilant. However, I travel in many different circles with schools, sports, church, and social and family connections. Why are there any conflicting directions at all? It seems obvious that we should err on the side of caution as we re-enter this world and all of the unknowns it hides. Can't we learn from other countries and their loss of life? Why is there massive distrust of the news media? Since when did opinion supersede fact? And yet, the majority of people I see DO NOT wear masks outside their homes. They DO NOT stay away from each other. They have gone back to their lives, pre-pandemic.

My glass IS half-full. I do not long for life pre-pandemic. My extrovert side has become better acquainted with my introvert side. Life was too busy. But what will life post-pandemic bring?

I speak for Steven and myself when I say that life is still plenty busy, with several jobs and two teenagers; we just don't have to drive around quite as much. And, to be socially responsible, we must limit our interactions to a small amount. However, there are still so many uncertainties and many questions to ponder. What will life be like in August, September, to start the church and school year? How long will these social-distancing measures last and when can they be eased? What will all of this mean for singing and music-making in the long run? And what will be the methods by which we make music and meaningful connections in this new world? I feel strongly that the introspection-time I gained during this experience will not be lost. Instead, I hope that it gives us the impetus to embark on this new adventure, in this new territory, with safety and well-being in the forefront of our minds. We will be able to look back on this time with dignity and clear conscience that we did the right thing, and that our community sustained us so we could come out stronger in the end.



Steven Dearing
Co-Director
Music Ministry

At first thought I had really nothing to say about release and re-entry, and then it became clear: that's what we were expecting at the time this topic was chosen.

Now, things look a lot different. Re-entry looks like it will be even further away. The news looks bleak, people are ignoring the fact that the pandemic isn't over, or maybe even that it ever began, and it's taking all my composure to not walk up to people and ask them "what's wrong with you?"

As I sit in a hotel room in Indianapolis writing this, my heart breaks for my son, the newbie of his baseball team, whose dad won't allow him to go play with his teammates in the pool between games. Rahkesh is the only kid not there, and although I know he understands, he feels even more like the odd kid out. I have to try to release in the fact that my kid is here to play ball, not win over peers, because he has zero to prove to them.

And there's my re-entry: that I'm going to do what I think is right to try to keep my family as healthy as possible, and come November, when some type of sanity returns to the White House, I'll feel I did the right thing.



Joanne Copeland
Bookkeeper

Re-entry and/or Release were the topic choices for July. I'm going to go with Re-entry.

As our state was doing so well under the guidance of Governor Whitmer, the talk of lifting limits was exciting and something to look forward to. I had mixed feelings about going out to places with other people. Especially those people who do not follow the rules.

I have been able to visit and have a beer in the backyard at my sister's place with the social distance of 6 feet, and it was great to see her and her husband, and of course their dog, Porter. There was always a drawback though. I didn't want to drink too much for fear of having to need the bathroom. You see, their daughter is expecting a baby any day now (she'll probably be born by the time this goes to print), and they pretty much have been under house arrest in order to be able to see and hold their first grandchild. I was terrified if I had used the bathroom and I had the virus and didn't know it, yikes! I would never be able to live with myself if they got it from me. And there is the hitch about re-entry. Everything is still unknown. The numbers are beginning to rise. Is that because of Memorial Day and the protest marches when so many people let their guard down?

So, I will continue to stay safe, wash my hands frequently with soap and hot water, wear my mask, and social distance. For I, too, would like to see that baby, but unfortunately, I believe it will be at a distance and no holding her until there is a cure or a viable vaccine. Alas, someday...



Valerie Phillips
Administrator

After reflecting on my thoughts and feelings regarding our re-entry into society during a still very-real pandemic, I was surprised at what I discovered. I am full of questions and looking for answers. I am taking in all the information I can and trying to process it all. I am full of confusion and anxiety. This is exactly the same way I felt when everything was shutting down. It turns out that nothing has changed. My feelings are the same, because COVID-19 still exists in the world.

Fortunately, in my reading, I found these feelings are normal. They're even expected in these situations. I have learned that taking these uncomfortable feelings and trying to make them positive can help me feel more in control. For example, my anxiety about potentially catching the virus tells me I need to wear a mask and distance from others to help prevent catching it and spreading it to others. I am okay with taking these types of health precautions. I am being responsible, setting safe boundaries, and being respectful of myself and of others. I noticed as I've started venturing out to more public spaces that conversations

with others sound more polite. "May I sit here? Where may I set my belongings down? Are you comfortable with the space between us?" It shows concern and respect for the health and safety of myself and others.

In a half-joking, half-serious way, I made the decision fairly early on that I am not going to get sick from this virus. Nor am I going to give it to anyone else around me. Life is different now. I do the best I can to navigate it day-to-day. I grieve for a changed world, but I also find comfort in the good that has come from the changes too. I feel it is important to continue making new connections and nurturing our existing ones with one another. I will continue to share my love with others everyday, and remember to take time for myself, too.



