

ALL SOULS *at 200+*

THE ALL SOULS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Spring 2021, Vol. 1, Issue N° 3

The All Souls Historical Society

“The past matters because the future matters—
history is as much about the future as it is about the past.”

—Ann Gronningsater

Editor: Christina Bellamy, President; Production Editor: James E. Moskin, Vice President

LOOKING BACK (THE UNRESOLVED LEGACY OF RECONSTRUCTION AND THE FIGHT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE TODAY)

This time last year, the world turned upside down as the global pandemic forced us into lockdown and upended our lives. The events that would follow—the compounding, persisting effects of our nation’s health, economic, and racial justice crises—led us to accelerate and adapt our plans across the board to be responsive to the moment. The United States has reached a critical time as civil unrest and mass protests against racist policies become more frequent across the country. The increased discontent and polarization have no clear resolution in sight and continue to challenge and weaken the bonds of our communities. Unfortunately, racism and the struggle for civil rights and equity are not new to the American experience. To help us understand how we arrived at this point we can reflect and examine life, lessons we have learned, and how to stay bold and fresh in our thinking, interacting with each other.

MOVING FORWARD: INTRODUCING WOMEN: YESTERDAY—TODAY—TOMORROW

In this issue, we present a review—not only of valiant pioneering women within All Souls, but of other women as well, and their impact on the denomination as a whole—under the theme: “Women Within Unitarianism.”

During the century since women’s suffrage, women have transformed our politics—in particular, they have become a force to be reckoned with. They instigated lasting change in American society, not only through their literary achievements but also through their activism fought for the abolition of slavery, racism democratically governed churches, equal rights for women.

When this congregation was founded, women were not permitted to speak or vote in a formal meeting of the congregation. It was only in “informal meetings” where no formal vote was taken that women were allowed to speak. In their own organizations, which were legally unchartered, they could participate fully in governance. This would not change until 1923, when Georgina Schuyler and Mrs. John B. McGinley were elected to the Board of Trustees and then, in 1961, the first woman to serve as President, Miss Florence McKinlay, was chosen to lead.

ASHS wants to designate a year-long theme for Women’s History. The 2021 theme will focus on valiant pioneering women refusing to be silenced through activism and writings advocating for abolition of slavery, empowerment of women, suffrage movement, the vote.

DECADES OF STEADFAST COMMITMENT

THE ANNIE EATON SOCIETY

This is one of the oldest continually operating social service groups in the United States that was organized and is still operated by women. The sewing program continued up until the 1960s and served a hot meal once a month to all those who wished to attend. This meal program eventually grew and separated into what became the congregation’s Friday Soup and Monday Night Hospitality programs. In 1986 the Society reorganized as a 501(c)3 charity and changed its name to the Annie Eaton Society, named for the member of the Society in the late 1890s and early 1900s whose bequest formed the basis of the endowment that funds current grant programs.

FANNIE BARRIER WILLIAMS, NÉE FANNIE BARRIER (FEBRUARY 12, 1855–MARCH 4, 1944)

A Unitarian, she grew up in the only African American family in Brockport NY and was one of the first leaders to identify housing segregation and limited employment opportunities as crucial issues for racial justice. She co-founded (1893) the National League of Colored Women. Through her many speeches, she was active in social work and the co-founding of two interracial benevolent institutions: The Provident Hospital and Training School for Nurses (1891), and the Frederick Douglass Center (1905), a settlement project she co-founded with Celia Parker Woolley, a white Unitarian minister. She championed the rights of African Americans and worked to ensure their recognition and inclusion at the 1893 Columbian Exposition and spoke at the World Congress of Representative Women and the World Parliament of Religion. Both speeches are reprinted in *Standing Before Us: Unitarian Universalist Women and Social Reform, 1776–1936* (Boston: Skinner House, 2000).



