

“New Minister Focuses on Caring at UU Falmouth”

Rev. Joseph Cherry has joined UU Falmouth, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation that serves the Upper Cape, as its new interim minister.

When asked what brought him to seminary and ministry, Rev. Cherry explains that his “ministerial expression” is rooted in his belief that every person is “fundamentally sufficient.” He believes that each person is “worthy of love and is capable of loving the world.” Along with that inherent worth comes “the responsibility to continue to grow as human beings for as long as we live.”

When asked about his thoughts on leading the congregation in this challenging time, Reverend Cherry said he continuously asks himself and his congregants “How are we being good to each other?” He considers this a “profoundly theological question,” and uses it as a “lens” through which he works. The question guides Rev. Cherry’s efforts to make sure people have a variety of ways to connect with him, their faith, and each other, both on Sunday mornings and throughout the week, while taking precautions for good health.

Rev. Cherry's experiences in ministry at congregations in Illinois, California, England and Canada, and most recently at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Cleveland, Ohio, as well as his previous experience in business, have given him insight into numerous ways congregations organize themselves and respond to change. "A variety of approaches can work, as long as being good to each other remains the focus," he says.

Rev. Cherry likes to remind people that we are interdependent, recounting stories of people helping each other in key ways. For example, he is grateful for the time a nurse saved his life when he was hospitalized as a young child. Because she had noticed he was a light sleeper on previous nights, she noticed when he did not awaken when she walked into the room. Checking him carefully, she discovered he had fallen into a coma. Joe Cherry woke up five days later in the ICU, hearing his parents cry, and has remembered the nurse with gratitude ever since.

In addition to asking key questions and telling meaningful stories, Rev. Cherry relates Unitarian Universalist theology to challenges people are facing today. When answering a curious, but hurried questioner, Rev. Cherry can summarize his beliefs in six words: "One God, Many Names, No Hell." Over the course of many Sundays, he teaches about the seven Unitarian Universalist

Principles to live by. The Unitarian and Universalist congregations that came together to form the Unitarian Universalist Association both have Protestant Christian roots, drawing wisdom from the Bible, and their “living tradition” also celebrates insights from many of the world’s religions and scriptures.

As a child, Rev. Joe questioned everything, and he remembers the kindness with which his minister at the time listened to his concerns and ideas. Decades later, after Rev. Cherry’s ordination as a Unitarian Universalist minister, he expressed his gratitude to the elder minister for having listened to him so respectfully. Rev. Joe wrote that he hopes to listen to every child and adult he encounters just as attentively.

UU Falmouth is currently offering Sunday services including their musicians and choir at 10 AM via Zoom. The link is available by contacting the office administrator at admin@uuffm.org by noon on the Friday before the Sunday service.

Other current UU Falmouth programs include coffee-house-style drop-in online presentations with music and other media focusing on a common shared value; Youth Group gatherings; discussions of books such as *Be Free Where You Are* by Thich Nhat Hanh (not requiring having read the book); mindfulness nature walks;

mindfulness classes; social action activities such as the sales of gift certificates for good causes and collections of snacks for Habitat for Humanity house building sessions; and social events such as special interest and support groups. More information can be found online at uufalmouth.org.

UU Falmouth, officially named the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Falmouth, is a caring community of people, diverse in faith and background, and joined together through shared values and a commitment to social, racial, and environmental justice, and to helping improve our world.

UU Falmouth's members, visitors and friends come from throughout the Upper Cape: Falmouth, Mashpee, Bourne, Sandwich, and beyond. Its online services make it possible for people to participate while in Florida or other states or countries. The congregation began as a lay-led fellowship group in the late 1950s, and built and moved into its Meeting House on Sandwich Road in Falmouth in 1995.

More about UU Falmouth can be found at UUFalmouth.org More about the Unitarian Universalist faith can be found at the Unitarian Universalist Association web site: UUA.org.

#

#

#