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**Office Hours:**

We do not have regular hours at this time, but arrangements can be made as needed. Email and phone messages are checked as usual. Check your email, Facebook and our website for updates.

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## From Our Minister

If nothing else, the last year and a half has most certainly opened us up to our September Soul Matters Theme, Embracing Possibility. I look forward to hearing what these thoughts stir in you, when I return from vacation and study leave on September 12.

Of all our themes this year, Embracing Possibility is arguably most central to our faith. It has distinguished Unitarian Universalists from the start. Historically, when others saw depravity and sin at the core of human identity, we saw potential. When many were preaching that this world was fallen, we fell in love with the possibility of heaven on earth. Theologically, you might say we were the people who believed that God hadn't given up on us, and so we shouldn't give up on each other or this world. Psychologically, it's led to us being a people of "why not?" Why not give people another chance? Why not fight what seems a losing battle? Why not risk a little failure?

So that's our religion. But what about us personally? How open have you been recently to "Why not?" How's your faith in possibility doing? As we honor our religion's faith in what's possible, we need to allow space for the reality that trusting possibility isn't so easy for many of us. Here's how one Soul Matters member puts the challenge:

*"When I think of possibility, I think of all the people and opportunities we close the door on. Such as: 'I will never see eye to eye with my sister.' 'I couldn't possibly leave this job to start my own business.' 'I will never have close friends like I had where I used to live.' 'I will never really make a difference, so why bother?'"*

We tell ourselves so many small stories about who we and others are. So many tiny tales of what the world could be. Part of it has to do with real life defeats. But often a bigger part of it is about imagined fear and protecting ourselves. There's comfort in convincing yourself that the effort is hopeless; that way you don't have to try and risk failure, hurt or disappointment, yet again.

All of which is to say that maybe Embracing Possibility has more to do with being a people of vulnerability and courage than we've thought. The work isn't just about *believing* in possibility. It's about being willing to endure a few wounds along the way. It can hurt to be hopeful.

So maybe the question this month isn't "Are you ready to lean into possibility?" but "Who's beside you, and who are you bringing along?" "Who have you gathered to patch and pick you up when the path gets bumpy?" "Whose faith can you lean on when yours grows dim?" After all, no one makes it down the road of possibility alone.

And perhaps that's the real secret: remembering that "Why not?" is something we all have to say and sing together. It's not a solo act. For it to sink in – and better yet take flight – it needs to be at least a duet. Of course, a quartet is even better. And just imagine what we might pull off if we can gather a choir, all singing the tune of "Why not?!" at the top of our lungs!

In Love and Hope,

Rev. Alice



## A Letter from Our Minister, Rev. Alice Syltie

My Dear Congregation,

Each August, the UUCP Board of Trustees, including the minister, meets on a Saturday to make sure the new board members are brought up to speed on roles and responsibilities of serving on the board, as well as to begin some planning and goal setting for the coming year. After moving that retreat to Zoom last year, we were looking forward to being together this year. The rising cases of Covid caused the board to again move that meeting to Zoom. This year's new board came together today with a well-planned agenda, that had to be modified at the last minute. Yesterday the UUA released guidance for congregations based on what we are learning about the new Delta variant. This is one paragraph from the letter.

*"One of the most important changes we have learned about the Delta variant is that even though vaccination reduces the chances of severe disease, vaccination does not prevent a person from getting infected or transmitting the virus to others. This means that even when we are vaccinated, we can contribute to increased community spread. As the [CDC](#) says, our guidance is changing because the virus is changing."*

The letter addresses a number of risks and reasons for concern that led the board to grapple today with a very difficult decision. We know that we need one another, and we need the comfort of our church community during these days of deep sadness for all that is happening in our world, in our neighborhoods, and sometimes within our own families. And yet, we have a commitment to be good citizens and good stewards of the relationships we are called to nurture in our church community.

Because of this, the Board listened to one another, including members of our Safer Congregations Ministry Team, and following an assessment of risk based on what we heard, came to the conclusion that the only responsible action was to discontinue our in-person church services for the immediate future. We will continue to assess the situation in our area, and to be as creative as possible in addressing the needs of our church community.

