



# Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry

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## SPRING 2023 NEWSLETTER

### A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND SENIOR MINISTER

You've made new growth possible.

This season we celebrate an expanding youth program - one that offers richer experiences to more Boston high school students.

We roll out walking tours celebrating our Roxbury neighborhood, and addressing the racial wealth gap through visits to Black-owned businesses. We interrogate our history to face the ways we have stood for justice, or made mistakes.

And we keep opening our campus wide for the arts, conversation and community to serve our neighbors.

In this season of hope, when life begins blooming again, I am deeply grateful for friends like you who stand with us as we face the past, and as we build a better and more just future.

So much is possible.

And because of you, the possible becomes real.

With gratitude and in faith,

Mary Margaret Earl



### ADVENTURES IN YOUTH PROGRAMMING

Roxbury Youth Programs (RYP) equips high school-aged young people with skills in leadership and creativity through a lens of Roxbury community history and social change. RYP's objective is to foster storytelling and creative skills—allowing young people to become change makers in their own communities.

RYP students learn both in the classroom and in the community. This has included involvement from people like Bob Glover, a Boston native with an award winning resume in television production, to help develop a social justice video storytelling curriculum. Plus, RYP students have the opportunity to work with Learning Artists throughout the semester to continue learning photography and digital media skills.



Above: RYP Interns on a recent field trip to the Hiphop Archive at Harvard University

Recently, they had a field trip to Harvard University and visited the Cooper Gallery of Afro Cuban Art as well as the Hiphop Archive. Students engaged with diverse forms of expression that they could bring back to incorporate in their own work.

RYP has made strides in the past year, but our goal is to continue the program's growth. This includes having the capacity to welcome more students in to the program. When you give to UUUM, this is what you're helping make possible.

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The work to restore the Meetinghouse is well underway, as is our commitment to honestly examine its history. The work on this historic building—now officially a Boston landmark— entails examining the past while building for the future.

Currently, the Meetinghouse is floor-to-ceiling scaffolding. The walls have been plastered and are now being painted. The lighting fixtures are being re-wired, new doors will soon be hung, and in the coming weeks Boston’s oldest wood-framed church will boast a new sprinkler and sound system.



We continue getting closer to meeting the \$2.8M goal of this campaign through efforts like the Pews Project, an opportunity for individuals, businesses, and congregations to sponsor the rehabilitation of a pew, and in turn receive historical information about the people who have sat in “their” pew through the years. Pew sponsors will be invited to a special celebration once construction has been completed. Currently half of the 106 pews have been sponsored, and there is still an opportunity to support this effort.

In addition to construction, the work on the Meetinghouse has included following through on our commitment to a complete and honest examination of its history. The first step of this work was the publication of the report, “Race & Slavery at First Church in Roxbury”, that was commissioned in partnership with the Roxbury Historical Society. This report includes the names of enslaved African Americans and Indigenous people who were enslaved by congregants of the First Church in Roxbury.

The report was presented at both an in person and online event that featured its author, Aabid Allibhai, and historian Byron Rushing. The report is available on our website ([www.uuum.org](http://www.uuum.org)) and we encourage you to take a look.

The report was just the start of the work that examines our history. Now, the focus will turn to interpreting and sharing what we have learned, and continuing to uncover the true story of our history—all to help ensure a better and fairer future.

Left to Right: Byron Rushing (historian), Aabid Allibhai (author of the report on enslavement at First Church in Roxbury), and Mary Margaret Earl (UUUM Executive Director). *Photo courtesy of The Boston Globe.*



## THE DEBUT OF OUR TOURS PROGRAM

In May, we will launch a tours program that focuses on three areas of Roxbury’s story in partnership with local artists and historians to enrich each offering. These will be three unique experiences looking at various aspects of what makes Roxbury great.

The three areas of our tours program will be:

- Public Art Walk, with artist Dayenne Walters
- Exploring Educational Institutions, from Roxbury Community College to the historic Timilty Middle School
- History of the Roxbury, looking at various aspects of the neighborhood’s history, with historian Thomas Plant.

Each tour will share the history of Roxbury with neighbors and visitors alike, in order to raise consciousness about the history that created our segregated communities. Additionally, each tour will also include a component to address closing the racial wealth gap, and how we can support Black-/Brown- owned businesses in Roxbury.



Stay tuned in the coming weeks for the official launch of the program. We hope you will join us, and bring a friend or two along with you.

