

COURAGE

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.

"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself," Franklin Roosevelt announced in 1933, evoking a stiff-upper-lip kind of courage meant to assure a nation in the throes of the Depression. And we have repeated this ever since, as if by banishing fear we could overcome it.

Ask any group of children about courage, though, and they may offer a different wisdom. Courage, they may say, is an attitude of "anyway." It's when you fear something will bring trouble or pain or embarrassment and you do it anyway.

Courage and fear, it turns out, are not opposites. Rather, they define and shape each other. Fear sets a boundary within which most of us pass most of our days. It separates what we name as safe from what we deem as threatening — and each of us draws that line differently. Courage, on the other hand, allows us to step across that boundary when life or love or a higher value or conviction demands it. It beckons us to act *anyway*, knowing full well we are stepping toward risk or danger, which requires knowing what our fears are in the first place.

Under FDR's advice, we don't get close enough to our fears to know them. Whistling our way along, pretending not to hear fear's footsteps, we lose a key source of guidance. After all, fear is our built-in warning system. It taps us on the shoulder and says "Watch out! Pay attention!" It can be critical to survival. "Fear is a natural reaction to moving closer to the truth," says the Buddhist monk Pema Chodron. Why would we send it packing?

The root of the word courage is *coeur* or "heart." In Buddhist teachings, the

soft spot in the center of our heart is one of our greatest treasures, the seat of compassion where we find our connection to all other beings. The courage of the spiritual warrior is found not in the fearful act of armoring and protecting this tender spot. It is found by opening the heart wider.

"You faced the death bombs and bullets," writes poet Ann Sexton, ". . . with only a hat to cover your heart." Now *that's* courage. Dropping the armor that shields us from relationship and stepping deeper into the world *anyway*. Not guarded from vulnerability nor running from it but engaging in what is fearsome because our heart tells us to. David Whyte says, "Courage is what love looks like when tested by the simple everyday necessities of being alive."

Notice, though, not all courage is inspired by love. There is courage present on the frontlines of the most unjust wars and causes. Courage can enable all kinds of terrible acts. Perhaps this explains the many Bible passages calling for "good courage" and expressed as imperatives: *Fear not. Take good courage.* Nowhere in these teachings, that I know of, does the word vulnerability appear, but we are told in the Gospels that "perfect love drives out fear." We learn from Biblical and other wisdom teachings that courage is at its best when disciplined to pair with love, to harness the ego, and to align us with the interests of community and relationship and the earth itself.

What does courage look like in a time of pandemic? And in the chaotic disruption of unjust systems and unsustainable living? What do

we mean by the "courage of our convictions" when living with so many unknowns? What does the "courage of our uncertainties" look like?

We are still wise to "take good courage." To muster love in the face of fear. To be strong not by guarding ourselves or withdrawing into isolation, but by moving boldly *toward* one another, "with only a hat to cover our heart."

Courage has been tucked into every one of us if we but learn to tap it and develop it — and then *en-courage* one another to do the same. Vulnerable and exposed, we are all invited to step over the lines of fear we have drawn around us, individually and in our communities of common values or identities. To move toward that brave place where we might truly and tenderly meet one another, hats off, hearts open, courageous open hands extended.

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

Ahmed Anzaldúa, Drew Danielson, Tom Duke, Ray Hommeyer, KP Hong, Kathy Hurt, and Laura Park (and adapted from an earlier commUNITY reflection by Karen Hering).

COURAGE THEME RESOURCES

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



Interim Reflections

My paternal grandmother served as our de facto child care provider during my childhood, a situation I enjoyed because she had so many amazing stories to tell about her own growing up in Appalachia, how her mother died one year on Christmas Day, how she married at 16 and traveled with

her husband in a covered wagon to Oklahoma, how that husband was killed in a car accident and my grandmother had to raise five children singlehandedly with no ready source of income. For a long time I found such stories the stuff of adventure — until I grew old enough to listen more deeply, and heard the constant note of hardship and tragedy in them. Then I began to ask my grandmother different questions along the lines of, “how did you keep going after that happened?” I saw great courage and inner resources in her ability to craft a life for herself and her children against overwhelming odds. She, however, seemed to see nothing remarkable in her life story, attributing her ability to keep going to her faith.