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FRANCES ELLEN WATKINS HARPER

(SEPTEMBER 24, 1825–FEBRUARY 22, 1911)

Unitarian, Writer, abolitionist, suffragette. Free Black woman, a member of the Unitarian church, “The Mother of African-American Journalism” poet, novelist, essayist, speaker, and activist, one of the nineteenth century’s most important advocates of Abolitionism and female suffrage. She wrote many books of poetry with strong anti-slavery themes, as well as a novel about African American life during Reconstruction, republished by Beacon Press. Watkins once refused to give up her seat on a Philadelphia streetcar. When the conductor refused to take her money at the end of her ride, she threw it on the floor and left. She was undoubtedly a courageous and powerful voice for justice, and her pioneering work still has profound lessons for us today.



MARGARET MOSELEY

(MAY 16, 1901–DECEMBER 11, 1997)

Margaret Moseley, Unitarian Universalist, was denied entrance to every nursing program in Boston because of her race, so instead, she became a civil rights activist. She founded a consumer cooperative and served on the board of the Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts and was a founding member of Freedom House, a leader of the anti-McCarthyism movement of the 1950s. She also helped form NAACP chapters throughout Cape Cod. The second UU Community Cooperative house in Boston’s Jamaica Plain neighborhood will be named for Moseley.



LYDIA MARIA CHILD

(FEBRUARY 11, 1802–OCT. 20, 1880)

Lydia Maria Child was a novelist, editor, journalist, and scholar who produced a body of work remarkable for its brilliance, originality, and variety, much of it inspired by a strong sense of justice and love of freedom. Child lived in New York City from approximately 1841–1845 or so, working on the antislavery newspaper *The Liberator* and other projects. She was drawn to the preaching of William Ellery Channing, though she despaired over his reluctance to embrace abolitionism wholeheartedly. She found Unitarianism “a mere half-way house, where spiritual travelers find themselves well accommodated for the



night, but where they grow weary of spending the day.” Concerned with political issues, she wrote *The First Settlers of New England* (about Native Americans) and *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans* (1833), an important early anti-slavery book which helped to attract prominent Unitarians to the cause but cost her popularity as writer. Little known today, in her own time she was a famously radical abolitionist. “She deserves an honored place in American and in Unitarian history, though she was critical of the Unitarianism of her day.”

TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE

JULIE BRANNAN, PRESIDENT OF ALL SOULS,

LAY SUNDAY HOMILY, JANUARY 31, 2021 (Excerpt)

“I think my love for New York City has been well established. I have even bemoaned not being a native New Yorker but tried to mitigate that grief by quoting from E.B. White, who described those—like me—who were born somewhere else but came to NYC in quest of something, as ‘settlers,’ and said that we give the city our passion.—But this was also a year where thousands of peaceful New Yorkers walked through the city streets to protest the death of George Floyd and others who have lost their lives due to racial profiling, and also the year when eight huge Black Lives Matter murals were painted on the streets of all five boroughs.

“I do really, really love this city, and have generally tried to be evasive if I was asked where I was from. There could have been many reasons for that reluctance. For instance, LGBTQ+ rights were nonexistent when I was growing up, and I personally knew people who were expelled from their families for coming out. Women were definitely not equal to men—for instance, I never saw women in leadership positions in the church I grew up in and wouldn’t be allowed to do what I am doing today. But I think all along I knew the real reason I didn’t want people to know I was from Montgomery, Alabama. I imagined the first thing people think of when they imagine Alabama is its history of slavery, Jim Crow era discrimination, lynchings, demanding that Rosa Parks go to the back of the bus, dogs and firehoses being turned on Black protestors, and on and on. Basically, I didn’t want people to think I was racist. But I was born in a state where the license plates as I grew up proclaimed proudly, ‘Heart of Dixie.’ As the song proclaims, I was born in Dixie, even early on one frosty morning in December. Dixie, a song written from the point of view of a supposedly happy ex-slave, looking back at better times. I can remember being taken to see the movie *Gone With The Wind*—yet another story perpetuating the myth of happy slaves and