If you have questions, please feel free to email me at [revaluu@gmail.com](mailto:revaluu@gmail.com)

My love to all of you,

Rev. Alice

## How do we build Beloved Community?

### From Your Board: President's Column



The month of September has always been transitional for me. It is naturally full of endings and beginnings, like the end of summer vacation and the beginning of school, and, for gardeners, the end of peak growing season and the beginning of dormancy. It's a time when we upshift from a leisurely to a more industrious pace.

We all find comfort in these rhythms of life and experience distress when these are interrupted. We know this all too well from living in the pandemic. And just when it feels that we are settling back into normal rhythms, we are faced with another setback. Masking back up was not a huge deal, but it isn't easy to give up enjoying refreshments with one another after the service or group luncheons to favorite restaurants. But we do know that this, too, will change, and we will resume our march toward normalcy.

Our public health environment is unstable and fluid, and we all know how COVID is currently ravaging our greater community. Rest assured that community public health outcomes are being monitored regularly, and we will continue to adjust our activities accordingly. We can appreciate the timeliness of interventions from the Safer Congregation Ministry Team and the Governing Board and take solace that we are all of one mind that the health and safety of our congregants remains our top priority.

While we've had a setback in one area, other things are moving forward. Ministry teams are gearing up, and the Board has had its retreat and charted its course for the year. [Disclosure: As I write this piece to meet the submission deadline, that is more a statement of faith and hope than historical fact! This time of year, the peak of hurricane season, brings its own uncertainties and disruptions.]

And finally, you may have noticed that I changed the header of this column from "How do we inspire love?" to "How do we build Beloved Community?" I see that as a natural progression because each time we celebrate diversity, strive for justice and inspire love, we are building Beloved Community within and outside our walls.

Closing on a personal note, I have come to appreciate that I should always be asking myself, "Am I building Beloved Community or adding to the chaos?" I must confess that I have been challenged lately by our First Principle. Call it what you like — anger, frustration, COVID-rage — I have felt it all. I have resented and blamed others for the changes I've had to make just when things started to feel good again. That is human, yes, but I also find it ugly, counter-productive and self-destructive. I am finding that the First Principle pulls me back and challenges me to recognize the humanity in those who think and act differently from myself and seek ways to make things better — to be a true builder of Beloved Community.

Faithfully,

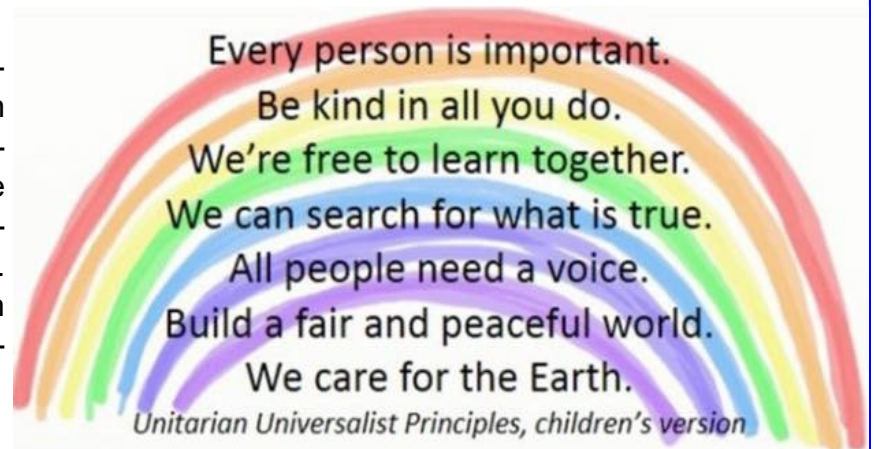
Arnie Ondis

Governing Board President

## Sunday Services in September livestreamed on Facebook at 10am

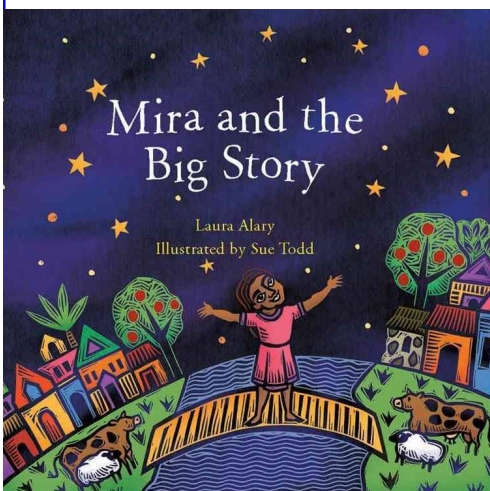
### September 5, 2021

A sermon by the Rev. Angela Herrera given November 26, 2017 at First Unitarian Church in Albuquerque provides an engaging and thoughtful explanation of the definition of religion and Unitarian Universalism's place in human religious history. Join us via Facebook for a service with both live and recorded elements, broadcast from the sanctuary.



