



The Flaming Chalice

THEOLOGICALLY DIVERSE • RADICALLY INCLUSIVE • JUSTICE CENTERED

Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church | May 2020 Newsletter



CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Due to COVID19 shelter in place orders, the church office is closed until further notice.

Kelli is working from home and can still be reached via

office@starrking.org

For pastoral care, please reach out to Rev. Maria Cristina via email or phone (617)895-9267.

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starrking.org

[facebook.com/StarrKingChurch](https://www.facebook.com/StarrKingChurch)

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Director of Religious Exploration

Allison Prout

dre@starrking.org

Newsletter

Kelly and Nathan Heigert

newsletter@starrking.org

Please join us every Sunday at 10:30am for worship online using Zoom. We publish the Zoom link for worship in the Announcements email that comes out every Thursday evening. New to Zoom? Go here for more information: <https://starrking.org/zoom>. Please reach out to us directly if you need further assistance so we can provide technical support.

During this challenging time we are designing the services week by week, responding to the needs of the moment with imagination and flexibility and love. On May 3, the service will focus on **Gratitude**. Please join us each Sunday as we gather together to sing and to reflect, to share our joys and our sorrows, to connect with each other and with something bigger than ourselves. This is the antidote to isolation! Come nourish and replenish heart and soul.

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April Highlights



From the Minister

"You can cut all the flowers but you cannot keep Spring from coming."

Pablo Neruda



In the Spring of 2009, I was a doctoral student at Harvard Divinity School. My research focused on the relationship between religious devotion and environmental justice. I was looking for ways to expand my spiritual practices and blur the line between spiritual practice and environmental activism. On my daily walks between the Women's Studies in Religion Program and the Center for the Study of World Religions, I would often pause, watching – and praying – for signs of Spring: Crocuses, witch hazel, forsythias, azaleas, rhododendrons, daffodils, dogwoods, magnolias, lilies, and so much more... I learned to identify the blooms and to follow the intoxicating fragrance of lilacs and honeysuckle. I felt a sense of spiritual renewal and embodied hope as I walked across campus, witnessing the first purple and yellow crocuses breaking through the snow and signaling the end of the long winter. But I, along with many others, also wished that in addition to the beautiful ornamental flowers, we could plant organic vegetables to share not just within the walls of the school, but also with our neighbors. We formed a coalition of various student groups and staff initiatives and in the Spring of 2009, the Harvard Divinity School's garden was created in the back of the Dean's house. As part of the school's commitment to decrease the school's ecological footprint, the garden provides local community organizations with organic fruits and vegetables. It also provides students and staff opportunities to connect spiritual devotion with environmental justice activism. Today the garden continues to "improve the quality of life within the HDS community, provide healthy food, work opportunities in the outdoors, inspiration towards increased self- and community-sustainability, and a space where people can breathe, rejuvenate, and revive. The garden is open to all members of the HDS community, and is a sacred space where anyone can come, pick up a tool, and work with nature to grow together." Every Spring, from 2009 until I left Boston in 2016, I was part of the garden blessing ceremony. In these times of uncertainty and fear, as we watch Spring unfold while sheltering in place, I remember the HDS garden and the words of Pablo Neruda. May this Spring bring us a sense of hope and renewal. May we turn to each other for sustenance as the new seedlings turn towards the sun. May we nourish our dreams and hopes as an antidote to fear. **Namaste. Blessed Be!**

Blessing of the Corn Seeds. Harvard Divinity School Garden, 2014

Spirit of Life,

Fuente de Amor,

Loving Darkness,

Pachamama:

We open our hearts in the spirit of prayer:

To give thanks for another opportunity to practice patience, hope, and faith...

The wheel of the year once again brings us together as a community planting seeds of many kinds.

In the face of grief, impending loss, uncertainty, and difficult transitions, we turn to each other much like the new seedling turns to the sun. When the light of hope is dimmed by fear, we turn to each other to rekindle hope. Dear Friends, it is the season to boldly declare our dreams to the universe and to shake away that which is no longer life giving, or affirming of loving kindness. It is the season to whisper gently into the heart of the seeds: A song of gratitude for all that we have received in past seasons and for the bounty of blessings yet to be received. Let us lift up the names of all those who lovingly encouraged us to grow, to follow the sun, to unfold, to transform, and to embody the beauty of the universe. As we look into the heart of the new Spring blossoms, let us envision new beginnings, well-being, and healing for ourselves and our planet. Let us nourish forgiveness, delight in beauty, and become one with Mother Earth inch by inch, row by row. Blessed be these seeds, blessed be our hands, blessed be this garden, our home.

