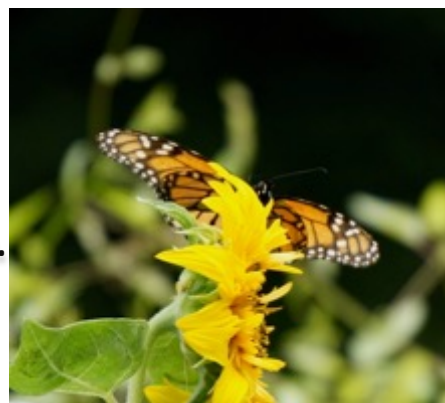




THE ALLIANCE ALERT

September-October 2021

**The Women's Alliance of the
Unitarian Church of All Souls, Inc.**



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Christine Goodwin

I hope you have had a good summer and managed to keep cool. This summer, due to lower Covid infection rates, people have been able to go out more, see family, and travel. Now with the rising Delta variant, things are once again uncertain. The Women's Alliance is making plans for the coming year, but aware that we need to be flexible depending on changing protocols and the virus.

Due to changes at All Souls, the Women's Alliance is facing some challenges. Many may be aware that All Souls Church has signed a new long-term lease with the All Souls School. Per the new lease, on weekdays the Ware Room and the Minot Simons Room (both used in the past for WA meetings for small groups) may not be available for WA use until 6 p.m. As I understand it, when the School is not using those rooms we will be able to reserve them for our executive board meetings, bridge group, etc., but we don't know yet how scheduling will work out.

There is also a new lease between All Souls Church and longtime tenant Super Soccer Stars. Reidy Hall will now be used by the soccer program from noon-6 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, which means that Reidy is no longer available for our traditional monthly Wednesday luncheon and speaker. On Fridays, Reidy Hall is used midday by Friday Soup Kitchen. On Mondays, Super Soccer Stars rents Reidy Hall from 2:30-6 p.m., so we are making alternative plans to switch our monthly lunch and speaker to Mondays from noon-2 p.m. If and when we are able to meet in-person in Reidy Hall for our lunches, we plan to use Zoom so those who cannot attend will be able to see and hear our speaker.

We have reserved Reidy Hall for Thursday, September 23rd from 6-8 p.m. for the Women's Alliance traditional Welcome Back Party, open to the everyone. We will be monitoring the health updates and any All Souls protocols and decide if we can hold the event or if we may have to cancel.

Many may not be aware that Women's Alliance had use of the closet in the Ware Room, where we stored our lovely holiday decorations, useful serving baskets and platters for our events, as well as boxes of items left over from past Holiday Gift Table events that were kept to sell at our next HGT. The closet also houses the heating and air-conditioning unit for the Chapel and the Ware Room. Unfortunately, the Ware Room closet was declared a fire hazard, so a small but intrepid band of WA members met on August 5th to triage the boxes stacked high in the closet and store the reduced amount in the smaller closet in the hallway across from the Ware Room.

As we move into the fall, we will keep everyone informed about our events, keeping in mind things may have to change at the last minute. So we need to be flexible and understanding. I hope that we will be able to meet again in-person, because it's so important to be able to be together, meet new people, catch up with our friends and strengthen the bonds within Women's Alliance.

WOMEN'S ALLIANCE UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, September 12, 1:30 p.m.

Memorial Service for Elizabeth McCollum in All Souls sanctuary

A celebration and commemoration of the life and passing of our dear Betty, a very active member and former president of the Women's Alliance. Refreshments will follow and Betty's family requests colorful attire. RSVP at ELIZABETH.MCCOLLUM.MEMORIAL@gmail.com. Gifts in tribute may be made to the Betty McCollum Fund at All Souls focused on social justice outreach within community allies.

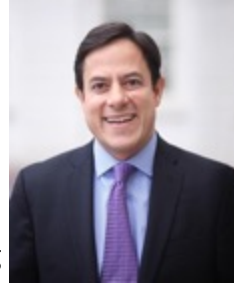
Wednesday, September 15, 3-4:30 p.m.

Membership Meeting (virtual)

Presenter: **Daniel Garodnick**, President and CEO of the Riverside Park Conservancy

Topic: **Garodnick's new book *Saving Stuyvesant Town***

The lifetime Stuy Town resident and former New York City councilman, originally scheduled to speak at the WA's July membership meeting, recounts the incredible true story of how his neighbors stood up to mammoth real estate interests. They fought to save their homes, delivering New York City's biggest-ever affordable housing preservation win.



Thursday, September 23, 6-8 p.m.

All Church Welcome Back Party

The Women's Alliance invites you to a convivial evening with food, drink and music in Reidy Friendship Hall with members of the Alliance and the Unitarian Church of All Souls.

