



Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry

10 Putnam Street • John Eliot Square • Roxbury, MA 02119

Tel: 617.318.6010 • Email: engagement@uum.org • www.uuum.org

SPRING 2024 NEWSLETTER

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND SENIOR MINISTER

There is every reason for worry right now, every reason for discouragement.

Morning headlines and evening news give us every reason.

But there's this, too: right now, in our Putnam Chapel, Boston high school students are creating a play about the past and also the future.

And they sound hopeful.

And student interns are expanding our website about First Church Roxbury - giving life to our tagline *Learn History - Make Change*.

Boston leaders are lending their voices to our Community Conversations series about how we can work for housing justice.

And we are readying to bring Roxbury artists into our Meetinghouse, to bring art to life. This is the work that you make possible.

Art. Justice. Joy.

In the face of everything - there is hope, blossoming still. On behalf of the UU Urban Ministry, thank you.

And onward,



EXPANDING YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES AT UUM

Because of our supporters, Roxbury Youth Programs (RYP) provides young people with space to express themselves through the arts and humanities.

Right now, RYP students are creating a play looking at social and racial justice in the past and in the present day. They are being guided by longtime theatre director and actor, Naheem Garcia, a Roxbury native who brings his commitment to youth and the community to this work.

And right now, our Career Exploration Interns are busy tackling projects including a refreshed Seeing Me in the World program, building out the UUM website to highlight our work examining enslavement connected to First Church in Roxbury, and fashioning a new walking

tour of the Meetinghouse. They are learning and building as they go.

We also are reconnecting with RYP alumni, gathering about 10 graduates for a recent dinner to learn more about where their journeys have taken them. They gave us feedback about what was most important to them about RYP in the past – and what would strengthen RYP in the future. And we are listening.

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This spring we look to offer Unitarian Universalist youth a refreshed *Seeing Me In the World* – this time shaped by youth in our RYP after-school program.

Seeing Me was launched in 2017 as an opportunity for young people from around the country to meet across congregations, and to learn and reflect on the history of segregation and race in Greater Boston. Youth from 8th through 12th grade are invited to join us for an historical walking tour, circle discussion, and artistic expression.

Now, under the guidance of our Community Engagement Manager Reggie Walker, a Career Exploration Program intern is reshaping the program to share her community with other young people. It will include a tour of key stops in the neighborhood, lunch in Nubian Square, and interactive activities to keep young people engaged.

We recently met with religious educators from Greater Boston and around the country to share our updated vision – a program by youth, for youth – and are planning on rolling it out this spring.



Sofia, RYP Intern and Reggie Walker, community engagement manager, who are working together to update *Seeing Me in the World*.

RESTORING ROXBURY'S MEETINGHOUSE

As the weather gets warmer the work to restore the interior of our historic Meetinghouse moves nearer to completion.

All of the pews have now been fully restored - horse hair filled cushions removed and fully sanded and repainted. The first two rows of pews at the front of the sanctuary have been removed, leaving a larger space for performances.



Painters work to restore the Meetinghouse pews

A hole was cut in one of the walls that will become the doorway for our new handicapped accessible entranceway. A ramp will be built outside that leads up to this new entrance.

Additionally, work is being done to restore the main entrance of the Meetinghouse. After the building was literally jacked up to replace the wood sill, the granite stairs leading to the church's main entrance are back in place. Now, workers are repairing the staircases that lead to the balcony-level, and the windows in the foyer area are being repaired.



View of the Meetinghouse pews from the raised pulpit

For updates about the work of our History Committee, and to read, "Race & Slavery at the First Church in Roxbury (The Colonial Period 1631-1775)", the report by Aabid Alibhai, visit: bit.ly/FCRoxburyHistory