– *Rev. María Cristina*



Bits from the Board

Well, your Board has been busy – even with the transition to Zoom-only meetings!

Our last Board meeting on April 23, we welcomed several guests and please know you are welcome to our Board meetings, too! Our next meeting will be Thursday, June 4 at 7pm.

We are **preparing for our Annual Meeting on May 17 at 11:45am via Zoom**. And, in the spirit of gratitude and appreciating our church leaders, here who you can send an email of “thanks!” to and for what service they’ve given us:

- We’ve applied for a PPP loan from our bank, thanks to **Marilyn Mosher’s** quick response
- We have a recommended budget to present to the congregation at our Annual Meeting, thanks to **Keith Lewis** working closely with **Marilyn Mosher**. We especially celebrate and appreciate the very important and successful efforts of our Canvass Chair, **Beth Ogilvie**. Because of Beth’s efforts and your generous response, we have the budget we had hoped to present to the congregation.
- The Nominating Committee (**Colleen Dino, Bob Simoni, Rene Castle, Glen Jacob, Bob Meyerson**) have prepared a slate of candidate for the Board and for the Nominating Committee to present to the congregation at our Annual Meeting.
- We’re applying for a UUA emergency grant for South Hayward Parish, thanks to **Terri Owen**.
- We’ll be resuming some of the landscaping work and weeding within strict guidelines that include 6ft. or more of social distancing AND wearing your own mask, scheduling a maximum of 5 people at a time and never alone, bringing your own water, hand sanitizer, gloves, tools, and “go before you go”, thanks to **Ethel-May Shaw**.
- We are joining others in adopting voters in swing states to “Vote Forward” thanks to **Bob Britton**.
- We continue to support **Allison Prout** and the Children’s Religious Education and its transition, thanks to **Zelma Nunez-Borja**.
- And we, as a Board, continue to practice gratitude through our monthly thank you cards, thanks to **Lavon Hodges**.

The Board has been preparing updates and changes to the bylaws of the church,



including reducing the number of Trustees on the Board and offering additional guidance for the Nominating Committee. Many thanks to **Mileva Lewis** working with **Colleen Dino** on those revisions. However, after deep discussion about the potentially limited ability for full and inclusive discussion given the limitations of the Zoom format that we will be using for this year's meeting, the Board voted to postpone both the discussion and the vote on any changes to the bylaws for now. Thanks to all of our Board of Trustees, **Roy Dickerson, Marilyn Mosher, Mileva Lewis, Lavon Hodges, Natalie Forrest, Donnie Rett, Ethel-May Shaw, Mary Swain, and Zelma Nunez-Borja** for diving deep and for your ongoing service and commitment to providing church leadership. You are appreciated!

**Those are the bits from your board this month –
In gratitude for our beloved community**

– Jennifer Koney



RE Reflections

**“You can't calm the storm
So stop trying.**

**What you can do is calm yourself.
The storm will pass.”**

Thich Nhat Hanh

I have heard from several friends who have discovered new creative outlets during their seclusion. For some it is art or poetry. For some it is reading or writing. For others it is sewing or cooking. There are different strokes for different folks. Whatever your preference, may it bring you peace.