Wednesday, September 29, 12 noon

Ravishing: The Rose in Fashion + Lunch

At the Museum at FIT (Fashion Institute of Technology)



This exhibit explores how the rose has influenced the way we look, dress, feel, and fantasize. It is the first socio-cultural examination of the rose in fashion. Let's go see! 227 West 27th St. and Seventh Ave. Free admission.

fitnyc.edu/museum/. Lunch at Niles Restaurant at 1:30 p.m., 371 7th Ave. @ 31st St. Proof of vaccination and photo ID are required for museum admission and indoor dining. To show our festive side, please wear or accessorize your

beautiful self with a rose, or bring a picture of your favorite rose — all good conversation starters! RSVP by Sept. 26th for Museum and lunch to Sandra Fisher, Sfisher535@aol.com, 646-675-3608.

Saturday, October 2, 11 a.m.

Special Program (virtual)

WA member **Marie Schu**, a volunteer with Chinese graduate students, worked with **Shuo Wu** for a year and has asked her to share about her life in New York City as a graduate student in accounting at Fordham University. Shuo Wu will talk about everything from learning to speak up like a New Yorker and finding an apartment in the city, to her work helping businesses and individuals file their income taxes. In



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February Shuo Wu returned to China, where she works at PricewaterhouseCoopers in Shanghai.

Wednesday, October 13, 11 a.m.

KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature and Fall Foliage + Lunch

At the New York Botanical Garden

Experience an immersive, indoor/outdoor installation by contemporary Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama. One of the most popular artists in the world, Kusama reveals her intimate engagement with the colors, patterns, and life cycles of plants and flowers. 2950 Southern Boulevard, Bronx. Admission to the grounds only is free on Wednesdays for NYC residents and does not require the purchase of tickets in advance. A timed-entry ticket to see both indoor and outdoor installations, the Kusama Gallery & Garden Pass, is \$35, Seniors \$32, Members free. nybg.org/visit/admission. Masks are required. Lunch at the Pine Tree Cafe by the Main Entrance at 12:30 p.m. Transportation: Take a Harlem line train from Grand Central Station or 125th St./Park Ave. to the Botanical Garden stop. Arrive in time to meet at 11 a.m. at Moshulu Entrance across from train stop. Train schedule (mta.info/schedules). RSVP for Gardens and lunch to Sandra Fisher, Sfisher535@aol.com, 646-675-3608.

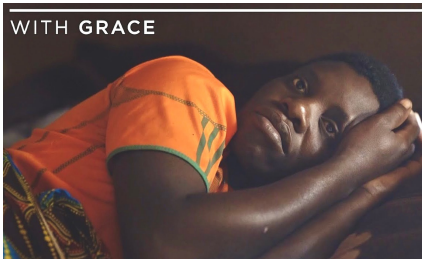


Monday, October 18, 3:00 p.m., on Zoom.

Membership Meeting

Presenter: **Austin Meyer**, documentary filmmaker

Topic: **Meyer's new film *With Grace***



With Grace is a 22-minute documentary about the state of maternal healthcare in rural Zambia. The film follows 34-year-old Grace Hachiswenya as she sets out to have a successful delivery in a country with some of the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the world. This film, which is presented by the United Nations Population Fund, was directed, filmed, and edited by Austin Meyer and funded by the National Geographic Society.

Looking ahead - Save the Dates:

Thursday, November 10, 11 a.m., an outing to Frick Madison + lunch

Thursday, December 2, 11 a.m., an outing Morgan Library + lunch

RESUMPTION OF SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)

By Mary Geissman

On a beautiful August night seven members of the Women's Alliance enjoyed a live concert at the Naumburg Bandshell in Central Park. The East Coast Chamber Orchestra, with a piano soloist, performed two Mozart piano concertos and two other pieces. It was the first live cultural performance enjoyed by the WA since the beginning of the pandemic. Unfortunately, it was the last of the series of Naumburg concerts this summer. However, as coordinator of the concert SIG (Special Interest Group), I will look for other free or low-cost concerts that might appeal to our members. Suggestions are welcome (migeissman@gmail.com).



Prior to the shutdown, the WA had several active SIG's — a bridge club that met once or twice a month; a cinema club that saw a current film followed by lunch once a month; a theater club that attended a play reading at the Ethical Cultural Society on Friday evenings once a month.

Play readings are resuming on Sept. 17. Hopefully as more cultural events are available in person, we will resume some of the SIG activities. Any member may initiate a new SIG.

Of course, one longtime SIG, the Women's Reading Group, never did stop meeting. Under the direction of Christina Black (christina.black50@gmail.com), this group meets the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m., currently on Zoom.