### September 12, 2021 and September 19, 2021

Rev. Alice is on vacation and study leave until September 12 but wanted to let us know: "At the moment, we face uncertainty about the shape of our Sunday Services in the immediate weeks to come. One thing we know for sure, we will continue to meet the challenge to move forward together in the best ways possible for the greater health and safety of our church community. Join Rev. Alice on September 12th and 19th as we explore our September theme Embracing Possibilities. Watch the Thursday Email for more specific details."



### September 26, 2021

Kate Wolverton and Penny Featherstone will present a multigenerational service based on the book *Mira and the Big Story* by Laura Alary. They will be exploring a pathway to peace, the concept of truth, the value of diverse perspectives, and the importance of being neighborly.

## The Best of Times, The Worst of Times

Jean Siebenaler, MD, MPH

It has been six months since my last communication in *The Light* regarding COVID-19. At that time, guidance about moving forward in a post-vaccine world was still murky. The vaccine was still new, and people were clamoring to get appointments to receive it. We were hopeful that by summer most people would be vaccinated, and life would be returning to some type of normal. While we learned that the vaccine was not 100% protective from getting infected, we watched the weekly hospitalization and death rates fall rapidly, giving us reassurance. And when we learned in the early Spring that vaccinated individuals didn't seem to effectively transmit COVID-19 to others, masks came off. There was a sense of liberation as people started eating indoors at restaurants and traveling again. Gym memberships were renewed, and church congregations began re-gathering indoors, including ours. I was sure that I would no longer need to provide any COVID-19 updates.

Sigh. Big sigh. It is clear now that "it was the best of times; it was the worst of times." We had heard about the Delta variant lurking in the background, but the vaccines seemed to be effective against it. And if people continued getting vaccinated, we hoped we would conquer this new invader. The scientifically sound and logical plan to move forward seemed clear, but we needed everyone to do their part. And that is where the plan fell apart.

Many of our neighbors, family, friends, co-workers, and even fellow UUs did not follow the plan. "Don't tell me what to do" they said, as they clung to a warped, twisted version of "give me liberty or give me death." Unfortunately, this extended to their war on masks as well, which remains the only low-tech, low-cost, simple, and practical tool to prevent most infected viral particles from spewing in the direction of others. As a result, the Delta variant grew in potency and transmissibility and became the dominant strain of the virus. Like a heat-seeking missile, it looked for its next susceptible target; its will to exist and mutate is strong. And Florida was ripe for the picking.

Florida, with its moderately low vaccination rate and lack of state leadership in adherence to public health principles, started to see a significant rise in community positivity rates by the beginning of Summer. Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties, with their extremely low COVID immunization rates among younger adults and teenagers, went from community positivity rates of less than 5% in early June to rates of 28%-36% by mid-August. Now we sit in horror as we see news reports of younger adults who are dying and leaving their children as orphans. Pregnant mothers losing their babies and often their own lives. And more children getting sick and needing hospitalization and ICU care than at any previous time in the pandemic. The number of cases has been so high among the unvaccinated that the odds of vaccinated individuals getting "breakthrough infections" from public exposure has grown stronger every day. It is simple math—and we are exhausted.

So where did we go wrong? And what lies ahead?

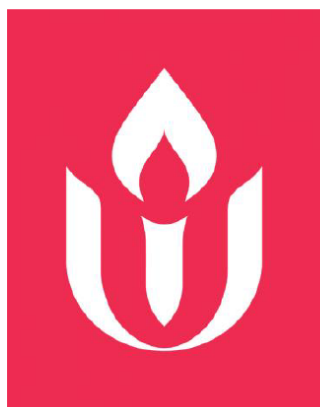
First of all, I want to emphasize that we—the vaccinated and/or the masked—did not go wrong. We did our part to protect ourselves AND others, including our children who are vulnerable but can't get the vaccine due to their young age. If we went wrong, it was in trusting others, including those we love, to do the same. It hurts to think we can't put our trust in them. And it makes us angry. We will all need to wrestle with these emotions as the future unfolds, but it helps to know that UUCP is a place to work it out together.