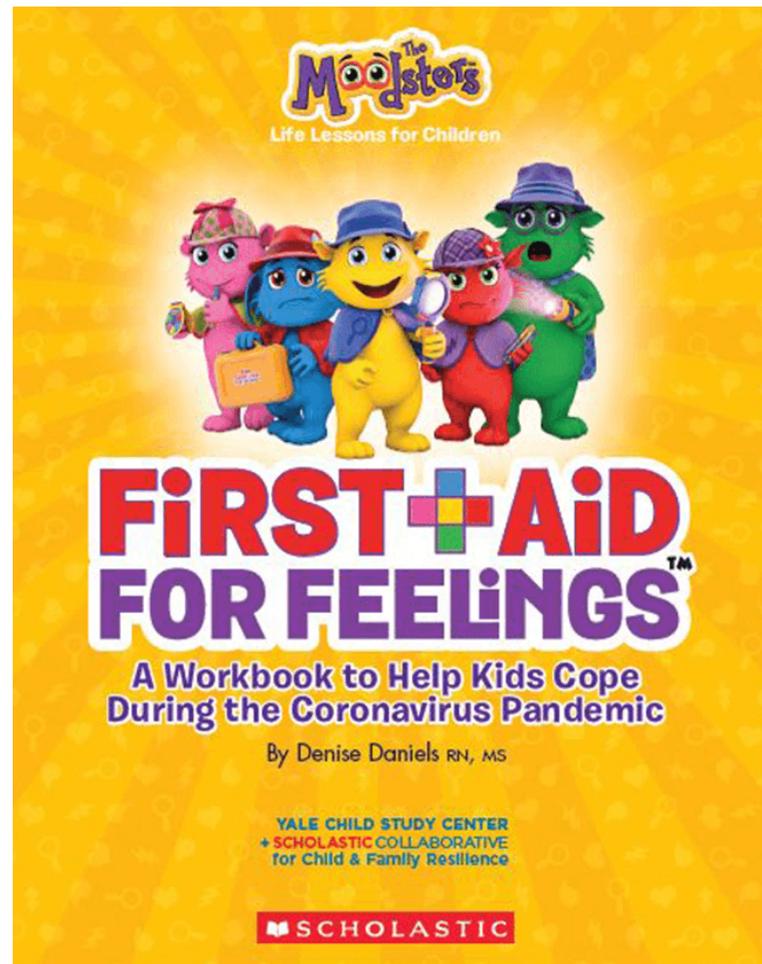
An attitude of gratitude helps put things in perspective. Focusing on helping others shifts energy in a healthy direction. Try to reach out to a few people you care about everyday either by phone or online. Try to stay connected to our church community. Attend virtual worship services on Sunday. Join family connection/ storytime on Thursday evenings. We want to connect with you, we want to help. Reach out and you shall receive.

We would like to offer families the following resource to help children learn to be smart about feelings and help alleviate their emotional stress. *First Aid for Feelings – A Workbook to Help Kids Cope During the Coronavirus Pandemic* by Denise Daniels.

By using the simple coping strategies found in this workbook, you can encourage children to express thoughts, questions, and feelings. These life skills may help reduce and manage children's stress or anxiety, and provide some sense of control within their changing lives.

Stay Safe and Be Well...

– Allison Prout



Family Storytime

In the midst of this crisis and subsequent shelter-in-place order, our family considers ourselves among the fortunate ones who have experienced minimal impact on our work while at the same time can keep 3-year-old Oliver home from daycare. Kelly works full-time remotely for KQED, while Nathan balances looking after Olly with his freelance illustration work. In times it's stressful, and we've leaned on our share of screen-time when we need to maintain Olly's attention while getting something important done, or just to get a breather, but overall we've managed well, and we feel duty bound to do everything to flatten the curve and help minimize the impact of the pandemic on our community.

Our one major concern, however, is the loss of socialization time Olly has faced in quarantine apart from his friends in daycare, around the neighborhood, and at Starr King, especially during this pivotal period in his communication and inter-personal development. In the few occasions where we treat ourselves to getting out of the house together, on walks with the dog or hikes in regional parks, we catch glimpses of Olly's urge to connect with others. While keeping our distance, he'll say hi to any kids and many adults that pass by, and eagerly volunteers such important information as "my dog's name is Izzy" or "she has a tail!"

That's why we're so grateful for the Zoom Sunday services and weekly family time sessions that the church has adopted. Along with our own family Skype sessions and similar group chats his daycare has recently launched, these moments of community are welcome breaks from the monotony of daily life around the house, and importantly give Olly someone to talk with and listen to besides just us and himself during play all day. We want to express our thanks to Allison, La Reverenda, Lorie and Peekaboo, and all the families who have participated in these valuable escapes from isolation. While we look forward to the day that life resembles some version of normal, we are nonetheless ready to maintain our social-distancing posture as long as these episodes of socializing from afar help sustain us.

