

From The UUA President: Navigating an In-Between Time

By [Susan Frederick-Gray](#)

March 25, 2021

Dear friends,

This time last year, as the world was responding to the growing threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, our congregations had to immediately pivot to virtual operations. I am proud of how well we responded to a stressful and chaotic situation.

You, as leaders and religious professionals, have been guiding your congregations through this difficult time, even as so many of you have been also caring for children, aging parents and navigating so many complexities and tragedies in our world. It's reasonable to be exhausted. Give yourself permission to take time off when you need it. A great lesson I learned in seminary is that to take care of others, we must take care of ourselves.

Although there is good news on the horizon, we are not yet able to gather in person. We are in a critical phase of the pandemic where we need to reduce the spread of the virus to combat new variants while vaccine distribution continues.

Navigating this “in-between time” will be even more challenging than dealing with the early days of the pandemic. Those who are vaccinated may wish to start gathering in person sooner. Each person and family will have different levels of risk and risk tolerance. As leaders, we have to navigate complex decisions taking into account care for the whole of our communities—within and beyond our congregations. Our priority continues to be abiding care for the most vulnerable, within and beyond our congregations.

At the UUA, we do not expect to be able to issue an “all-clear” on our guidance for gathering. There are too many factors that will vary across congregations. However, we will be a partner to you in understanding the factors to consider, the core values to guide decision making, how to plan for multi-platform ministry, sharing best practices from other congregations and working with our public health advisors on sound recommendations.

And the good news is that we have time. Time to plan in a measured way. We are not in an immediate crisis as we were last year. Now is the time to start planning for how to guide your community as the pandemic subsides. I know—from my own experience at the UUA—that there are hundreds of questions to consider. But again, we have time. Time to gather input, to talk with members and other leaders, to partner with your UUA regional staff. And, most importantly, we will continue to need flexibility going forward, because conditions can change – and new questions will emerge. Patience, planning and flexibility are essential.

At the UUA, we are your partners, to help navigate the coming many months. Please stay in close communication with your regional staff if you have questions or concerns. Below you will

find a list of important resources to help navigate planning. We will continue to add and share resources as we learn more.

Pulling together, leaning into relationships of covenant and care, we have met many challenges this past year. I couldn't be more proud of how we have led during this time. This gives me hope and confidence that we can, together, lead through this "in-between" time and prepare for what comes next.

Yours,

Susan

Resources to Help You Plan

- [A Guidebook to Multiplatform Ministries](#)
We will continue to update this resource over time. The guidebook includes articles on:
 - [Budget and Staffing for Multiplatform Ministries](#)
 - [Dual Platform Considerations: Choose Your Own Adventure](#)
 - [Multiplatform Discernment: What are the Greatest Needs in Your Community?](#)
 - [Being Mindful of Trauma in our Lives and Communities](#)
- [Guidance for Gathering In-Person when COVID-19 Subsides](#)
This resource includes questions to guide decision making, keys to a good policy and example plans and policies from congregations.

About the Author



Susan Frederick-Gray

The Rev. Dr. Susan Frederick-Gray began her six-year term as president of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) in June 2017. As president of the Association, she is responsible for administering staff and programs that serve its more than 1,000 member congregations. She also acts as...