

Authority

The life of a congregation is a rich community tapestry of people, programs, ministries, and worship. We lift up the patterns of this tapestry at Unity Church with the threads of monthly themes woven through our worship and programming. These themes deepen our understanding of our own faith and strengthen our bonds with one another in religious community.

Few phrases so bluntly and ambiguously express the challenges of our times as the command to “Question authority.” Like a banner held high when we stand up to injustices entrenched in any system, it can empower and embolden. And, like a slap across the face when others question our authority or the authority of values we cherish and believe in, it can sever relationship abruptly and painfully.

Unitarian Universalism, with every faith tradition that traces its heritage to the reformation of another, is born of the power of questioning one understanding of authority and naming new ones. We join many religious liberals in a centuries old, once heretical turn from hierarchical understandings toward the authority of continuous revelation. As Unitarian Universalists, we recognize multiple sources of wisdom — including a wide range of religious, humanist, and scientific teachings, the deeds and words of those working for justice, and earth-centered traditions — but we privilege truth that rises from a “direct experience of transcending mystery and wonder” and an “original relation to the universe.”

As such, each of us is both blessed and challenged to fully step into the authority we have claimed for naming and defining the divine, how it moves in our lives, and what authority it has or does not have over us.

Have you noticed? How this curls like a question pointing right back to itself?

This is fitting. The phrase Question Authority is widely attributed in its contemporary usage to Timothy Leary,

once named by Richard Nixon as the “most dangerous man in America.” It became a rallying cry for 1960s countercultural rejections of war, racism, sexism, and more. It continues to serve today’s protests of these and other injustices persisting more than a half century later.

What is sometimes lost, however, is that questioning authority is meant to uncover something reliable to which you grant authority as a result of your questions. Leary wrote, “But after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it.”

Authority, like so many of the themes we explore in worship, is relational. Questioning its governance may be a wise check on accepting the way things are and the power structures that keep them so. But ultimately, this questioning calls on us to seek and name where we *do* grant authority, and having granted it, to participate in carrying out what it asks us to do.

Are you ready? To what do you grant authority that you are willing to follow? Is it possible to live in this world without doing that?

Authority gets a bad rap for the many ways in which it is abused. This creates a suspicion of authority that can make us reluctant to act, to wield the power we so fiercely claim as a human birthright. But the simple fact of authority is neither good nor bad. It’s the how of it that matters. Contrary to Nixon’s claim, the most dangerous use of authority might be when it *doesn’t* circle back around, in questioning

and conversation, or in checks and balances built into accountable human systems and, more fully and fundamentally, woven into nature itself.

The danger of authority is glaringly obvious in the “Great Chain of Being.” That Platonic hierarchy of power depicted a pyramid of beings with allegedly diminishing value; it found a home in medieval Christianity and poisonously lingers still in the foundations of systemic racism. But nature itself offers us a different model in what might be called the Grand Ecology of Being. Nested there in a web of multidimensional relationships, authority flows in interdependent rhythms and cycles across time, species and elements.

So fire has authority over the trees it burns; and trees have authority over the earth their roots break up; and earth has authority over the stream it slows with silt; and the stream has authority over the fire that rages.

To truly question authority, we must each find our own particular place in the grand ecology of being — a place that will both grant us authority and hold it in check. And wherever we are granted authority, we are asked to accept it, to responsibly exercise it to the benefit of the larger living web of relationship and being. The danger of authority in our own faith tradition may be less about where it is guarded institutionally than about how it is often defended individually, holding us outside of the belonging that religious community is intended to foster and support. Because there, in relationship, we find the authority of love.

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Just Words



There are so many signs that I haven't caught up with the technological age. Some are by choice and some are simply because of ability and aptitude. I still carry around a paper datebook for example. I like to keep all kinds of things in it, notes and reminders, arrows of connections. This past year, as I have said before, was full of unrealized plans. I know that this is true for all of us. What we imagined as the New Year arrived a year ago is a far cry from the reality that unfolded before us. I

look at my datebook for 2020 and I see plans for retirement and travel. I see weeks we had planned to be "on the road" waiting for our new home to be built. It has been said that life is what happens to us while we are making other plans. No amount of planning could have saved us from this year, that's for sure.

I have been amazed at people's ability to pivot: realign their lives and adjust. It doesn't mean it has been easy. Our mental health professionals have all made it clear that our adjustments have come at a cost. As I like to say, "All of us have cracks in our lives." The pandemic exposed some of those cracks and often made them longer and wider. At the same time, we are finding ways to survive. I have visited some of your backyards. I have walked by the river or met in parks with some of you. I have talked in drive ways and through windows and screened porches. I have shouted across rooms with masks on so that everyone could maintain physical distance and still plan. We have learned the old adage that my aunt used to say, "It does not do to leave a live dragon out of your calculations, if you live near one." We have had to calculate risks as we navigate safety and needs. We have had to find new ways to express love and concern.

I have taught numerous people the Merritt hug program which is only possible when people from different pods interact with others in another pod. When we visited Tom and Sharon for a driveway visit last spring, it was so hard not to hug them with love and support. They then taught us that we could still embrace, just not in ways we had ever imagined. They hugged each other and unexpectedly exclaimed, "Rob, it is so good to see you. Janne, it is so good to be with you." They suggested that Rob and I do the same. We hugged each other but while we looked into each other faces, we said, "Sharon, it's so good to be with you. Tom, how are you? It is so good to see you!" It wasn't the same but we ended that exchange feeling like we had gained something, and because we know hugs can mean a lot, we passed it along to others. There is so much we have learned and are learning this year. May we take these learnings with us and never take simple things like dinner with friends or being able to see loved ones in the hospital for granted ever again. To 2021!

Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs

The Wheel of Life

In Celebration

Kevin Bevis and Arlene West celebrate 40 years of marriage on January 10, 2021. Their children Martin, Lily, and Charlie are grateful for all the camping trips, bike rides, delicious meals, and the modeling of a loving partnership over the decades. Please join us in raising a glass from afar, until we can celebrate in person again.

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Our Rising Voices: A Call for Bold Social Action

31st Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Event

A Virtual Celebration: Monday, January 18 • 9:00-10:15 a.m.

Details and registration: www.mlkbreakfast.com

A bold conversation with Dr. Bernice King and Ambassador Andrew Young, moderated by Dr. Michael L. Lomax. This annual fundraiser benefits the United Negro College Fund Twin Cities MLK Legacy Scholarship Fund, helping local students go to and through college.

JANUARY SERVICES

Sunday Worship and Coffee Hour

While our building remains closed, multigenerational Sunday Services are being live-streamed from the Sanctuary at 10:00 a.m. Details and links, including access to past services, are available online at www.unityunitarian.org.

Each Sunday, everyone is welcome to join a virtual Zoom coffee hour after the service. To participate in the coffee hour, please use this link: <https://bit.ly/unitycoffehour>. If you would like to receive our congregational emails, please sign up here: <https://bit.ly/ucuemailsignup>.

January 3: Tolling of Bells

Livestream service: <https://youtu.be/xZ2-c0j6Zjo>

"It matters how you carry it, books, bricks, grief..." wrote Mary Oliver. Given the magnitude of our grief in response to the pandemic, our annual *Tolling of Bells* service seems perfectly timed for the turning. If you would like to have a candle lit to honor someone you loved and lost in 2020, please send their name, your name and a sentence or two that points to their attributes, to Rob Eller-Isaacs at robei@unityunitarian.org.