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a noble lost cause—as part of our history class with my school. The large public high schools in Montgomery were—and are—named after Jefferson Davis (President of the Confederacy), Robert E. Lee, the Confederate Army general, and Sydney Lanier, the so-called ‘Poet of the Confederacy.’ Growing up, I saw the Confederate flag—the same flag that some insurrectionists who occupied the Capitol Building on January 6th carried—not only flying over the state capitol building, but casually, proudly even, displayed widely. The story told was that it only represented pride in Southern ‘heritage.’ But as Ibram X. Kendi so clearly explains in his book, *How to Be an Anti-Racist*, an excerpt of which was read earlier, it is simply impossible to be ‘not racist.’ No one can be. One can only in every moment, have thoughts, words, or actions that are either racist or anti-racist. And here is what I have realized: had I been born in New York City; this would still have been true. A New York City Commission on Human Rights report that was released just last year stated that anti-Black racism is present in almost every facet of life in the city. The report featured accounts from Black New Yorkers who have experienced racism in education, housing, health care, work and interactions with law enforcement and the criminal justice system and described racism in the city as ‘inescapable and emotionally taxing.’

“I still love New York City. But there is much anti-racist work this city needs to do, and I now realize that being a native New Yorker in no way would have protected me from growing up in a culture and society that, as Ijeoma Oluo explains in her book *So You Want to Talk About Race*, has white supremacy woven into every aspect of our lives.

“*Somehow, we’ve weathered and witnessed A nation that isn’t broken, but simply unfinished.*”

—*The Hill We Climb*, Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman”

“What does our theology require of us with regard to anti-oppression work?”

Julie Brannan, Lay Sunday homily — “Look Away”
[homily video link \(at about 40 min. in\)](#) || [homily text link \(pdf\)](#)



MAKE AN IMPACT

THE 8TH PRINCIPLE OF UNITARIAN-UNIVERSALISM

We are all familiar with the 7 Unitarian-Universalist principles, but there is now an 8th principle which has been adopted by several churches that are now working toward building a beloved community. We embrace our principles as strong values and moral guides, recognizing that UU churches and the denomination ever remain as works-in-progress.

This principle calls us to make our church a place of true diversity in all ways, in which everyone is treated with mutual respect, love and care. It calls us to work for justice in the world, and it calls us to open our hearts and minds. Active anti-racism and anti-oppression work will help us move toward a spiritual renewal and help us to repair our institutions.

The 8th Principle of Unitarian-Universalism was drafted by Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU).

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.

Being keenly aware of the sensitivities surrounding issues of race and racism—will we members of All Souls take this opportunity to make an explicit commitment to anti-oppression and anti-racism as an integral part of our collective expression of who we are as a congregation and adopt the proposed 8th Principle? For two centuries, our congregation has been involved with issues of race starting with the interim ministry of Charles Follen and continuing through work on abolition, the Civil War, and the Civil Rights era. Work on the 8th Principle is a continuation of our long history with issues of racial justice.

The question we face is: If not now, when?

The All Souls Board of Directors and the All Souls clergy team invite all members and friends to participate in this congregational Equity & Inclusion small group program:

Widening the Circle of Concern,

a congregation-wide Equity & Inclusion Initiative, based on the UUA program of the same name.

For further information review this resource link:

8thprincipleuu.org

Discussion and a vote on the 8th Principle will almost certainly take place at the June 23-27, 2021 (Virtual) General Assembly.

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(VIRTUAL) GENERAL ASSEMBLY: July 23–27, 2021
CIRCLE 'ROUND FOR JUSTICE • HEALING • COURAGE



GA is a time to “circle ‘round” in community. We circle ‘round in care and healing for liberation and justice, and for love and courage.

Reaction of a first-time All Souls delegate at the June 1986 General Assembly:

“In June, I was a first-time delegate at the UU General Assembly and found myself amazed at the wide spectrum of UU viewpoints and social concerns represented by the delegates from across America.

“In August, our former minister, Dr. Walter Donald Kring, preached at All Souls and his first sermon (summarized briefly) seemed particularly relevant to me after my exposure to UU activism in Rochester.

“Dr. Kring pointed out that while we as religious liberals and Unitarians try to be rational, pluralistic and broadminded in matters of theology, we often become almost creedal in our zeal when we champion various liberal, social, and economic causes.

