



Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry

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FALL 2023 NEWSLETTER

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND SENIOR MINISTER

As one season gives way to the next, we open our doors and hearts to what's ahead.

We welcome back Boston high school students to our expanding youth program, ready to offer a nurturing space where they will forge friendships, plan for bright futures, and express themselves.

We welcome Roxbury leaders in our Community Conversations series, as they speak to housing and the racial wealth gap - and what we can all do about it.

And we welcome community partners whose work for equity we amplify, and celebrate.

As our hallways and classrooms come alive, again, this autumn, we also celebrate all our friends who make this work possible. Thank you for the ways you learn, donate, engage and believe in our shared work to make Greater Boston a fairer, better place - in this and every season.

In faith and with gratitude,



EXPANDING YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES AT UUUM

This summer, we welcomed seven recent students from Roxbury Youth Programs (RYP) to our team as paid interns for the summer months. These internships were created to offer young people another way to be engaged in our work, while offering practical professional experience.

The interns joined us in all aspects of our work, and brought their voices, energy, and experience to our team during their time with us. Check out the work that our interns did this summer.

Sofia, Sarah-Simone, Sabrina, and Wintana

Four recent RYP students, Sofia, Sarah-Simone, Sabrina, and Wintana, worked with Tours Coordinator Bithyah Israel to become guides for our Tours program. Their work included learning more about Roxbury - both historical and present day - and how to share that with tour participants.



Bithyah Israel (left), with student tour guides Sofia (center) and Sarah-Simone (left)



Roydell (left), our summer intern who organized and planned peace garden events, sits with Yasmin. Both are alums of UUUM's youth program.

Roydell

RYP graduate Roydell, worked this summer as the first ever peace garden coordinator. He coordinated events for the community that were held in the peace garden such as a painted rock activity, and "Herbs and Weeds", an afternoon to plant herbs and enjoy Roxbury-grown herbal teas.

Funmi and Mya

Funmi and Mya worked with us this summer to strengthen our communications. Together, they helped us improve how we use social media, and boosted our outreach to neighbors.

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RESTORING ROXBURY'S MEETINGHOUSE

We are getting closer to meeting our goal of finishing the restoration of Roxbury's Meetinghouse every day. And it feels like there is something new happening inside the church daily.

The floor-to-ceiling scaffolding was removed recently, revealing the repaired and freshly painted walls and ceiling.



The interior of the Meetinghouse after the removal of the scaffolding. As you can see, the walls and ceiling have been repaired and painted.

At the front of the building, a portion of the wall was cut and removed and will be part of the new handicapped accessible entranceway. This will also include a new ramp planned for the exterior of the building, that will lead to this new doorway.



The arm of the bulldozer helping to remove the front stairs of the Meetinghouse so they can be repaired

The next steps in the construction process will be the sanding and painting of the church's box pews, and the repair of the historic brownstone steps at the main entrance of the church.

We are on track to opening the doors to a home for the arts, music, and civic life that Roxbury both needs and deserves. Thank you for the part you are playing to ensure that Roxbury's Meetinghouse has a future in the vibrant life of this neighborhood and beyond.



Inside one of the 106 box pews, that is being repaired, sanded, and repainted



Hole cut in the front wall of the Meetinghouse that will be part of the new handicapped accessible entranceway.

COMMITMENT TO EXAMINING OUR HISTORY

This past winter we shared a research report on enslavement by First Church Roxbury congregants during the colonial period. The publication of "Race & Slavery at the First Church in Roxbury" by researcher Aabid Allibhai was not an ending, though, but a beginning.

The UU Urban Ministry, working in partnership with the Roxbury Historical Society, has convened a History Committee to continue this interrogation into the history of First Church. Led by historian Byron Rushing, and joined by community leaders such as Honorable Leslie Harris and historian and UUUM board member Thomas Plant, the committee is charting our course forward.

A priority is doing genealogical research into the descendants of enslaved people named in the report, and finding ways to honor those who were enslaved.



Historian Byron Rushing (left) with Aabid Allibhai (center) and Rev. Mary Margaret Earl (right), as pictured in a recent article in The Boston Globe.

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 Allibhai, visit: bit.ly/FCRoxburyHistory