– Nathan Heigert



Adult RE

Why Think About “End of Life Care” – Especially Now Mileva Saulo Lewis, EdD, RN

Dear Friends,

This is a scary time and there are many things we can't control. At the same time, there are things we can control, and one of them is our own health care decisions. Even if we're too sick to speak for ourselves, we can have created documents that express our desires, and named a decision maker who knows what we want. It's a gift we give ourselves and our loved ones. Trust me – if we're critically ill, in the ER or the ICU, especially if our loved ones can't be there, that is not the first time to begin this conversation. Given the visiting restrictions, this is not the kind of conversation that you want to have over the telephone!

When it is safe to gather as a community, the Adult Religious Exploration Committee will reschedule the two-hour session that was planned for 18 April. That will give us an opportunity to explore choices, concerns, decision-making models and guides, and to answer questions in greater depth. Until then, we offer this information so that, if you have not already done so, you can begin these invaluable conversations and take action.

Kaiser's [Life Care Planning](#) website has a wealth of information and an advance directive form everyone can use, not just Kaiser patients. I prefer this form over others I've seen. It starts with values and is much more conversational and personal than the California Attorney General's form, for example. I may be biased in that I sit on the Kaiser Northern California Region End-of-Life Care Planning Advisory Council that has developed and modified this form over time, but I am passionate about planning for end of life care.

My goal is to make the planning process so accessible that everyone does it, because I've seen in my career what a tremendous difference it can make. If you can't speak for yourself, but your family and medical team know what you want, it's a blessing for you and for them.

Here are the steps:

- 1. Choose your designated decision maker**
- 2. Talk about what matters most to you**
- 3. Think about what you would want**
- 4. Complete your advance directive**
- 5. Talk about it!**



1. Choose your designated decision maker (also called agent, surrogate, or proxy for health care), the person who speaks for you when you cannot speak for yourself. Your decision maker must be:

- Over 18
- Someone who knows you and your choices (especially after you've talked)
- Can be trusted to carry out your wishes even if there is controversy

If they don't live nearby but they are your choice, consider naming a second or alternate decision maker. See [Choose your agent](#) on the Kaiser website for more information. Be sure to give this information to your primary health care provider, your agents, and to have it available should you need it in an emergency.

2. Talk about what matters most.

What is most important to you in life? What makes life worth living? Answering these questions and then discussing them with family, friends, perhaps your minister is a key step. See [Consider your values](#) on the Kaiser website for more questions to consider and discuss.

3. Think about what you would want.

The [You decide](#) page of the Kaiser website leads you through the main choices and helps you make an informed decision. It includes answers to some common questions about topics like life support, artificial nutrition, breathing assistance, and CPR.

4. Complete your advance directive.

The [Kaiser Advanced Directive](#) form is excellent and can be used by non-Kaiser patients. The website includes page by page advice for filling it out, if you want that. When you're finished and ready to sign, it does not need a notary but does need to be witnessed. It's a legal document.

5. Talk about it!

Going over it with your designated decision maker and alternates is especially important. Give a copy to your health care provider. Discuss it with your doctor.

You, speaking through your advance directive not only has the power of legal authority but also and more importantly, it has the power of your values and your voice speaking your choices. The choices you want honored.

– Mileva Lewis

It's the gift we give ourselves and our loved ones.

The Committee on Ministry (COM)

05/15/2016 to 4/15/2020

There have been questions recently about the COM – its charter, its recent accomplishments, and its current activities. We offer this report to illuminate the work of the COM over the past 4 years, along with our current activities.

Mission Statement: The COM is guided, in part, by the following two Church Documents:

FIRST, from the [church bylaws](#):

ARTICLE IX COMMITTEES

E. Committee on Ministry (COM): *Starr King UU Church recognizes that the responsibility for ministry extends beyond the minister to the entire Congregation; it is an extension of our congregational covenant to one another of mutual trust and support. The purpose of the Committee on Ministry (COM) is to foster this “Shared Ministry” – a close collaboration of lay and ordained leadership that establishes the mission and goals of the church, clearly communicates those objectives to the congregation in terms of ministry, and assesses our progress in achieving those objectives. In short, the COM determines how well we “walk our talk”, “practice what we preach” and “live our values”.*

- *Therefore, the work of the Committee on Ministry:*
- *Continually monitors congregational life;*
- *Helps model healthy and deepening relationships with minister(s) and program staff;*
- *Continually educates itself about ministry;*
- *Supports continuing education of the congregation for its growing understanding and skill in shared ministry;*
- *Coordinates periodic assessment of the shared ministry of the congregation and its leadership components;*
- *Periodically advises the board regarding the health of shared ministry;*
- *Supports the minister’s planning for continuing education, sabbaticals, and other professional development;*
- *Recommends and actively supports such plans to the board and the congregation.*