A MESSAGE FROM THE WOMEN'S ALLIANCE FINANCE COMMITTEE

By Jane Colvin, Chair

I hope you're having a safe AND enjoyable summer ... Just a reminder for you to start thinking about recommendations that you'd like to send us for charities to be included in our Charitable Giving Program for 2021. We do have the following guidelines and criteria in order to consider your recommendations:

The charities must be 501(c)3 organizations, have a 3-star or higher rating on Charity Navigator, Guidestar or other similar highly regarded third-party charity rating agency. Organizations must also meet one of the following criteria:

- Provide support for women and girls
- Are programs of, supported by, or affiliated with the Unitarian Church of All Souls
- Are programs affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist Association, such as the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and the UU Women's Federation, and programs supported by the Unitarian Universalist Office at the United Nations (UU@UN)
- Provide support for local neighborhood programs in New York City

Please send recommendations to JaneColvin914@aol.com by September 15th.

NEW MEMBER PROFILE

Sandra Michael: Now is the Time

By Maureen Marwick



Sandy Michael is looking forward to fresh challenges in the fall days ahead. An All Souls member since around 2005, she is now a new member of the Women's Alliance because "now is the time to get out and about, meet new people, do new things."

For the last several years, Sandy had been busy looking after her ailing husband Bill, who died in September, 2019. Just before the COVID shutdown she put on a rousing memorial service for Bill in Reidy Friendship Hall with spoken-word artists, jazz musicians and even a tap dancer! Sandy's marriage partner of 61 years was also her long-time business partner. Together they

opened a boutique in Harlem in the late 1960s, The Ashanti Bazaar, featuring colorful African print fabrics, wall hangings and jewelry. It flourished during the black cultural renaissance of the '60s, but withered during the economic downturn of the '70s. So Sandy and Bill, always ahead of their time, changed their fashion focus.

As African clothes were no longer such a novelty in American retail, they left Harlem to transfer to a new Ashanti boutique at Lexington Avenue and E. 65th Street, keeping the core of their exciting colorful designs, but transitioning into more sumptuous, sweeping caftans and larger sizes. Sandy sewed and designed some of the clothing and did marketing as well. They retired just before 9/11 and, to her, that was a stroke of luck. After that, it was a different world in clothes design.

Sandy no longer sews, designs or markets. "I am trying now to downsize and cut down on the clutter of fabric and sewing equipment. Much quieter life now that my husband has gone and because of the pandemic." Her two grown children — a son and a daughter — both live in California. But to her delight, her daughter, who is a teacher in the Los Angeles public school system — Sandy started her own working life as a nursery school teacher — is packing up and coming home to New York. Now Sandy is busy helping "to fix up" her daughter's new apartment.

Sandy loves to cook and entertain and read as much as possible. "I hope joining a book club is in my future." A new interest is prison reform. She would like to become active in helping with that issue. (She had been volunteering at All Souls' Monday Night Hospitality soup kitchen but had to give it up because of the pandemic.) "Mostly I am looking forward to getting back to dressing up again for theater openings and family visits. And to joining the Alliance programs on Zoom and in person."

PASTORAL CARE UNDER THE CLOUD OF COVID

By Alynne Wesson



Pamela Patton was walking fast down Madison Avenue on a recent stifling summer afternoon, a package tucked under her arm. As All Souls' Director of Pastoral Ministries, she was on her way to drop off a collection of meditations on loss that might provide some measure of balm in Gilead for a congregant who is dealing with grief.

A preternaturally calming presence, even Patton has been stressed by the added burden these Covid times have placed on her. Early in the pandemic, she says, "there were times when I had to go into the hospital via Zoom," when ministers and families were not able to visit hospitalized patients. Along with hospital workers, they had to learn on the battlefield, so to speak, how to negotiate the video conferencing tools that were their only means to connect. Along with Senior Minister Galen Guengerich, Patton performed "a service via a physician's phone" for a congregant who was dying of Covid early in the pandemic. The Zoom connection also included the patient's children, a couple friends, and grandchildren who read poetry and played music.

Patton, who is a member of the Women's Alliance, has a heightened awareness of the Covid paradox: While her life these last 18 months has largely been confined to squares on a Zoom screen, her reach as a pastoral counselor and calmer of shaken nerves has expanded.