(continued on page 5)

(continued from page 4)

In the meantime, here are some current facts from the CDC regarding the Delta variant and what may lie ahead:

- **The transmissibility and potency of the Delta variant is much higher than early COVID-19 variants.** It may be nearly as infectious as measles, which is one of the most easily transmissible respiratory infectious diseases on the planet, and one that we nearly eradicated with an effective vaccination program. According to the CDC, 90% of susceptible people will get measles if they are within 60 feet of an infected person. Furthermore, the measles virus can live in a closed room for up to two hours after an infected person leaves that area. This essentially means that unvaccinated and unmasked individuals will almost certainly become infected at some point. It is no longer a matter of “if”, but “when.”
- **People infected with the Delta variant carry higher viral loads in their noses, mouths, and respiratory systems, including those who are vaccinated.** This most likely contributes to more viral shedding and may play a role in the fact that the incubation period from exposure to symptoms has now decreased to 2-3 days. And while the viral load is higher in vaccinated people with the Delta variant compared to the early variants, it also seems to go down faster than in unvaccinated people, meaning that vaccinated individuals may be infectious for less time.
- **Immediate symptoms caused by the Delta variant seem to be changing.** Coughs and loss of smell are less common, with the symptoms of a common cold being more commonly documented (e.g., sore throat, runny nose, headache, fever).
- **It is not clear that the Delta variant is causing more severe illness.** We may be seeing more people in the hospital based on the sheer number of increased cases, but this is still being investigated.
- **The number of breakthrough infections in vaccinated people is increasing.** This may also be due to the sheer number of exposures to increased cases in the unvaccinated population, but it may also be due to waning vaccine effectiveness over time. Currently all the current COVID-19 vaccines are holding in their protection from serious illness due to the Delta variant (i.e., hospitalizations or deaths), but this is expected to increasingly slip as time goes on, which is the reasoning behind recommendations to start getting booster shots at the 8-month time point after the second dose of the mRNA vaccines. (Note that we are still waiting for guidance regarding boosters for the JnJ vaccine.)
- **Moderate to severe immunocompromised people are encouraged to get a 3<sup>rd</sup> vaccine dose 28 days after the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine.** This is because current data shows there was never an adequate immune response to the first two doses of the vaccine. Patients who fall in this category are those who are receiving active cancer treatment, organ transplant recipients who are taking immunosuppressant medications to prevent organ rejection, stem cell transplant patients within the past 2 years or taking immunosuppressant medications, diagnoses of moderate to severe primary immunodeficiency syndromes, advanced or untreated HIV infection, and current treatment with high-dose steroids.



# CRE \*\*\* Faith Development

## Fall into CRE

Back at home and back to remote gatherings. We didn't really expect to have in person classes again until everyone, including our littles, could be vaccinated. And now that the church has closed down in-person gathering it feels like we have been here before. Right? And yet we persisted. And will continue to persist.

September 12 will be an Ingathering Sunday. We will celebrate the end of summer by sharing the stories of our summer travels. Some of us may have traveled far; some may have only traveled as far as their back yard. We would like to hear about all your adventures. Bring something to show us that you obtained, found or were given in your travels on Sunday September 12 at 9am via Zoom Come as You Are Sunday School.

All PJs and breakfast munchers welcome!

### Children's Religious Education (CRE) Ministry Team

Coordinator: Sarah Stubbs

Team Leader: Open

Team Members: Linda Cobb, Penny Featherstone,  
Kate Wolverton, Pam Levitt

Feel free to contact any member with  
comments or suggestions!

## Come as You Are

We will resume Come as You Are Sunday School on September 12. In the meantime, keep an eye on your snail mail box for family activity kits to work on together as a family. The first kit will be mailed out next week. It will include materials to make a child-safe chalice that may be used each time we meet, to light at the beginning of class.