- Article IX, E, The Committee on Ministry (COM)

SECOND, from the Letter of Call and Ministry Agreement between Starr King UU Church and the Rev. Dr. María Cristina Vlassidis Burgoa, signed May 15, 2016:

Anti-Oppression Awareness: In calling a minister from a racial or cultural group historically under-represented in the Unitarian Universalist ministry, this congregation accepts its responsibility to continue to offer its members and minister(s) opportunity to increase their ability to function in a multiracial, multiethnic capacity and to address the systemic nature of bias within Unitarian Universalism. On-going opportunities for growth and reflection will be offered to ensure the success of the professional ministry and will be scheduled in consultation with the Committee on Ministry.

FINALLY, we remember this comment from our interim minister, Rev. Joy:

- “This church has been blessed with some long ministries that some other churches would envy. But don’t take it for granted!”
- And from the UUA: “A study of ministerial tenure showed that white ministers stay an average of 7 years with a congregation, and ministers of color stay less than 3.” [“The Dreaded Statistic”]

Membership: *The structure and membership of the COM shall consist of no fewer than three and no more than seven members. A term shall be three years, with overlapping terms providing for the continuity of two or more members each year. Members are chosen by joint appointment of the Board, the minister, and the COM (By-Laws, Article IX, E The Committee on Ministry)*

Current Membership (Changes in Membership are described later):

- Bob Britton (he/him/his)
- Keith Lewis (he/him/his)
- Claudia McDonagh (she/her/hers)
- Guadalupe Middleton (she/her/hers)
- Beth Ogilvie (she/her/hers)
- Xiomara Tapia (she/her/hers)

Monthly meetings are open to congregation members, except for portions dealing with confidential matters. Members of the congregation may bring issues of concern to the COM or to individual members of the committee for discussion, advice and facilitation. (Bylaws)



Outcomes:

Relationship building – Final Fellowship – Installation

The first year the COM consisted of the following: Jennifer Koney, former Chair of the Search Committee; Beth Ogilvie, former COM member and co-leader of the church anti-racism anti-oppression work since 2011; and Keith Lewis, Past President, former COM Member, and current Finance Chair. In that year we were primarily concerned with three things:

- Developing a trusting relationship with the minister and providing support for her as she dealt with the dual challenges of being a new settled minister and being a minister of color in a majority white church dealing with congregants' racism and micro aggressions.
- Working with the minister and providing feedback to her regarding the eight areas of competence a UU minister in Preliminary Fellowship must demonstrate to be granted Final Fellowship (the indication that a UU minister is fully and completely qualified). This work was highly successful, as the assessments of these eight areas submitted by the COM, the board, and the minister inspired the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) of the UUA to grant her Final Fellowship in November of 2017.
- Helping plan and produce the Installation Ceremony in April of 2017 that sealed the covenantal relationship between the minister and the congregation in a sacred ceremony.

At the end of the first year, Jennifer left the COM to join the Board as Vice President/ President Elect, and the COM gained two new members, Guadalupe Middleton and Xiomara Tapia. Since Beth and Keith identify as white, and Guadalupe and Xiomara as Latina, their presence on the COM provided essential additional support, in understanding the issues of culture in a way that the white members could not. They also had significant experience in the RE program and were able to provide valuable insight in that area as well.

Increasing our anti-oppression awareness

After the first year, the COM addressed our contractual commitment to our minister “to increase [our] ability to function in a multiracial, multiethnic capacity and to address the systemic nature of bias within Unitarian Universalism” by:

- Participating in and co-facilitating Beloved Conversations, “a curriculum for exploring the role of race/ethnicity in individual and congregational lives.”
- Participating in and co-facilitating the White Racial Literacy Book Group as we read and studied two books, *What Does It Mean to be White, Developing White Racial Literacy* by Robin DiAngelo, and *Centering – Navigating Race, Authenticity,*

and Power in Ministry edited by Mitra Rahnama. *Centering* was the first book to “center the stories, analysis, and insight of Unitarian Universalists of color offering their religious leadership” and was a real eye-opener for the white group to what UU religious professionals of color routinely experience in UU spaces.