January 10: Whose Story Is This?

Livestream service: <https://youtu.be/MO40tvDpfFI>

We all have a multitude of stories that we carry with us that inform us about our lives and our identity. They belong to us. Or do they? Worship associate Erika Sanders and Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs will delve into the issues of story, identity, and who has the authority and power to tell stories about identity.

January 17: Soul Force

Livestream service: <https://youtu.be/8LmnGYUq0H4>

Combining the Sanskrit word *satya* meaning soul or truth, and the Hindi word *graha* usually translated as force, Gandhi coined the term *satyagraha* to refer to non-violent resistance. Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs and worship associate Ben Pettee will honor the legacy of Dr. King by renewing our understanding of the practice of *satyagraha* and of how its lessons are applicable today.

January 24: Dare to Be Powerful

Livestream service: https://youtu.be/-7rl_qLIMNA

Audre Lorde wrote, "When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid." When we use our strength in the service of our vision, it becomes less and less important whether we are afraid, and it also becomes less and less important how the external environment is changing. Our vision doesn't change, though our choices about what we do with our life force might. As the year on the calendar changes, as the national leadership changes in the U.S., how does our use of our own power remain the same and how does it change? Rev. Meg Riley, pulpit guest; Lia Rivamonte, worship associate.

January 31: By What Authority?

Livestream service: <https://youtu.be/eob1xncsuSw>

The question of authority surrounds us in the controversies and divisions of our time, from politics and media to criminal justice and the science of vaccinations and climate change. What are the sources of authority that we can rely upon in a post-fact era, when skepticism reigns of the old and entrenched order and brazen power assumes the guise of authority? Rev. KP Hong and worship associate Rebecca Flood explore the crisis and question of authority at a time when the organizing structures of society no longer hold and nothing definite seems forthcoming.

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In what ecology of being do you place yourself, and how does that name the nature and boundaries of your own authority? What is beyond the boundaries of your separate self that has authority in your life? Does your own belonging — to this or any other community, to your current relationships or those you long for, to love itself — exert authority over the choices you make and the legacy of your life unfolding day by day?

This is the invitation we are each given to question — and honor — authority in a faithful, fruitful way.

By Karen Hering on behalf of this month's theme team:

*Ahmed Anzaldúa, Drew Danielson,
Janne Eller-Isaacs, Rob Eller-Isaacs,
Ray Hommeyer, KP Hong,
Ruth MacKenzie and Laura Park*

Authority Theme Resources

For further reflection on this theme, a variety of resources including books, poems, videos and audios, are listed in this month's Chalice Circle packet available online at www.unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html and by request from karen@unityunitarian.org.

Offering Recipients

January 3: East Side Elders

January 10: Listening House

January 17: Open Cities Health Center

January 24: Store to Door

January 31: Spirit of St. Stephens Street Outreach

Turn to page 13 for organization information.

Time to Be Slow

Clover Earl, Board Chair



If you had told me that living with the December theme, waiting, would be the most meaningful gift I would

receive this holiday season, I would have doubted you. Doubted you because I am my father's daughter when it comes to being very well practiced in the art of impatience. I am also a perfectionist, and the combination of these two states of being often leads to stress, which takes a physical, emotional, and spiritual toll.

Making New Year's resolutions has never really been my thing. However, setting intentions is something I do regularly. I am very much looking forward to the Christmas Eve "Finding a Stillness" service, and I share this poem with you as we say goodbye to the chaos and turmoil of 2020 and welcome all the potential of 2021. My intention is to cultivate more time and space to be in the here and now; the present moment.

This Is the Time to Be Slow
by John O'Donohue

This is the time to be slow,
Lie low to the wall
Until the bitter weather passes.

Try, as best you can, not to let
The wire brush of doubt
Scrape from your heart
All sense of yourself
And your hesitant light.

If you remain generous,
Time will come good;
And you will find your feet
Again on fresh pastures of promise,
Where the air will be kind
And blushed with beginning

Budget Talk

Barbara Hubbard, Executive Director

It's 2021! With the new year comes a renewed sense of hope and light. I'm writing to provide you with a summary of the 2021 operating and capital budgets that were approved by voting members of the congregation on November 21, but first I'd like to say a word or two about 2020.

In November of 2019, we approved a 2020 operating budget that seemed reasonable, predictable, and tidy — but 2020 was anything but predictable and tidy! Our programs were in full swing and then the pandemic hit and we became a virtual church. We purchased video equipment, retooled our jobs, and found new ways to worship and connect with one another. When the Federal government offered the Payment Protection Plan (PPP) to qualifying non-profits in April, we applied for and were awarded a \$224,000 loan, which covered salaries, taxes, and benefits for an eight-week period of time, offsetting the significant drop in building and program income and our cancelled fundraiser. We retained and paid all staff at budgeted levels into the summer, even though the building was closed. Given the severely reduced building activity, we downsized our facilities staff in July.

As the year progressed, we met our pledge goal and pledge payments held. Our offering income and unrestricted special gifts actually exceeded projections. As a result of your continued and generous support, we were able to maintain salaries and benefits and provide worship and programming in new and innovative ways.

2021 Operating Budget: \$1,887,000

Some of what we had planned for 2020 is now budgeted for 2021. Janne and Rob will retire this summer and an interim minister will join us in August. Karen Hering will oversee the pastoral care program once Janne is gone, and we will be hiring a part-time Community Outreach Coordinator. Other program, administrative, and facilities staff members will continue to support the ministries of the church.

The 2021 budget is written with the assumption that we will begin to open the building in July. We are planning virtual events this winter and spring including the Children's Musical, Coming of Age celebration, Foote Sunday, and our annual fundraiser. We are planning a virtual retirement party for Janne and Rob with the hope that there may be an embodied farewell at some point in the future.

We set our pledge goal for 2021 at the same level as 2020, \$1,350,000. As of December 16, we are at 94% to our goal with the gap-to-goal at just over \$80,000. We will gauge our progress and adjust the budget on February 1 if necessary.

We have budgeted our program and facility income at about 50% of what a "normal" year would be. We will rely on a portion of the Currier Estate gift for another year of multicultural initiatives, and the Bose bequest to pay for our Finance Director in 2021. Staff salaries that fell out of market range in 2020 have been adjusted in 2021. Other expenses have been projected based on history and trends, and all assumptions are recorded.

2021 Capital Budget: \$75,000

Capital pledges allow us to pay debt service on our long term Unity Tomorrow loan and provide funds for capital acquisitions and repairs, thus avoiding deferred maintenance and protecting the operating budget. Capital pledge totals average \$218,000 each year from over 300 households.

The capital budget for 2021 includes allocations for extending the livestreaming capabilities to three other rooms, upgrading the lighting in the Sanctuary, adding bipolar ionization to our HVAC system, refinishing the Parish Hall floor, commissioning art for the chancel of the Ames Chapel, and correcting foundation issues on the exterior of the Eliot Wing.

If you have questions or would like more detail on these budgets, contact Barbara Hubbard at barbara@unityunitarian.org.