Many stories of courage are like that: the one who has done something courageous, when pressed to describe how they summoned up the courage to act, seems almost perplexed by the question, as though they simply stepped forward without needing any special preparation or an extra measure of inner resolve. While I might conclude from such a pattern that courage is something innate and all that is required of us is to find it somewhere inside ourselves, I suspect that is not the whole story. When courageous people say they did nothing special when they actually did do something quite special in its bravery, I believe that nonchalant reply is the result of their actions not involving ego efforts. The ego, in its love of being center stage, will certainly want to claim heroics. But if actions have been enabled by courage from deep inside us, then the ego does not get to be involved and the usual sense of ego efforts will be absent.

I know well when I have borne down and put my mind and strength into some undertaking; I also know well those mysterious times when I accomplished something significant — yet it felt like no big deal. Courage lives inside the self apart from the ego, and finding courage may mean I have to reach around my ego to summon it up. But it is there, ready to be put to use, even in times when I feel anything but courageous.

In faith, hope, and love,
Rev. Dr. Kathy Hurt



Take Care

Rev. Karen Hering, Associate Minister

English speaking people have been using the phrase “Take care” for five centuries and today we use it a lot — when saying goodbye in person or on the phone or signing off in an email, text or letter. “Take care,” we urge one another, as a wish for wellbeing,

maybe for caution or at the very least awareness.

Here at Unity Church, we might understand the phrase as more than an individual wish or note of concern. In our congregational life, one of the commitments we make is to care for one another. We recognize that the giving and receiving of care is the warp and weft of our community’s weave, providing both its beauty and its strength. In the middle of our congregational ends statements is our aspiration to: “Generously give and openly receive compassionate care in times of joy, sorrow, and transition.”

We try to be a community where it’s easy to “take good care” — because good care is readily available, from the church ministers and staff, but most abundantly from other congregants. I am often moved to learn how the web of care in this community, led by the Pastoral Care Team and reaching far beyond it, continually sends comfort and support where it is needed.

In this month focused on the theme of courage, I am thinking about the kind of courage that rises from vulnerability. How it might take courage to acknowledge when we need care and to accept it when it is offered. When we say, “Take care” to one another in this community, I hope we understand that as a wish for our collective wellness — a blessing calling on each of us to care for one another and to lean into the care of others when we need it. This giving and receiving of care not only helps us individually; it strengthens our congregational life as well.

When you find yourself in a time of needing care (and these times come to all of us), I hope you’ll let our Congregational Care Team know how we might help. You can use the form on the website (unityunitarian.org/pastoral-care.html), send an email to me at karen@unityunitarian.org, or call me at the church.

Take care, friends. Take good care.

Apply to serve as a care associate.

Details at www.unityunitarian.org/pastoral-care.html

SUNDAY SERVICES / OFFERING RECIPIENTS

Join us in-person at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m., and online at 9:00 a.m. only, each week for Sunday services! Masks are required for in-person worship.

January 2: Tolling of Bells

Livestream: youtu.be/9SsaWJAv4QY

We begin each new year with a memorial service for those who have died in the previous year. If you would like to have a candle lit to honor someone you loved and lost in 2021, please complete this online form: bit.ly/tollingbells21.

January 9: Going Gently

Livestream: <https://youtu.be/35iivfCB11U>

For a time during the Middle Ages, a trend in art included some image of death, such as a skull or a skeleton. Called *memento mori*, the trend seemed a way of reinforcing awareness of human mortality and the need to ensure priorities were solid in case death came unexpectedly. The pandemic has brought us another round of *memento mori*, heightening our recognition of the risk always present in our lives. How do we find courage to live well and without undue fear of the death that eventually comes to us all? Rev. Dr. Kathy Hurt, Ahmed Anzaldúa, and worship associate Nancy Dilts reflect on the particular courage called for when death is present.