- Participating in and co-facilitating “Book Group+”, an interracial group, as we read *Mistakes and Miracles, Congregations on the Road to Multiculturalism* by Karin Lin and the Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones.
- Participating in and co-facilitating the *Trans Inclusion for Congregations* course from the Transforming Hearts Collective.

Twenty-six members of the congregation have participated in these discussion and learning opportunities.

Establishing the mission and goals of the church

Parallel to the personal and congregational growth track, we collaborated with the Board of Trustees to launch the Envisioning Team, comprised of the minister and representatives of the COM, the board, and the congregation. The Envisioning Team was charged with assessing whether we needed to change our mission statement, look at creating a vision statement, and determine what the congregation sees as religious and spiritual priorities. We did this using an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process led by Mileva Lewis that gathered congregational input at several meetings open to the entire congregation. The Envisioning Team reported to the congregation at the end of each phase of the AI Process. See their report in the April *Chalice* as well as this annual report.

In the past few months, the COM expanded its membership to include Bob Britton and Claudia McDonagh. Claudia brings many years of experience as a teacher to bear. Bob is a Past President, Small Group Ministry leader, and committed member of the Pastoral Care Committee; and has an understanding from his union experience of various ways prejudice shows up in the workplace. In addition, Bob and Claudia bring to the COM their long term active commitment to issues of social justice in the larger community.

Works in Progress:

- Continue to collaborate with and work through the Envisioning Team and the Board to live out our values, vision, and mission;
- Develop a process by which to evaluate shared ministry, and
- Provide input and support as we develop Family Ministry, our new approach to faith formation for children and families.