### Class Schedule for September:

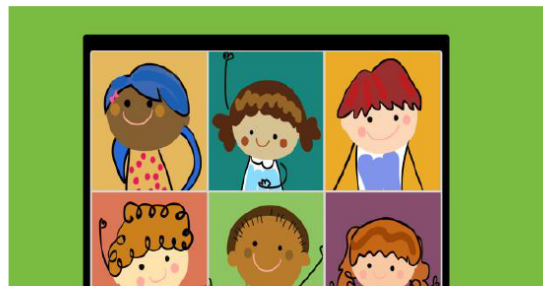
Sept. 12: Ingathering

Sept. 19: Finding Hidden Possibilities

Sept 26: What Dreams Make possible

Please email

[UUPensacola@Gmail.com](mailto:UUPensacola@Gmail.com) no later than Thursday at 4pm to receive the Zoom link to the class for the following Sunday.





LET'S GET  
Together

### UUCP VIRTUAL ZOOM HAPPY HOUR at 5:30PM on Fridays

— **Trista Blouin says**, “Please grab a beverage and join your UUCP family on Friday evenings for a time of light-hearted conversation. We're finding it to be a great time to just laugh and let go of cares for an hour. Hope to see you there.” To join the Zoom Meeting, you'll be sent an email that will give you the link, the Meeting ID number and pass-word to use. If you are not a Member or Friend of UUCP, contact the UUCP office.

### READERS' GROUP — Sep 20th CANCELLED. Sep 10th ZOOM group — GOOD TO GO.

Because of current COVID restrictions, the Sep 20th Face-to-Face Readers' Group, scheduled at the Ortiz House has been cancelled. **However, the Sep 10th ZOOM group at 10 am is available.**

An email will be sent out a few days prior to the Sept 10th ZOOM group with a guide to the day's session. Meetings last roughly an hour, and there is NO REQUIRED reading. We enjoy sharing our experiences and recommendations, and passions for escaping in a good book. Info - Contact Laurie Winterberg.

### YARD SALE TO BE RESCHEDULED

In light of recent Covid developments, the Yard Sale will be rescheduled for a later date. Stay tuned via our [website](#), [Facebook](#) page and your email for developments.

### CRITICAL RACE THEORY DISCUSSION GROUP CANCELLED

The group will not meet on Sep 5 due to UUCP cancelling in-person gatherings.

### *Caring Connection — Inspiring Love*



Emma Mulvaney, her husband Mike, and daughter Maeve are moving to Starkville, Mississippi. Before that they will be doing a two-month road trip out west in their new little pull-behind trailer. We wish them well in their new home and adventures. Emma has been very active with our Children's Religious Education and has done so much for UUCP during the years she has been with us. Mike and Maeve have also contributed and have been part of the CRE activities, the Fun and Fellowship programs and the Family Campouts. They will be missed.

And, speaking of folks moving, Sharon West is now in living in California. Rob Palme is settling in in South Florida after moving to be closer to his daughter.

Linda Cobb has been spending quite a bit of time in South Florida as well, getting to know her new granddaughter and helping out.

Denise D'Angelo, our pianist, is now at home recovering after being hospitalized with Covid. Several of our members are helping her by bringing in meals.

As a final note, Happy Birthday to all those with birthdays in September. Make YOUR day a special one.



## How do we Strive for Justice?

Changes to Florida's voting laws will be the focus of a March for Voting Rights — set for midday Saturday at Seville Square in downtown Pensacola. The event is an offshoot of the national March for Voting Rights in Washington, D.C. Besides Florida and the nation's capital, the marches will take place in Georgia, Arizona, and Texas, where voter suppression efforts have been passed into law. Besides Florida and the nation's capital, the marches will take place in Georgia, Arizona, and Texas, where voter suppression efforts have been passed into law. Jeff Nall is an organizer of the local march and says the Aug. 28 date is no accident.



Civil Rights leader Rev. H. K. Matthews

“Aug 28 is the 58<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.’s historic march on Washington,” Nall said. “A group in Pensacola decided that we wanted to have a local march; and if you go to [marchonforvotingrights.org](http://marchonforvotingrights.org), you can see all the places around the country, and you can see how widespread the concern, and the support, for this movement is.”

The march kicks off at 11:30 a.m. outside the Escambia County Supervisor of Elections Office on Palafox Place and will proceed to Seville Square for the rally at 11:45. Among those scheduled to speak is Civil rights icon Rev. H.K. Matthews.