BELOVED COMMUNITY STAFF TEAM

Beloved Community Staff Team 2020 Year in Review

Merrill Aldrich and Shelley Butler, on behalf of the Beloved Community Communications Team

The Beloved Community Staff Team (BCST), like many of us, thought that the pandemic was our biggest challenge in 2020 but everything seemingly changed on May 25, 2020, with the killing of George Floyd. Not only did the world explode with anger and action, so did Unity Church. Within days of Mr. Floyd's death, the BCST delivered a video statement and organized a two-night event, "#WeCantBreathe" and "Next Right Action." With this, the team began what BCST member Erika Sanders called "the most impactful change in the past year" in establishing the Next Right Action framework.

Determined not just to hold one or two meetings and then go back to "normal," the BCST expressed determination to continue efforts to include antiracism and multicultural work in every area of the church. Members of the BCST, the Racial and Restorative Justice Team, the Sustainability Living Team, and many other teams and congregants showed up to continue Next Right Action work.

In August, Rob and Janne followed up with a "Reflecting on the Journey" session. The Racial and Restorative Justice Team created new objectives, inspired the Justice Database, and held a series of "Reimagining Public Safety: A Circle of Peace" sessions. Next, the "Finding Our Next Right Action" forum brought together representatives of many of the teams and initiatives of Unity Church and offered opportunities for members to sign up for specific work. One of the new offerings was Antiracism Literacy Partners; the team and interested congregants met again in September and November, and will meet again in February.



Perhaps we, as a congregation, were able to jump into "Justice for George" because Unity has been involved in antiracism work for many years, acknowledging that we have a long way to go. Our engagement with Team Dynamics to grow our individual and collective ability to bridge the "differences that make a difference" continued in 2020, culminating in the excellent seven-part "Equity + Justice" series in the fall, in which some 200 people participated.

In 2020, many individuals and key ministry teams took advantage of the opportunity to take the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and receive coaching on both the results of their inventory and their Individual Development Plan (IDP). Also, the Racial Justice Film series and the Artist in Residency program continued. With the pending departure of Lisa Friedman in spring 2020, Karen Hering and Laura Park joined the Beloved Community Staff Team and strengthened it, jumping into the work feet first. There is more but we're out of space to list it all.

Moving into its fifth year, it's clear to see that the BCST has made great strides in strengthening and coordinating antiracism and multicultural initiatives at Unity Church, now with the ongoing support of the Helener Currier Endowment for Racial Justice. Aspirations for this year include opportunities for us to deepen involvement with our IDP, but check in next month when the BCST looks forward to the work of 2021 in greater detail.

In 2016, the Beloved Community Staff Team was formed at Unity Church to strengthen and coordinate Unity's antiracism and multicultural work, and to share the stories of this journey with the wider community. We commit to sharing the struggles, the questions, and the collaborations here at Unity and in the wider world of our faith and city. The current members of the team include Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs, Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs, Rev. KP Hong, Barbara Hubbard, Drew Danielson, Ahmed Anzaldúa, Laura Park, Karen Hering, Angela Wilcox, Pauline Eichten, and Erika Sanders.

Photo: "Say His Name" by Unity Church member Paul Rogne

WELCOME NEWCOMERS



Welcome Words

Laura Park, Acting Director of Membership and Hospitality

On whose authority do we become members of Unity Church? Our own, mostly. People join Unity Church when they decide that the commitment to our way of the spirit is meaningful enough to sign their name in the membership book. There is no creed to memorize, no beliefs to profess. There is only your internal awareness that you need what the church offers and are willing to do the work our challenging faith asks of us, within yourself in your personal spiritual practice, among the people of the church community as you develop the skills of small group intimacy, and beyond the congregation as we bring our values to bear in the larger world together.

My virtual door is always open for conversation, information, and exploration of your pathway into deeper meaning in our religious community. The best way to contact me right now is email, if possible, laura@unityunitarian.org. Or call the church office and leave a message: 651-228-1456 x110. I look forward to getting to know you!

Mix with Six Remixing!

Our Mix with Six groups have been meeting for a few months now, and it's time to re-mix! Now's your chance to join a group and get to know a few other Unity Church people in friendly, low-key Zoom meetings.

Fill out the registration form at www.unityunitarian.org/mix-with-six.html, and we'll put you into a group with six others that will meet once a month, February through May, on Zoom. We'll give you conversation starters, ideas of things to do together from your singular rooms, and even, if you're really brave, a few fun games to play. You'll get the chance to know six other people from all parts of the congregation and hopefully make some new friends. DEADLINE to register: Sunday January 17. Questions? Contact Teresa Wernecke at teresa475@gmail.com or 651-226-8953 or Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x110. Email works best for contact.

Mentoring at Unity

Would you welcome having a guide to congregational life at Unity Church? Request a mentor! Your mentor will meet with you at least once a month face-to-face and be available for ongoing questions and advice. Each pair makes a commitment to work together for at least six months. If you have questions, or would like to request a mentor, please email Laura Park, Acting Director of Membership and Hospitality, laura@unityunitarian.org.

Pathway to Membership Classes

The offerings below invite you to explore a deeper connection to Unity Church and the commitments and opportunities of membership. If you have questions or would like one-on-one conversation about getting connected or about membership, please contact Laura Park, Acting Director of Membership and Hospitality, laura@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x110.

Finding Yourself at Unity

Sundays Online • 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Finding Yourself at Unity includes eight classes that you can attend in any order to better understand how Unity Church supports our faith journeys, our work to build Beloved Community, and our efforts to bless the world. Topics include: UU History; Religious Education for Children, Youth, and Adults; Pastoral Care; Q&A with a Minister; Worship and the Liturgical Year; Social Justice & Community Outreach; Membership 101 and Congregational Life, and even an online Building Tour! Sunday morning emails include the class topic and a Zoom link to get connected.

January 3: Unitarian Universalist History
January 10: Social Justice and Community Outreach
January 17: Pastoral Care
January 24: Religious Education for Children, Youth, and Adults
January 31: Membership 101

Committing to Unity

Thursday, January 21 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

I was starved for a communal expression of spirituality that was not exclusionary . . . Janne and Rob hooked me for life when they sang the gay lullaby "Everything Possible" to the high school seniors as they headed off to college.

Does this quote from a recent member of Unity Church sound familiar? Are you ready to make the membership commitment? This class explores the deeper meanings and expectations of membership and shared ministry. It offers time to reflect on the meaning of generosity and how you can discover the places in your life where the world's need meets the gifts and joy you have to offer. The class concludes with a ceremony as participants sign the membership book (virtually if necessary) and officially join the church! RSVP by email to Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org.

Sunday Coffee Hour

After the service you are invited to participate in a virtual Zoom coffee hour, where we share a bit of our lives with each other and get to know one another more deeply. Join on Sundays after the 10:00 a.m. service here: <https://bit.ly/unitycoffeehour>.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Ben and Alix Aase grew up in the Macalester Groveland area of St.



Paul and now live there with their children, Etta and Oskar. The first time they walked through the doors, they felt incredibly welcomed, at ease, and spiritually enlightened. Ben and Alix look forward to continuing their spiritual journey and contributing their time and energy in ways that benefit the church community.

Heidi Birkholz has been lurking around Unity Church since the late 20th century when her sister-in-law, Teresa Connor, brought her to this beloved space.