Marcia Mahood
Rental Coordinator

Catch-and-Release

In the middle of the pandemic, our good friends moved to Boise, Idaho at the beginning of May. It was a very stressful time for them—coordinating movers, staying distant from them, figuring out where to leave donated goods (in our basement, until the next Rummage), planning a cross-country drive, and borrowing our car one afternoon so they would not have to sit in the car dealership while their vehicle was getting serviced. Throughout this time, however, our friend Kosta spoke longingly of the wonderful fly fishing available within the Boise city limits. He was so excited about the prospects of fly fishing practically from his back door. When the topic of “release and re-entry” came up, my mind kept going to the phrase “catch-and-release” as I envisioned Kosta in his waders in

the cool Idaho waters, casting for brown trout. It sounds appealing.

I enjoyed the time of quiet during the stay-at-home order. I wondered what would be different after this time. In the words of Mary Oliver, the patron saint of UU poetry, am I living my “one wild and precious life”? It was a time of introspection and reflection about what really matters in my life.

So now we’ve been “released” after a long period of staying at home. And yet, are we truly released? Each time I venture out, I have to remember to be alert and present. And yet, my instincts are to be gleeful. Getting my hair cut was a highlight of the day. Seeing friends and coworkers in 3D made me gleeful. Going to our first backyard barbeque outing is something I will remember forever. It was an auction event (thanks, Eric and Annette), was safe and carefully planned, had great conversation, and made me forget the world for a few hours.

And then today, in the middle of writing this, I received some news of concern. A good friend’s 20-something daughter has just tested positive for Covid. Her daughter has no symptoms, thankfully, but the family is concerned, as they had a large family gathering with an elderly father, so everyone is now waiting on test results.

So I think of this time as more like the catch-and-release that fisherman practice, as opposed to release and re-entry. Except perhaps it is release and catch. We think we are off the hook, and that things will ease up, and then the news of a positive test brings me up short. I am not off the hook yet. My fear is of complacency. We are released back into the world, but we need to maintain our vigilance, continue to remember the rules, and be careful. Stay safe, my dear BUC friends, and don’t let your guard down. Enjoy your time of release, but remember there are hooks out there—don’t get caught.



Sara Constantakis
Communications Coordinator

“The pandemic hasn’t changed the things you can control, those things are the same. We were just under the illusion that we controlled more.” -
@LaJethro Jenkins on Twitter

The above quote encapsulates the biggest lesson I’ve had to learn, and am still learning, about the Covid-19 pandemic. In the beginning, while we were under the state-mandated stay-at-home order, there were clear lines around what we as individuals could control in our own lives. We couldn’t leave the house for anything but essential activity. We had to cook all our meals at home and entertain ourselves and our families at home. We had to connect with people and conduct both business and social meetings over the phone or video chat instead of in person. Our worlds were smaller, and

so we had to distill what we could control, like our news and social media consumption, our reactions, our self-care routines. We’re in a different place now, almost four months later. Some “release” has happened, meaning that some restrictions have been lifted, but the virus is still very much with us. And so I find myself feeling, again, about the same as I did in the beginning, with that same grasping for what I can control, wondering how much control I had to begin with.

For me, release and re-entry are inextricably linked in these times. In terms of the pandemic restrictions, release is defined by re-entry. And release may not mean much if re-entry isn’t possible or advisable. As we’ve seen in news reports, the virus is continuing to spread as different areas of the country “release” people back to “normal” activities, with surges that are even overwhelming hospital capacity again in some places. This means that “re-entry” is complicated or even non-existent for the many people who are not able to return to public activities due to medical conditions and other vulnerabilities. Those vulnerable folx are in our immediate and extended families, our workplaces, our friend groups, and our church congregations. This is why those of us who have “re-entered,” to whatever extent, must stay diligent about washing our hands, and staying six feet apart, and wearing masks during those times when we are away from our homes. In our public discourse, mask-wearing has unfortunately become a divisive political issue. Some even frame it as a “personal choice.” To me, there is no alternative, no choice in caring for people fiercely and carefully, with an abundance of caution and over our own comfort. It’s there in our first principle about the inherent worth and dignity of every person. We need that principle more than ever right now. The whole world does.

I do have control over what I release and re-enter within myself. So, some things I am trying to release: fear, anxiety, anger, sadness, hurt. Some things I am trying to re-enter: hope, calm, inner peace, self-love. It’s daily work.



Bruce Webber
*Outgoing President,
 Board of Trustees*

As I look back on my time as President, I would like to thank the Board, Rev. Mandy, and the congregation for their encouragement and support. The work was both challenging and rewarding. I grew as a person, and although this was uncomfortable at times, I am grateful.

As I leave this role and look ahead, I am thinking more about the existential threats our world faces and the increasing polarization in our society. Our UU faith provides ways to meet these challenges. The seven principles offer a framework we can use when encountering new situations and deciding how to act.

I appreciate that our living tradition draws from a number of sources, each of which has truth, but not all the truth. As I try to

make sense of the world, I am learning to see other people's perspectives in a similar way—as true, but partially so.