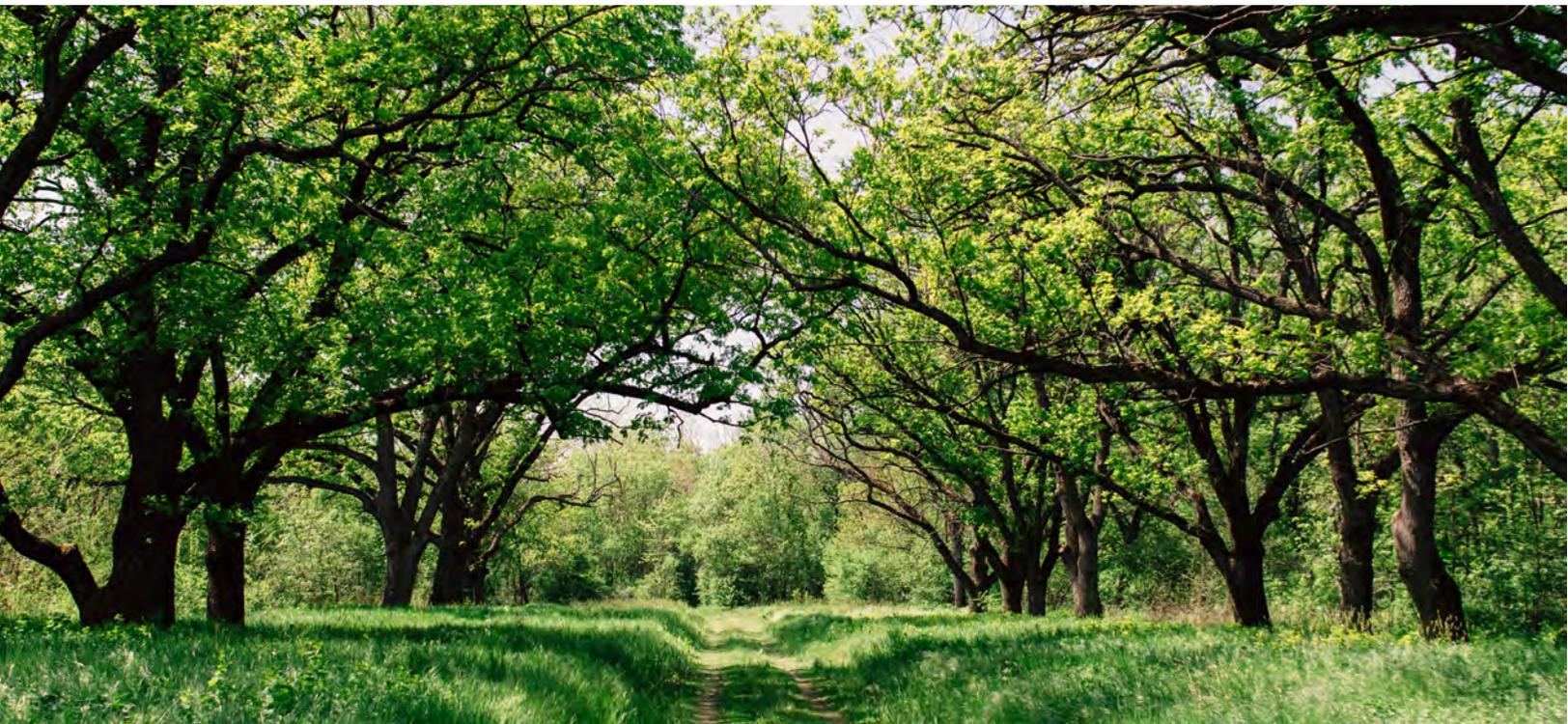
On behalf of the Committee on Ministry,

– *Keith Lewis and Beth Ogilvie*

Ongoing Activities

All in-person activities done virtually or on hold until further notice.
Please check the website at starrking.org for updates.

Drum Circle	First Friday of the month, 7–9pm on Zoom. For adults and mature kids. Contact: Kathryn LaMar
Evening Meditation	Every Wednesday, 7:30–8:45pm on Zoom. Open to all. Contact: Diane Meyerson
Elderberries	Third Wednesday of the month, at noon. For self-identified elders. Bring your lunch. Contact: Karen Cook
Small Group Ministry	Contact sgm@starrking.org for more information.
Board Meeting	First Thursday of the month, 7–9pm in Fellowship Hall. Open to all. Contact: Jennifer Koney
Family Storytime	Every Thursday 1:30pm and 7pm on Zoom. Contact: Allison Prout
Adult RE	Second Tuesday of the Month from 11–12 noon on Zoom Contact: Mileva Saulo Lewis
Book Group+: Trans Inclusion for Congregations	(On hold) Meets every 1st and 3rd Monday at 7:15pm in the sanctuary. Contact: Beth Ogilvie
Choir Practice	(On hold) Meets every Sunday from 9–10:15am in the Fellowship Hall. Contact: Lea Casini
Church Bookstore	(On hold) Open on the third Sunday of the month, after the service. Contact: Evelyn Cormier



Starr King Church Calendar

May 2020						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26 • 10:30 AM Sunday Worship Service	27 • 6:30 PM Rainbow NA Meeting	28	29 • 7:00 PM Virtual Online Meditation	30	31 • 7:00 PM Drumming Circle	2
3 • 10:30 AM Sunday Worship Service	4 • 6:30 PM Rainbow NA Meeting • 7:00 PM BookGroup+	5	6 • 7:30 PM Evening Meditation	7 • 10:00 AM RE Council • 7:00 PM Board of Trustees	8	9
10 • 12:15 AM Peace & Justice Action Team • 10:30 AM Sunday Worship Service	11 • 6:30 PM Rainbow NA Meeting	12 • 7:00 PM Worship Committee	13 • 12:00 PM SGM Afternoons • 3:00 PM Pastoral Care Committee • 7:15 PM SGM Evenings	14	15	16
17 • 10:30 AM Sunday Worship Service • 12:00 PM Annual Meeting	18 • 6:30 PM Rainbow NA Meeting • 7:00 PM BookGroup+	19	20 • 7:30 PM Evening Meditation	21	22	23
24 • 10:30 AM Sunday Worship Service • 12:00 PM RE Appreciation	25 • 6:30 PM Rainbow NA Meeting	26	27 • 12:00 PM SGM Afternoons • 7:15 PM SGM Evenings • 7:30 PM Evening Meditation	28	29	30
31 • 10:30 AM Sunday Worship Service	1 • 6:30 PM Rainbow NA Meeting • 7:00 PM BookGroup+	2	3 • 7:30 PM Evening Meditation	4 • 10:00 AM RE Council • 7:00 PM Board of Trustees	5 • 7:00 PM Drumming Circle	6



May Birthdays

MAY 12

Laura Otermat
Torsten Fink

MAY 16

Lavon Hodges
Beckett Wagner

MAY 21

Karen Kramer

MAY 29

Carol Henrie