Upon sitting in the pew, she started weeping and knew immediately she was home. Unity Church has always remained a steadfast touchstone for helping her to find the tenuous balance of safe and brave space.

Joan Clarkson was raised Catholic in Oklahoma City. While living in California with her husband Rick McCormick, she worked on tenants' rights and housing affordability. After moving to Minnesota, Joan worked for 22 years in adoption social work. She is the proud parent of two daughters and four grandchildren!



Pat Cleary, retired professor and scientist, is glad to become a member of Unity Church after 37 years of attendance.



Since retirement he has taught microbiology to children in Mexico, danced Argentine tango, and learned to paint with oils. He maintains his interest in infectious diseases and hopes to become involved with Unity's community projects.

Curt Johnson is a new member mostly because of his wife, Carol Olson Johnson, who has been a member for decades.



Her example has always inspired Curt to do things he had not planned to do. They have seven children and a dozen grandchildren; holidays are interesting, never dull, always expensive. After a career in education, government, journalism, and managing non-profits, he is now helping a group of Minnesota mayors to cross if not end the rural-urban divide. He looks forward to meeting other members.

Amy and Bryan Lloyd started attending Unity Church five years ago in search of an open minded and intellectually challenging religious community.



They have enjoyed their time at Unity Church and Covid has brought the opportunity to become members. The family lives in St. Paul with daughters, Carys and Wynn timer, and they love to bike, travel, spend time with family and friends, and connect with nature.

Jay Mastrud is a long-time participant at Unity Church and finally took the giant leap of faith into membership. He was introduced to Unity by his wife, Heidi, whose mother, Katy Gray, was "pretty engaged here to put it mildly."



Jay and Heidi were married here in July 2001 and all three of their children (Bea, Franny, Gus) were dedicated here and have been involved in a plethora of children's programming. Jay works for the FAA at MSP's air traffic control tower and serves in the Air Guard. In addition to technology his interests include, history, road trips, hiking, and volunteering.

Veronica Nordeng DeVillez grew up Lutheran in Wisconsin and lost touch with the church when she moved to Minnesota. She discovered Unity and found the services to be a comfort and solace during times of hardship.



She has been attending for five years and is interested in committing to more involvement with service projects, faith development, and getting to know other members. Veronica is recently married and has an 11-month old daughter and two spunky Italian Greyhounds.

Gary Perry and his wife, Linda, have two daughters and five grandchildren. With his Catholic background, Gary considered his career in mental health services a religious vocation. Unitarianism and Unity Church now seem more closely aligned with his basic philosophy.



Juliana Tillema was raised in the UU church in Madison, WI, and has been skirting the edges of Unity Church for several years. This year, she was ready for a deeper commitment. She is the parent of Anja (they/them), spouse of Chad (he/him), a gardener, reader, and cook.



Mathew Williams felt a responsibility to finally sign the membership book after attending Unity Church for many years with his partner, Jason-Aeric Huenecke.



Pictures and bios to come for Pat Diamond and Steve Ellsworth next month!

SPIRITUAL DEEPENING

Wellspring: A Year of Spiritual Deepening

Created by the Rev. Jen Crow, a former Hallman Ministerial Intern, Wellspring responds to the need for spiritual grounding in our own tradition and offers a five-spoke model of spiritual deepening. The five spokes include: daily spiritual practice, regular meetings of the Wellspring group, engagement with Unitarian Universalist history and theology, meeting monthly with a one-on-one spiritual director, and discerning our unique call in life.

Unity's Wellspring group will be led this year by Laura Park and Susan Huehn on Zoom. The group will begin with a retreat on Saturday, January 9, from 9:00 a.m. to noon, and will meet regularly for 90 minutes on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month through November 2021. Each session will have reading assignments that support the exploration and engagement of the topics and themes. Class enrollment is limited to 15. If you are interested in this offering, please contact Martha Tilton by e-mail at martha@unityunitarian.org or by phone at 651-228-1456 x105.

Crossing and Blessing Our Thresholds

2021 Series Open for Registration

We are all living in threshold times, on the cusp of significant changes nationally, globally, and environmentally. If this wasn't abundantly clear before, the pandemic and widespread uprisings over centuries-old racial injustices have underscored the truth of this in 2020.

For some of us, however, these large-scale changes are compounded by personal thresholds (some caused by the pandemic and uprisings, others not). These include changes in our relationships, work, home, roles, identity, or abilities creating a significant turning point in our lives and bringing heightened awareness as well as both risk and possibility. Whether we've chosen these changes or not, they are places of great vitality and exchange, where new greets old and the familiar gives way to the unknown.

If this describes your own life now, you are invited to join the 2021 Thresholds series, a facilitated small group inviting participants to explore the changes occurring in their personal lives with the support and company of others doing the same on their own thresholds. (NOTE: group size is limited and pre-registration is required.)

In a supportive small group facilitated by Rev. Karen Hering, we'll each reflect on a threshold we're currently crossing while accompanying others in crossing theirs. Using conversation, guided writing, and a variety of creative activities both playful and serious, we'll consider the meaning, risks, and possibilities present on the cusp of change.

The group meets online on four Saturdays, January 23 – February 27, and participants are asked to commit to attending all four sessions. The series and schedule have been adapted to fit an online format and includes a two-part first session on Saturday, January 23, from 10:00 a.m. – noon and 1:00-3:00 p.m., and three additional Saturday mornings, February 6, 20, and 27, from 10:00 a.m. – noon. At the end of the series, on Sunday, February 28, the group will be blessed by the congregation in online worship, honoring the role of community in giving us all safe passage across the many thresholds of our lives.

The series is free to members; a fee of \$100 will be charged nonmembers at the time of registration. Register early at www.unityunitarian.org/thresholds.html, to reserve your place. For questions, e-mail Karen Hering at karen@unityunitarian.org.



Chalice Circles

Many Chalice Circle participants this year report that their online circles are a great way to experience fellowship and meaningful conversation during the pandemic, so we're offering a shorter three-month Chalice Circle experience for those who wish to try it.

Chalice circles are small groups of 5-8 people, led by trained facilitators. Each month, participants receive a packet on that month's theme with readings, podcasts, short videos, and other resources related to the theme. Each person chooses one spiritual exercise and a deep question from the packet to spend time with over several weeks. Near the end of the month, the group gathers online to share their experiences.

The three-month circles will meet February–April, on the themes of curiosity, suffering, and transcendence. Space is limited in the two scheduling options: 4th Sunday each month, 3:30-5:00 p.m., and 4th Thursday, 1:00-2:30 p.m. Register online here: www.unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html. Additionally, several ongoing chalice circles currently have openings. To join a circle that will meet monthly now through at least June, please complete the online form and we will contact you about availability.

Qigong

Welcome the New Year

Tuesday, January 19

10:30-11:30 a.m.

Register: <http://bit.ly/qigongnewyear>

An online program with Qigong and Tai Ji teacher Lisa Schlingerman guiding participants in movements and meditations to increase resistance to illness and enhance the circulation of chi (energy) in the body. No experience in Tai Ji or Qigong required. Movements can be done standing or sitting.

WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

Wellspring Wednesday

Unity Church's Wellspring Wednesday has long been a multi-generational opportunity to gather midweek at church for food, fellowship, and fun. While the church building remains closed due to the pandemic, we continue to gather online for programming. Multi-generational chapel services are prerecorded and posted on the church's YouTube channel each Wednesday for viewing anytime that afternoon or later; and Unity's Religious Education program offers Our Whole Lives (OWL) classes for youths and periodic Tweens gatherings on Wednesday evenings.

For adults, one or two live online programs are offered each Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. as opportunities for enrichment, spiritual practice and fellowship. If you haven't yet participated in an online program using Zoom, church staff can help you get started. Descriptions and registration links for this month's programs are listed below. (Unless otherwise noted, you can use the registration link right up until the program starts to participate.) As we say in church each Sunday, "Stay tuned!"

January 6 • 7:00-8:30 p.m. ————— ■

Singing Prayers into the Body • Session 1 of 2

Register: <http://bit.ly/singingprayers>

Join Rev. Ruth MacKenzie on January 6 and 13, exploring different ways of deepening your spiritual life through chants, humming, and prayer. In this first session we will explore singing as a form of spiritual centering, working with two or three short chants to invite a time of mindfulness. During the second session we will build on our singing practice and work with the practice of whole body listening. All are welcome. (You don't need to be a singer in order to participate, or even be able to sing in tune. You just need a curious spirit.) This will be a joint program with shared attendance from First Unitarian Universalist Church of Rochester, MN. Rev. Ruth Mackenzie is a long time Unity Church member, a gifted professional singer, and ordained UU minister recently retired from First Universalist Church in Minneapolis.

Kirsten Fischer discusses her new book *American Freethinker: Elihu Palmer and the Struggle for Religious Freedom in the New Nation*

Register: <https://bit.ly/americanfreethinker>

Elihu was an infamous speaker in his day, sharing the radical idea that virtue and morality could be found outside of religion, for example, in the interconnected web of the natural world. He tested the new nation's foundation of freedom of religion and freedom of speech. Come meet this fascinating character who comes alive with Unity Church member and history scholar Kirsten Fischer's pen. To purchase the book visit www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/16133.html and get 30% off, January 1–10, using code ELIHU30-FM at checkout.

January 13 • 7:00-8:30 p.m. ————— ■

Singing Prayers into the Body • Session 2

Register: <http://bit.ly/singingprayers>

In the second of a two-part series, Rev. Ruth MacKenzie continues exploring how to deepen your spiritual life through chants, humming, and prayer. This session will build on our singing practice and work with the practice of whole body listening. All are welcome. For more information, see January 6 above.

Recovery from White Conditioning (RWC)

Register: <http://bit.ly/recoverywc>

Unity Church has hosted a Recovery from White Conditioning group for several years. Come learn how white people are using the 12-step model (of AA) to recover from White supremacist conditioning as it lives in us and around us. This 90-minute presentation includes an interactive 50-minute history and presentation (with short video clips), a guided discussion, and Q & A with a team of RWC leaders.

January 20 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Inauguration Signs of the Times: A Conversation with Unity's Ministers

Register: <http://bit.ly/unityministersconvo>

Join ministers Janne and Rob Eller-Isaacs, Karen Hering, and KP Hong for an evening of reflections on the presidential inauguration, together asking with participants what is now beginning, what is ending and what will carry over as our nation transfers power from the past administration to the new one? And, perhaps significantly, what is our part as citizens and faithful leaders in promoting and realizing the long deferred dream of democracy for all?

January 27 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Dying and Mourning in a Time of Isolation

Register: <http://bit.ly/deathandmourning>

Dying is a sacred time of life. How do we honor that when we can't even be in the same room together? The pandemic has introduced new ways of thinking about dying even as we become more accustomed to hearing about death. What are your experiences? What are your questions? We will explore the nuances of dying during a time of isolation and how we cope with mourning alone. Presenter Anne Supplee attended her first death and dying class at a summer program between 7th and 8th grade. She worked as a grief counselor and hospice volunteer for many years. Today, she continues to learn in her work as chaplain at the ALS Association and in the Allina Hospital system.

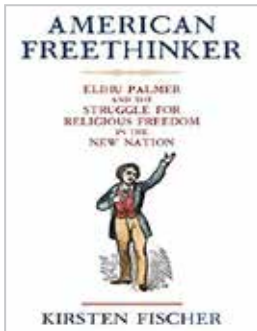
LIBRARIES AND BOOKSTALL / MEN'S GROUPS AT UNITY

Unity Church Library and Bookstall Team

What We're Reading January 2021

Shelley Butler, Barb Foss, and Jan Gestner
Unity Library and Bookstall Team Leaders

***American Freethinker: Elihu Palmer and the Struggle for Religious Freedom in the New Nation* by Kirsten Fischer.**
University of Pennsylvania Press, December 2020.



"Concerns about the social order were pressing...the experiment of representative democracy faced threats to its very existence. Americans disagreed, however, about the greatest source of danger. Some feared most of all the anarchy of revolutionary violence.... Others, however, saw a greater menace to American freedom in the slide toward oligarchy." This United

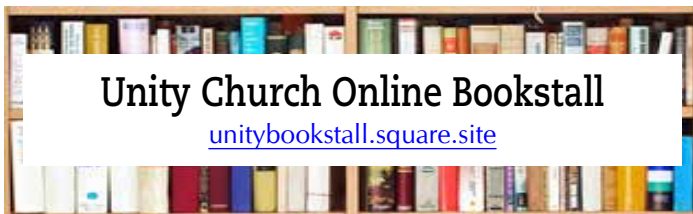
States of the 1790s that Kirsten writes about has an eerie sense of familiarity.

The First Amendment, protecting free speech and freedom on religion and ratified in 1791, was only just beginning to be tested at the beginning of the new century; many states still prohibited blasphemy. At the time when most Americans believed that a religion of original sin, heaven, and hell was what guided morality, lecturer and writer Elihu Palmer gained infamy with such radical ideas like, "true morality, the kind a democracy requires, flourishes best alongside freedom of religion and even freedom *from* religion."

In *American Freethinker* we learn that Elihu struggled with many of the same social justice issues that we do today: poverty, inequity of wealth, an unfair criminal justice system. His belief in finding solutions in the miracles of the natural world, the interconnectedness of life, the diversity of thought and religion, and in compassion for all living things is as relevant today as it was 200 years ago.

Where can I buy the book? Get 30% off, January 1–10, 2021, when purchased from the University of Pennsylvania Press: enter code ELIHU30-FM at checkout.
www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/16133.html

Don't miss Wellspring Wednesday on January 6, at 7:00 p.m. Kirsten will discuss *American Freethinker*.
Details and registration are here: <https://bit.ly/americanfreethinker>.



Profile of Unity Church Men's Groups

What do the men of Unity Church want in their lives? They consistently answer: more connection with one another, to form community together as an antidote to isolation. There are a number of welcoming groups you could join to help develop that camaraderie.



Men's Retirement Group

With participants ranging in age from 60-90, this group begins their twice-monthly meetings with a chalice lighting. After an hour where everyone attending checks in, the group rotates responsibility for bringing a topic or a question to discuss. Topics, wide-ranging and always interesting, have included white supremacy, current movie interests, charitable giving, and reflecting on childhood neighborhoods. Contact Tom Zell at tomzell@icloud.com to get on the email list. This group meets on Zoom every other Monday afternoon (opposite the Men's Conversation Group) at 1:00 p.m.