“It’s been 58 years ago [since the march], but still my memory is pretty vivid of that day; so I don’t have to do a lot of prepping for [his speech],” Matthews said. “When I’m talking about days and dates I’m familiar with, I normally just ab-lib — just go to wherever I’m led.”

In 2021, Matthews can see parallels between the new, restrictive voting laws, with the attempts to curb minority voting rights in the run-up to the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

“They made us count the number of jelly beans in a jar, which was impossible; and of course the poll tax that was imposed upon some of the older people,” he said. “What some of the states are doing, this is just a revisit of Jim Crow.”

Two of the biggest culprits, contends Matthews, are two governors – Greg Abbott in Texas, and Ron DeSantis in Florida. The tactics are different from the mid-60s, he says, but the goals are the same: preventing certain groups from casting a ballot.

“We expected it back then; but Lord knows in 2021, after all that we have gone through, and all that we have accomplished, I never dreamed that we would be back to a day that they’re trying to take us back to a time that never should have been.”

Some advice from Matthews to those targeted by the new laws: get off what he calls their “stools of do nothing,” and not depend on others to do the work.

“I hope that this is the beginning of a movement that will sweep throughout this nation; and that it will have the same effect on those in high places — that they won’t have any choice but to acquiesce,” Matthews said. “And come down off of their racist horses.”

Just moments after Gov. Ron DeSantis signed Florida’s restrictive voting bill into law, voting rights groups filed a couple of lawsuits against it. Voter registration and vote-by-mail applications will also be available, as well as application forms for qualifying those interested in restoring their right to vote. Going to the polls, says Rev. H.K. Matthews, is the ultimate weapon against voter suppression.

“We must turn out and vote, not because of, but in spite of, we have got to be in ‘show business,’” Matthews said. “And show those who are trying to deter us and set us back that, as we used to say and sing in the movement, ‘Ain’t gonna let nobody turn us around.’”

(Excerpted from [www.wuwf.org/local-news/2021-08-24/march-for-voting-rights-saturday-in-pensacola](http://www.wuwf.org/local-news/2021-08-24/march-for-voting-rights-saturday-in-pensacola) Aug 24, 2021 by Dave Dunwoody)



UUCP’s Paula Montgomery & Lauren Anzaldo at the march; Scott Satterwhite, Marcy Moreland & Jean Siebenaler also attended.

**Please see page 10 for information on how you can help.**

## How can you Strive for Justice—from home?



### LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The 2022 Legislative Session convenes January 11, preceded by six weeks of committee meetings beginning the week of Sept. 20 and ending the week of Nov. 29.

If you are meeting with your legislators in their offices, virtually or in County Delegation meetings, you may find the items on the Legislative Advocacy page helpful in framing your discussion.

Watch for targeted Action Alerts to express your support or opposition when key bills are placed on committee agendas for your Legislators to vote on.

Please drop a note to [info@uujusticefl.org](mailto:info@uujusticefl.org) if you would like help in forming teams, in creating agendas or talking points or to offer suggestions on improving Legislative Advocacy efforts.

### REDISTRICTING PROCESS STARTS IN SEPTEMBER 2021

Months overdue, key U.S. Census numbers were released Thursday, August 19, 2021, that will allow Florida lawmakers to begin the process of redrawing congressional and legislative districts for the state's 21.5 million residents.

"I would like to be optimistic about this current redistricting cycle," said Ellen Freidin, leader of the FairDistricts Florida Movement and CEO of FairDistricts Now, Inc. "So far, the Legislature has not given us any reason to be optimistic that the Fair Districts amendments will be adhered to. But we always remain hopeful and are looking forward, as I'm sure you are, to watching this process unfold."

The House and Senate plan to have a joint website to provide detailed information to the public. Also, input will be gathered during committee meetings held in advance of the 2022 legislative session. Lawmakers are expected to approve final maps during the session, which will start in January.

House Speaker Sprowls (R-Palm Harbor) advised members to "stand by" as the website, which will provide interactive maps and a place for constituents to submit input, will be rolled out before the Sept. 20 start of committee weeks. WUSF Published Aug. 13, 2021

No action yet. But stay aware and be ready to advocate for fair districting by contacting your elected representatives.

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Pensacola, FL 32534

*Return service requested*

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Deadline for submissions  
for **OCTOBER LIGHT:**  
**Thursday, September 16th**






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