"My job is two-fold," between the pastoral care and the Buddhism workshops, she says, "but there is a lot of overlap." Before Covid, Patton's job was defined as three-quarter time. A couple of months into the pandemic, as her pastoral work evolved and her "Buddhism and Mindfulness" sessions grew in attendance from about 40 on Sundays at All Souls to, "in winter during high Covid," as many as 120 on Mondays and Thursdays on Zoom, she was asked to take on a full-time load. Her last two Monday and Thursday sessions in August — generally the month of lowest attendance for church programs — drew around 70 participants each. Many expressed their gratitude for the sessions with enthusiastic comments on Chat, while more than a few did so out loud, with sometimes heart-breaking emotion.

Much of Patton's work these last 18 trying months has been about creating connections. Her "Circles of Care" programs — the Friendship and Support circles — grew during Covid, and she cites Membership Assistant Robert Wohner and Ministerial Intern & Adult Education Coordinator Julie Bond as "essential" to their success. "They did a great deal of the communications for the programs and Julie leads the Long-term Illness support Circle." An eight-week session taught by Pilar Jennings, a psychoanalyst with a focus on clinical applications of Buddhist meditation, brought together Western and Eastern practices and attracted 100 people; Patton had been expecting 25.

The Friendship Circles, which wound down with spring, had about 140 participants in 15 different groups, or "circles." A favorite story involves the member of one Friendship Circle who talked about his Irish dancing during a meeting. After one of his co-members said she would love to see him dance, he called her from the sidewalk outside her apartment and gave her a personal concert right then and there.

Patton notes the four Support Circles (with focuses on Grief, Long-term Illness, Caregivers, and

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The Women's Alliance - supporting values of friendship, equality and justice

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Enlightened Aging) were “relatively small, but targeted. People joined from all over the country.” The Rev. Tracy Sprowls, who led the Grief Support Circle, says she would have 7-10 participants.

Volunteers — from the Lay Pastoral Associates to the Friendship Circle leaders — are also an important part of the effort. One volunteer stays in touch with members who are not able to connect online. Sadly, Patton notes that “we lost two Lay Pastoral Associates” during the pandemic, Women’s Alliance member Betty McCollum, who died of Covid, and Mary Ellen Fahs, who was struck by a car.

Patton also cited Sprowls, until recently All Souls’ Assistant Minister for Lifespan Faith Formation and now Interim-Minister at UU Fellowship of Centre County in Pennsylvania, who helped Patton with calls and emails to congregants throughout the pandemic. Sprowls also kept up with the 104 children who were registered in All Souls’ religious education before Covid. That effort included, among other things, Sunday school classes and middle-school socials on Zoom, twice-a-week emails, 4 to 5 mass mailings of care packages, and help for families in crisis. She was “amazing,” says the mother of a child in the program, “at keeping the families together” during the pandemic.



All the ministers, Lay Pastoral Associates and other volunteers had to “make it up as we go” and refine their approaches to Zoom, says Patton. Now they are re-evaluating for the fall and figuring out “how it makes sense to go forward. ... It’s a question of topics and schedule. We will continue to offer a lot of programming over Zoom.”

PRACTICING LAY PASTORAL CARE DURING COVID

By Peggy Montgomery

For many of us who have become dedicated All Souls members, our long term-friendships are among the most precious parts of our lives. Joining each other in many AS activities at church and beyond brings us further opportunities to grow, give back, and develop new skills and joys.

For me, co-leading a Small Group Ministry for three years brought challenge, joy, and treasured friendships. The group met bi-weekly in my home, and there were at least 10 folks. More recently, being part of our All Souls Pastoral Care team taught me to be a much better listener and more appreciative of how others confront difficulty. The group has 15 or so members, and each member works with at least three All Souls people. Pamela Patton leads our group meetings, which are now on Zoom.

With the current fact of COVID-19, the pandemic has kept most of us apart literally, and pastoral care has taken on different challenges. Talking on the phone can make a connection obviously, but not seeing the talker face-to-face lessens the sharing. Watching a film or television at the same time makes a connection, but it’s still afar. So is listening to the radio.

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Then along comes Zoom, which is wonderful if you like seeing and hearing folks sitting in a box. And it requires the right kind of technology and the willingness to watch on and on.

How special and joyous it is to have the words, wisdom, voices and dear faces of Galen, Audette, Pamela, Julie, guest speakers, All Souls members and friends, and hundreds of folks worldwide at our fingertips. What a treasure!

Summer Outings:



(L to R) Victoria Kimbrough, Nicky Carrante-Vaughan, Mary Ann Lang, Maureen Marwick, Susan Hoehn enjoyed lunch after a visit to the New-York Historical Society in July.



In June, WA members had a guided visit to the 91st Street Community Garden in Riverside Park.

The Women's Alliance (WA) is a membership organization. If you are interested in learning more about WA and its various programs and events, please email WomensAlliance@AllSoulsnyc.org.

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