Men's Conversation Group

With the goal of multigenerational, multicultural conversation about topics that matter, the twice monthly meetings of the Men's Conversation Group encourage participants to be frank and open about their own lives, to bring listening and empathy to the stories of others, and to avoid problem solving. Contact Terry McDanel at tmcdanel@gmail.com to get on the email list. This group meets on Zoom every other Monday evening (opposite the Men's Retirement Group) at 7:00 p.m.

Men's Coffee Group

Started by Tom Zell during the March 2020 Covid shutdown so he would have a group of friends to meet with over coffee, the group now meets every Wednesday morning, at 10:00 a.m., for light-hearted conversation on Zoom. Contact Tom Zell at tomzell@icloud.com to get on the email list.

Men's Breakfast Group

Tom Zell, plus his amazing pancakes, is also at the heart of this group. When the pandemic closed the church building, the group moved to Zoom and decided to meet every week, not just monthly. Contact Tom Zell at tomzell@icloud.com to get on the email list. This group meets every Saturday morning at 8:30 a.m.

STAYING CONNECTED

Online Group Meetings

The following groups have committed to meeting online while our building remains closed.

Afterthoughts offers time to discuss the service. Contact Paul Gade, 651-253-1493

Caregivers Group: An informal support group for caregivers. Meets on the third Thursday of the month. Contact: Janne Eller-Isaacs, janne@unityunitarian.org

Evergreen Quilters: The group meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-9:00 p.m. and fourth Saturday of the month. Contact Peggy Wright, 651-698-2760

Families Living with Mental Health Challenges: A support group for families living with mental health challenges. Meets the first Saturday of each month, 9:30-11:30 a.m. Contact: Janne Eller-Isaacs, janne@unityunitarian.org

Kung Fu: This 60 minute practice strengthens the body, calms the mind, and lifts the spirit. Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. Contact Barney Kujawski, barney.kujawski@gmail.com

Living With Grief Group: A group for people living with grief and loss. Meets on the third Tuesday of the month. Contact: Janne Eller-Isaacs, janne@unityunitarian.org

Men's Breakfast Group meets on Saturday mornings at 8:30 a.m. Contact Tom Zell, tomzell@me.com

Men's Coffee Group meets every Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. for light-hearted conversation. Contact Tom Zell, tomzell@me.com

Men's Conversation Group meets Monday, January 11 and 25, from 7:00-9:00 p.m., to discuss a wide range of topics. Contact Terry McDanel, tmcdanel@gmail.com

Men's Retirement Circle: Monday, January 4 and 18, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact Tom Zell, tomzell@me.com

Music Ministry: Children's Choir, Unity Choir, Unity Singers, Women's Ensemble, and Thresholds Choir are all meeting and singing virtually. Contact Ahmed Anzaldúa, ahmed@unityunitarian.org.

New Look at the Bible: Meets the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. Contact: Paul Gade, 651-253-1493

Recovery from White Conditioning: Wednesdays, 6:00-7:00 p.m. Contact Dayna Kennedy, daynamelissa@icloud.com

Connecting with Ourselves and Others: Relationships and Sexuality: Meets Thursday, January 28, 7:00-8:30 p.m., on the topic Power Dynamics and Relationships. Register: <http://bit.ly/connectingselfandother>. A monthly series offering a candid look at gender identity, sexuality and relationships. Contact Mike Huber, mikehuberece@gmail.com

Single Parenthood Support Group: A single parents group building community together. Meets every other Wednesday, January 6 and 20, from 7:00-8:00 p.m. Contact Laura Park, laura@unityunitarian.org

Sustainable Living Team: Meets every other Sunday, January 10 and 24, from 8:30-9:45 a.m. Contact the team, unitysustainabilityteam@gmail.com

Textile Arts Group meets every other Wednesday, January 13 and 27, from 7:15-8:30 p.m. Bring your knitting, embroidery, etc. Contact Johanna Stammeier-Toole, johanna2le@gmail.com

Unity Book Club: Second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m. Contact Jack Hawthorne, jack.hawthorne@centurylink.net. On January 12 the group will discuss *2001 A Space Odyssey* by Arthur C. Clark.

Women In Retirement: Meets the second and fourth Thursday of the month, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact Laura Park, laura@unityunitarian.org

Young Adult Group (ages 18-35): To join the YA email list, email kp@unityunitarian.org.

Congregational Database Sign in today!

Members are invited to log in to ShelbyNext, the online congregational database that includes the ability to update and review your own membership and giving account, access the membership directory, and view the calendar.

To access from your PC:

- Open a browser (Chrome works best) and navigate to this URL: <https://unityunitarian.shelbynextchms.com/>
- Choose "Forgot Password?"
- Enter the email address you use to communicate with Unity Church
- You should receive an email with your username and password
- Log in, **upload a photo to your account**, and explore!

To download the App:

- Go to your App store: Google Play for Droid and App Store for iPhone/iPad (iPad users make sure to choose iPhone app)
- Download ShelbyNext Membership
- Enter the domain: unityunitarian (full domain: unityunitarian.shelbynextchms.com)
- Choose "Forgot Password?" if it is your first time accessing ShelbyNext Membership (or just log in if you have already accessed it on your PC)
- Enter the email address you use to communicate with Unity Church
- You should receive an email with your username and password
- Log in and explore!

Questions? Contact Martha Tilton at martha@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x105.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Sustainable Living Team News

Anna Newton, Sustainable Living Team

If you walk outside after a snowfall, the world is clean and bright, nature distilled to its essence. Ridges silhouetted against the horizon, purple shadows long, footsteps muffled.

Tracks soon interrupt this wintery perfection. The smallest ones emerge from underneath the snow. Something remarkable has happened: warmth from the earth rises through the snowpack, partially melting it. Upon refreezing, an icy ceiling is created over a small space, just big enough to shelter mice from the cold winter air, and from predators. Mouse survival depends on snow.

Walk through the prairie, and seeds fall onto snow. Some are destined to sustain mice, but a few endure the repeated freeze-thaw cycles needed to sprout in spring. Many plants, like rhubarb, require a period of winter dormancy; without it they literally wear out. The snow itself plays host to bacteria that convert nitrogen into fertilizer that becomes available to plants upon melting. Will wonders never cease?

NEW Sustainable Living Team Campaign: Act for the Earth

Where is our place in this world? How do we experience the raw beauty that is winter, its ability to both challenge and support life? Are we like mice, active all winter under the snow? Are we like plants, waiting, changing internally, preparing to sprout and grow? Perhaps both approaches are needed as we continue to engage the congregation to **act for the earth**. However you spend your winter days, there is room for you on our action teams:

The Stop Climate Change Action team is working on initiatives to lower GHG emissions individually and as a congregation, and to enhance carbon sequestration. It also will foster healthy consumer and food choices. Contact Priscilla Morton at prismorton@comcast.net

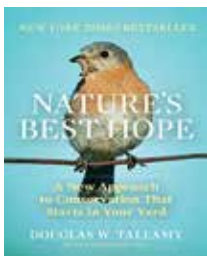
The Stop Extinction Action Team is working on initiatives that promote habitat, sustainable agriculture, and making the earth safe for life. Contact Anna Newton at asnewton3@gmail.com

The Ensure Justice Action Team will help other action teams include justice in all their efforts. This team will also promote independent justice events and activities where needed. Contact Jean Hammink at jhammink@earthlink.net

Nature's Best Hope*

Friday, January 8 • 7:00-8:15 p.m.