Curiosity is a powerful tool. What is compelling about another person's perspective? What truths does it contain? Can I hold this person's perspective while continuing to hold my own? Is there a new, more complex perspective which includes both?

The statement "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them" has been attributed to Albert Einstein. Whether he said this or not, it is a crucial insight.

In faith,

Bruce Webber

Join the BUC Community Facebook Group

Do you ever wish there was a friendly corner of Facebook where you could converse with your favorite UUs? We have just the place: the BUC Community Facebook group. This is a private discussion group for the members and friends of Birmingham Unitarian Church. Ask a question, discuss an important issue, or share a joy. Let's talk!

To join, search for "BUC Community" on Facebook or follow the link below (you must have a Facebook account to join):

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/BUCCommunity/>

Calendar of Events

All church events and meetings take place on Zoom (with the exception of the Wednesday chats on Facebook Live). For resources on downloading and using Zoom, click [here](#). If you're part of a private committee or group that is meeting on Zoom, your organizer will send you the Zoom access info for your meeting.

To join an event, simply click on the meeting's Zoom link. If you're not using a computer to access Zoom, you can dial into meetings with your phone by calling the number and entering the meeting ID and password listed below (press # if asked for a participant ID).

Church-wide events are listed a week or so in advance on our [website](#), under Calendar of Events. New events are being added all the time, so watch your email and our Facebook page!

Weekly Events

Weekly Worship Service

Sundays | 10:30 a.m.

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/196899450?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/196899450?pwd=RXJuNFpHdWMraENaZmFDWFVaSExqUT09)

[pwd=RXJuNFpHdWMraENaZmFDWFVaSExqUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/196899450?pwd=RXJuNFpHdWMraENaZmFDWFVaSExqUT09)

To join by phone:

dial: 253-215-8782

meeting ID: 196-899-450

password: 882131

Sunday Discussion Group

Sundays | 3:00 p.m.

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/328155806?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/328155806?pwd=SXFESjhnaJhzc1lPQUhVlK0UGZ3QT09)

[pwd=SXFESjhnaJhzc1lPQUhVlK0UGZ3QT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/328155806?pwd=SXFESjhnaJhzc1lPQUhVlK0UGZ3QT09)

To join by phone:

dial: 253-215-8782

meeting ID: 328-155-806

password: 531879

Coffee with the Minister

Mondays | 10:00 a.m.

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/445635030?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/445635030?pwd=ZXZoQndmRW1BdkZaNIzqYjV2UGQ2UT09)

[pwd=ZXZoQndmRW1BdkZaNIzqYjV2UGQ2UT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/445635030?pwd=ZXZoQndmRW1BdkZaNIzqYjV2UGQ2UT09)

To join by phone:

dial: 253-215-8782

meeting ID: 445-635-030

password: 196960

Living by Heart

Mondays | 1:30 p.m.

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/332255974?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/332255974?pwd=eDBNbGMxRTZaVUJVT0pUdDBYWTFkUT09)

[pwd=eDBNbGMxRTZaVUJVT0pUdDBYWTFkUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/332255974?pwd=eDBNbGMxRTZaVUJVT0pUdDBYWTFkUT09)

To join by phone:

dial: 253-215-8782

meeting ID: 332-255-974

password: 558564

Fireside Chats with Rev. Mandy (and Friends)

Wednesdays | 7:00 p.m.

[Click here to watch on Facebook](#)

July Events

Issues and Ale

Friday, July 10 | 6:00 p.m.

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86207494702?
pwd=ajJpVlFhaWVKbTlIOVFkKy9LUjB4UT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86207494702?pwd=ajJpVlFhaWVKbTlIOVFkKy9LUjB4UT09)

To join by phone:

dial: 253-215-8782

meeting ID: 862 0749 4702

password: 307228

Climate Change Quiz Night

Monday, July 20 | 7:00 p.m.

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87227665352?
pwd=d2c2a0MxcldgyenJlK3NpU2RDWTEUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87227665352?pwd=d2c2a0MxcldgyenJlK3NpU2RDWTEUT09)

To join by phone:

dial: 253-215-8782

meeting ID: 872 2766 5352

password: 991812

Humanists of BUC

“Help for Humans” by Paul Plante

Sunday, July 12 | 7:00 p.m.

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82261198109?
pwd=ejRFaGIPMmtmQjM2TC9MWnE3d3ByZz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82261198109?pwd=ejRFaGIPMmtmQjM2TC9MWnE3d3ByZz09)

To join by phone:

dial: 253-215-8782

meeting ID: 822 6119 8109

password: 677681

Confronting Racism monthly meeting

Tuesday, July 21 | 7:00 p.m.

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82170168008?
pwd=RTRtd0hTaHpCbHI0OVVCejJXSF12UT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82170168008?pwd=RTRtd0hTaHpCbHI0OVVCejJXSF12UT09)

To join by phone:

dial: 253-215-8782

meeting ID: 821 7016 8008

password: 260931