

At the beginning of this church year, our Board of Trustees gave the Social Responsibilities Council a formal charge: “[to engage] the congregation in discussion and discernment of the [two] UUA 2020 General Assembly Actions of Immediate Witness for recommendations...regarding a [possible] course of action for AlbanyUU.” Some of you may have participated in our forum in September discussing AIW#1 Amen to Uprising! or the forum in December when we heard from congregants Jill Peckenpaugh and Jaye Holly who served, respectively, in Albany and Delmar on their NYS Police Reform and Reinvention Collaboratives. These Collaborative reports are now available and I hope you are reading at least the summary and recommendations of your particular police department.

Today, many of us are trying to get our heads around the violent police actions in Albany aimed at Black protestors. On April 14,<sup>th</sup> a day when the Chauvin verdict was announced that brought relief and perhaps some hope, and then on April 22,<sup>nd</sup> Albany police attacked Black bodies at South Station. The AIW Amen to Uprising addresses what it means to affirm the inherent worth and dignity of *every* person, promote justice, equity and compassion in human relations, and genuinely proclaim through our actions that Black Lives Matter! It speaks to an increasingly militarized police force, such as we saw in Albany. And it asks us to consider how our communities might look if we defunded the police—that is, re-allocated monies to create a more humane system such as Dr. Alice Green of the Center for Law and Justice has imagined. She calls for the establishment of a bifurcated City of Albany “Department of Public Safety” which would house two equal-status components, the “Division of Law Enforcement” (performing law enforcement functions currently provided by the APD) and the “Division of Citizen Safety and Oversight,” which would include, among other things, an empowered Community Police Review Board. You can read more online about Dr. Green’s thought-

provoking responses to the Albany Police Collaborative. You can watch the very unsettling videos provided by Ch. 13, for example, of the events on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> and you can also hear from the South Station protesters themselves by searching online for recordings of their press conferences and other gatherings. The AIW calls for those of us with white privilege to amplify Black voices frequently discounted, often demonized, by those in power. As you learn more, I would urge you, especially Albany residents, to send texts or emails to the mayor, to the chief of police and to your city council representative calling *out* the violence and intimidation and perhaps calling *for* an independent investigation. The Albany Police Collaborative report eloquently speaks to the creation of an ongoing working relationship between the community and police, addressing the history of mistreatment of communities of color, systemic racism and implicit bias; these recent events suggest that there is much work to be done. May healing *and* accountability take place.