Register: <http://bit.ly/naturebesthope>



When we think of nature as separate from where we live, nature and people suffer. We all have a role to play, in fact, we can be nature's best hope. With striking photos and a good dose of humor, Douglas Tallamy presents a convincing argument for the inclusion of native, keystone plants and insect-centered management practices on our land, thus supporting the insects that channel plant energy to the rest of the food web.

Tallamy's presentation will be streamed at 7:00 p.m., after which Kathy Sidles and Anna Newton will lead a discussion of Tallamy's principles, share resources, answer questions, and demonstrate how you can raise your own native plants. Seeds and planting supplies will be available to early registrants.

*Douglas Tallamy's keynote address *Nature's Best Hope* from the Minnesota Woodland Owners Workshop at St. John's Outdoor University

Line 3 Pipeline Teach-In

Sunday, January 10

3:00–4:30 p.m.

Register: <http://bit.ly/pipelineteach>

Whether you just want more information about the Line 3 pipeline or you've been following the stories and want to learn of ways to take action, please come to this information session sponsored by Act for the Earth, the new campaign of the Sustainable Living Team.

Line 3 is a proposed pipeline to be built by Enbridge through untouched wetlands and the treaty territory of Anishinaabe peoples, through the Mississippi River headwaters to the shore of Lake Superior. Violation of treaties, dramatic increase in fossil fuels contributing to climate change, and potential harm to 192 bodies of water including the Mississippi are three primary reasons indigenous leaders from northern Minnesota along with many environmental groups as partners, are resisting the construction. They have worked for over six years without success to stop the permit approval process. The last permit was issued November 30 and Enbridge started construction on December 8. Now the organizing is focused on stopping the construction through direct action as well as continued advocacy to public officials.

Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light, in partnership with Indigenous leaders will be giving us the history, background, and what's at stake with the building of this pipeline. They will share ways to become involved including educating ourselves and others, advocating for ongoing legal appeals, participating in direct action, and supporting the indigenous people leading the resistance in this fight for justice.

For more information email unitysustainabilityteam@gmail.com.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Unity's Racial and Restorative Justice Ministry Team and Amicus invite you to participate in the

Annual Winter Warm-up Drive



Help people recently released from prison find warm clothing and hygiene items. Far too many people seeking help at Amicus lack the hats, coats, gloves, scarves, and footwear needed to make it through a Minnesota winter. On every day of the year they also need hygiene items such as toothpaste, lotion, shampoo, and deodorant.

You and your family can help provide these items and send the message that someone cares and wants them to succeed in their efforts to find a new start.

What You Can Bring

Top Needs • New items only please!

- Winter coats, long underwear, T-shirts, hats, gloves, boots
- Deodorant
- Toothpaste
- Hand lotion

Because the great majority of those we work with at Amicus are men, our priority is on collecting items suitable for men. Sizes XL and above are always needed.

Other Important Needs

- Scarves
- Soap, shampoo, hand sanitizer, washcloths
- Tote bags to carry items while on the street

How and When to Donate

- Drive runs through the end of January.
- Donate financially or drop off items at Amicus: 3041 Fourth Avenue South, Minneapolis MN
- Amicus is open Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.-noon, and 1:00-3:00 p.m. Call 612-277-3009 for updates.
- Questions? Please contact Steve Nelson at steve.nelson@voamn.org for more information.

Offering Recipients

Each Sunday, thirty percent of the offering goes to support the Community Outreach Ministry at Unity Church and seventy percent is given to a chosen community non-profit recipient. Donations are gratefully accepted online at <https://bit.ly/sundayoffering>. Offering checks, payable to Unity Church, should be sent "Attn. Song Thao."

January 3: [East Side Elders](#) (ESE) aims to create a circle of care around the elders of Dayton's Bluff, Payne-Phalen, and Conway-Battle Creek districts by helping seniors remain independent and safe in their homes. The pandemic has intensified food insecurity issues facing many elderly in our community. ESE delivers prepared meals and groceries to a growing number of elders uncomfortable leaving their homes. This collection will help support ESE's food security services. Unity's Anacleto Martina is a grateful client of ESE.

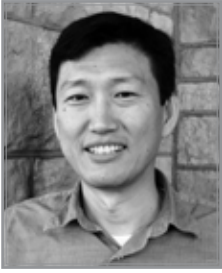
January 10: [Listening House](#) is a daytime living room for St. Paul's homeless population where guests experience down home hospitality without judgement. Guests can relax, clean up, and get a bite to eat. Professional staff help guests deal with issues that keep them homeless while providing a comprehensive Covid survival education. This collection will support the purchase of winter clothing and PPE for guests. Unity's Bernie Troje is a long-time Listening House volunteer.

January 17: [Open Cities Health Center](#) (OCHC) was started in 1967 in the basement of St. James AME Church on Dale Street and Interstate 94. Today it is a major provider of culturally competent, full spectrum health care for the uninsured and underinsured. Serving over 10,000 clients annually, OCHC uses a sliding scale and turns no one away. This collection will support its behavioral health Covid outreach. Unity's Vivian Stone, now age 99, was a longtime board member of OCHC.

January 24: [Help at Your to Door](#), founded in 1984, provides home-bound individuals of all income levels access to competitively priced food and personalized delivered. In 2019 over 500 volunteers also provided 18,000+ hours of home assistance, helping clients stay safe at home. This collection will support outreach to clients to review food needs and access items needed for pandemic survival. Unity Church member Hal Freshly submitted this nomination.

January 31: [Spirit of St. Stephens Outreach](#) in Minneapolis meets people where they are and provides one-on-one outreach aiming to help individuals address the immediate needs for safety and survival while living on the streets. In addition to counseling, St. Stephens also administers two homeless shelters as well as Rye House, an intentional community hosting homeless refugees. This collection will support the daily expenses of its two homeless shelters accommodating up to 100 nightly guests of all gender identities. Unity Church member Collin Rust nominated Spirit of St. Stephens.

MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Pitter-pattering Questions

[...like raindrops on the window, and little feet running through the house]

Rev. KP Hong, Minister of Faith Formation

On Christmas Day 1989, the Brandenburg Gate in the Berlin Wall was opened for the first time in twenty-eight years. The iconic site had come to symbolize the ideological divisions of the Cold War, with Berlin partitioned into East and West by a concrete barrier that snaked through the city for almost twenty-seven miles, fortified with barbed wire, attack dogs, and landmines. But in a wave of revolutions and democratic movements across Eastern Europe, the Soviet-led communist bloc began to collapse, and with it the dividing wall. On the ninth of November, the East German Communist Party announced that citizens could freely cross the border. Celebrations erupted, with ecstatic crowds swarming the wall from both sides, strangers and friends embracing one another, family members running into the arms of loved ones not seen in nearly three decades, people laughing and weeping and dancing in the streets, “the greatest street party in the history of the world,” as one journalist wrote. A new world order was emerging, and for the first time in twenty-eight years, East and West Berliners were free to spend Christmas together.