“A denomination which abhors absolutism in religious beliefs should not claim to possess the final truth in questions of social policy. We can take stances as individuals, but we must be careful what we do as a church or as a denomination.

“This is a point worth pondering. As All Souls devotes more and more energies on the alleviation of social ills, it behooves us to look at all sides of issues and to respect opposing viewpoints, particularly within our own church community.”

—*Marietta Moskin*

Going forward, we will seek to learn: How can we best center the voices and power of people with lived experience in our justice work.

ACCESSING THE ALL SOULS ARCHIVES AT MEADVILLE-LOMBARD

Accessing our archives, now housed online at the Meadville Lombard Theological School, can be daunting. Here are the steps to get to the All Souls Archives at Meadville Lombard, if you don't want to use: tinyurl.com/all-souls-archives (which takes you to the same place):

1. Go to: meadville.libguides.com/archives *
2. Click on the **Digital Collections** tab
3. Scroll down to **Digital Collections List** and click on: “Records”
4. Click on: “New York - New York - Unitarian Church of All Souls Records” (NOT: “UUA Congregational Records - New York”, which isn't right.)

There should be 352 records.

At the top right corner of the results, it's best to select 100 or 200 rather than the default 20 results per screenful, and to look for what you want from there. (At the bottom of the results is a set of clickable page numbers of results. Move from one to the next there.)

It is possible to do a refining search for what you want using the search box or Advanced Search on the top right corner of the window.

* It is possible to get there from the *Meadville.edu* home page, but it's not worth the effort, as it takes a complex series of clicks.

SHARE YOUR COVID-19 EXPERIENCE

Have you received the Covid-19 Vaccine? What challenges have you encountered in trying to get it? What do you most look forward to after having received it?

The ASHS invites you to contribute your COVID-19 experiences to our collection. Record your experiences on a daily, weekly, or intermittent basis. You can contribute your thoughts and images online by sending them to our webmaster, Lois Coleman, at: archives@allsoulsnyc.org.

Please tell us if you would like us to post your contribution on our Historical Society website at: allsoulsnychistory.org/community-stories. Many thanks to everyone who has shared so far.

ART & ARTIFACT COMMITTEE

Reestablishment of the Art & Artifact Committee is high on our agenda of things to do. We will be seeking ASHS members with both an interest in our art and other articles of historical interest and a desire to help catalogue items when the church re-opens. If you are interested in working on this, please let us know at: archives@allsoulsnyc.org.

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Welcome New Members

Kari B. Elwell
Anne Brewer

EVENTS

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING
October 24, 2021.

THE BELLOWS LECTURE

Watch for announcements about our annual Bellows Lecture that will be held in November.

VIDEO LIBRARY

Bellows Lecture by Dr. Bernard Unti:

“Henry Bergh: Animal Advocate, ‘Riddle of the 19th Century’” (Nov. 22 2020)

<https://vimeo.com/482825245/1c7a834c8d>

New York: A Wonderful Town (Dec 18, 2020)

<https://vimeo.com/493409649/68f775ed94>

The Rev. John Buehrens, President of the UUHHS (Unitarian Universalist History and Heritage Society) on his book, *Conflagration: How Transcendentalists sparked the American Struggle for Racial, Gender and Social Justice* (reprise of the inaugural Channing Lecture) (Jan. 12, 2021)

<https://vimeo.com/501302889>

MEMBERSHIP

JOIN ASHS OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Our Members are the heart of the ASHS community and an integral part of the ASHS story. Become a member to help make possible the Society’s mission to promote the study of our history.

Annual Dues payable in October

Individual—\$20

Family—\$40

Life Membership—\$100

Mail-in: Download PDF Membership Form:

[\(Printable Membership Form\)](#)

(OR) Join online with a credit card at:

<https://onrealm.org/allsoulsnyc/-/give/now>

WE WILL GATHER AGAIN, BUT VERY CAREFULLY

Laura Pedersen, an acclaimed writer and playwright, and a beloved All Souls historian, will be carrying on the tradition of Sanctuary Tours first established by Mary-Ella Holst.