Leonard Bernstein was invited to conduct an international orchestra in East Berlin to celebrate the historic event. “There are no words for this moment, it is so beautiful,” Bernstein said. “I just couldn't say no.” Bernstein, a Jew, conducting an orchestra in the land of the Reformation and the Holocaust, with musicians from East and West Germany and the four occupying powers of Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States. He was presented with the Star of the People's Friendship, when fifty years earlier he might have instead worn a yellow star and a pink triangle. Beethoven's Ninth was selected as the culminating event, and adding to the symbolism of the moment, Bernstein took one (not so) little liberty. In the final movement, he substituted the word *Freiheit* for the word *Freude*, making it an Ode to *Freedom* from the original Ode to *Joy*, a change he “felt authorized by the moment” to do so. At the conclusion of the performance, the concert hall, along with the world watching on television, thundered with applause. But authority of the moment? Did he mean the authority of a democratic people over authoritarian régimes? Or perhaps the moral authority of *Freiheit* even if it means *Angst* for others? What authority was Bernstein invoking?

The ancient Greeks spoke of a *kairos* moment as qualitative time, imbued with the authority of *timeliness* or *appropriateness* or *ripeness* of time attuned to the situation, born entirely of context and complex of converging relationships. An authority born of “right relationship” asking us to entrust ourselves to a *relational authority* that promises to *author* a flourishing of life for all. Perhaps nowhere is such relational authority as subtle and painstakingly formative as in our relationship with children, where it remains all too easy to rationalize compliance while failing to see power and coercion actually engendering injury and distrust. In a pandemic world where science, facts, media, politics, courts, and other organizing structures of society have all been plagued by doubt and suspicion, what else but a covenantal authority enables a commitment strong enough to author our children's future toward integrity, service, and joy?

Sharing questions that pitter-patter across our sacred journeys...

Religious Education at Unity Church

If you would like to enroll your child(ren) in religious education classes, email Michelle Mecey at michelle@unityunitarian.org.

Pastoral Care

If you have a joy or sorrow, life-cycle event, or concern you would like to share with the ministers and Pastoral Care Team, or have shared in the embracing meditation during Sunday service, please complete the online form at www.unityunitarian.org/pastoral-care.html or send an email to janne@unityunitarian.org and a minister will contact you.

Flowers for Worship

If you would like to provide flowers for Sunday worship, contact Martha Tilton at 651-228-1456 x105 or martha@unityunitarian.org.

Church Calendar

All church programming can be found on our calendar at www.unityunitarian.org/calendar1.html.

Social Media

Follow Unity Church!

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/unityunitarian

YouTube:

youtube.com/c/unitychurchunitarian

Instagram:

www.instagram.com/unityunitarian

Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/UnityUnitarian>



Music Notes

Ahmed Anzaldúa, Director of Music Ministries

Whenever I receive a message from someone interested in joining a choir, that message often includes some sort of apology and negativity about their own abilities: “I’m not a very good singer,” “I can’t read music,” “I don’t know how I’m supposed to breathe…” And, I wonder, to whom are we apologizing? These thoughts imply that there is an authority judging us on the beauty of our singing voice and accuracy of our pitch, determining whether or not we are worthy.

After a year of precious little in-person music-making, I’m also plagued with negative thoughts: What is choir if we can’t actually sing together? What am I as a musician if I’m not out there performing? And, over this unusual year, I’ve come to realize more than ever that I cannot hide behind the label of “musician;” I am first a human being. We are not alone, we do not exist alone, we do not create alone, and everything we do has an effect on others. I am hopeful that the result of this year will be a humanistic awakening of altruism and compassion. Music matters, but only insofar as its ability to tap into the complexity and richness of what it means to simply exist in this world as part of humanity. More importantly: I matter, and you matter too. I am enough and you are enough. And because we matter and we are enough, we should keep going. There is no agenda beyond curiosity and wonder.

This message about our online experiences from one of the singers in our Women’s Ensemble sums it up:

Too often I labor under the illusion that it’s my sole responsibility to get things right. Hearing my imperfect voice blend perfectly with the other singers was a powerful way to break that illusion. I now have an entirely different notion of my role in a choir (and perhaps in life): it’s fine to bring my strong low notes and let the sopranos bring strength to the high notes — it’s the combination of our differing strengths that brings beauty to the result. We don’t walk to get better at walking, we walk because we need to walk. It helped me to realize that choir can be even more joyful for me if I see it not as a place to improve my singing but simply a place to feed my soul.

Sing with a Unity Choir

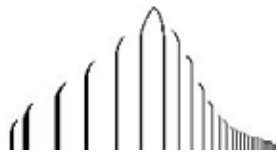
Unity’s choirs (adult *and* children) are meeting online every week! In addition to learning new music, we are also meeting to sing familiar songs and maintain our connection to each other and to the church. All newcomers are welcome and encouraged to take part! If you are interested, contact Ahmed at ahmed@unityunitarian.org.

A Call for Music

Given the depth of musical talent in this congregation, Ahmed is extending and invitation to individuals and families to share their music making. Please send a video of your singing, playing a musical instrument, or doing anything else that’s musical! The only request is that this is a video of you or your family making music — please do not send prerecorded music made by someone else. So, turn on your phone camera, record yourself singing a song or playing something, and send it to Ahmed at ahmed@unityunitarian.org.

2021 Virtual Children's Musical

Stay tuned for details!



UNITY CHURCH—UNITARIAN

Sanctuary Entrance: 733 Portland Avenue • Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
Business Entrance: 732 Holly Avenue • Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
651-228-1456 • fax: 651-228-0927 • www.unityunitarian.org • unity@unityunitarian.org

CLOVER EARL, CHAIR, BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REV. JANNE ELLER-ISAACS, CO-MINISTER
REV. ROB ELLER-ISAACS, CO-MINISTER
REV. KP HONG, DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
BARBARA HUBBARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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**TIME SENSITIVE
MATERIAL**

Cook Along at Home with Pancake Breakfast

Saturday, January 9 • 9:30 a.m.

Register: <http://bit.ly/cookalongpancake>

We'd like to cordially invite you to a pancake breakfast, cooked by you in your own home. This will be a live interactive cooking class with Tom Zell over Zoom. You'll learn how to make German pancakes! After we cook together, you'll have time to enjoy pancakes with a small group of other participants.

Along with a tasty meal and fellowship, participants will receive a hand-delivered goodie bag. Register early as supplies are limited!

Your pancake recipe packet will be sent by email one week before the event. There will be a few items to add to your weekly grocery shopping.

Gluten-Free, vegan, and dairy-free options will be available.

Don't want to cook? You are welcome to tune in to watch, learn, and hang out with other breakfast enthusiasts.

Save the date!

Cook Along at Home with Soup Supper

Sunday, February 14 • 4:00 p.m.

Register: <http://bit.ly/cookalongsoup>

Join Heidi Birkholz to explore soup tips and fellowship with other soup enthusiasts.



Unity Church 2021 Book Read

Breathe:

A Letter to My Sons
By Imani Perry

Read in January and early February.
Discussion: February 24, 7:00 p.m.

To order a copy with delivery
email library@unityunitarian.org.

Find the reading guide online at
<https://bit.ly/breathereadguide>.