January 16: When Courage Fails

Livestream: <https://youtu.be/bDQbfa9uKel>

Nobody, not even those who seem especially brave, lives entirely without fear. In those moments (or hours, or days, or even long times) when courage deserts us, how do we go forward anyway? On this Martin Luther King Sunday, Kathy, Ahmed, and worship associate Brian Newhouse consider what happens when we lose courage.

January 23: Superheroes and Secret Identities

Livestream: <https://youtu.be/IHYdvqbjUUs>

We have many cultural images and stories of characters who have an extra measure of courage, often because they are equipped with some sort of superpower that enables them to face overwhelming enemies. Those characters seem to be required to conceal their superpowers behind carefully developed secret identities. For the rest of us, hard experiences and cultural conditioning seem to challenge us to live as who we truly are, rather than hiding behind a socially accepted identity. That also means the superpowers we all carry go unused. Kathy, Ahmed, and worship associate Merrill Aldrich explore the courage needed to share our true identities when so much seems to call for hiding them.

January 30: Art As Messenger

Livestream: <https://youtu.be/k9egwVEKwNQ>

Courage helps us answer the call for self-reflection, growth, and putting our gifts to work to help others. And the messenger issuing the call? Oftentimes it's art. Be it visual, musical, prose, or poetry, art is able to reach us in ways nothing else can and then may lead us on a journey we never expected. Join worship associate Jen Welsh and worship leader Rebecca Gonzalez-Campoy for an exploration of the possibilities of spiritual antiracism and antiracist spirituality.

Rebecca Gonzalez-Campoy is a lifelong Unitarian Universalist in spirit and practice. She joined Unity Church in 2016 and began a Masters of Divinity program in UU Social Transformation at United Seminary of the Twin Cities in the fall of 2020. She runs her husband, Mike's, endocrinology clinic in Eagan and volunteers with several antiracism multicultural programs at Unity. She has three adult children engaged in the arts, technology, and education, and two dogs who know how to just be.

Seventy percent of our Sunday offering is given to a community non-profit recipient and thirty percent supports the Community Outreach Ministry at Unity Church. Donations are gratefully accepted online at <https://bit.ly/sundayoffering>.

January 2: [International Institute of Minnesota Afghan Refugee Program](#)

provides wrap-around services for newly arrived refugees offering help with the financial resources needed for immigration documentation, housing and health insurance applications, school registration, employment training, and transportation.

January 9: [Good Courage Farm](#) is an emerging agrarian ministry in west-central Minnesota where people of all faiths gather to learn and work together for the healing of Creation. Good Courage grows good food while sharing practices of agricultural, social, and spiritual regeneration. This collection will support Good Courage Farm's summer interns.

January 16: [Freedom School](#), held each summer in the Rondo Education complex, is a free program for students in grades K-8. This collection will help provide nutritious meals, address pandemic learning loss, and provide resources for lessons, field trips, and fun.

January 23: [Pawsitivity](#) serves individuals with autism and epilepsy by training dogs to serve their needs and help foster their independence. This offering will outfit two service dogs with vests, patches, harnesses, and belts.

January 30: [Minnesota Multifaith Network](#) aims to be a statewide network of faith leaders committed to building bridges and trust between faith communities and opening space for deeper relationships. This collection will support shared learning and training focused on fostering human rights through expanded interfaith commitments.

Nominate an organization to receive the offering: unityunitarian.org/sunday-offering.html.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES / MST UPDATE



Normalizing Courage

Jess Landgraf, Trustee

Because I am a year-round commuter by bicycle, I sometimes hear awe mixed with consternation from colleagues, especially around more extreme weather events. They'll tell me, "You biked to work in this?!" or "I couldn't do that — I'm too [insert excuse here]." I used to engage with the speaker (upkeep of my bike and gear costs less than a quarter of the amount of our car's annual expense plus I get fresh air and cardio exercise) but now I mostly nod and hear my colleague out. Often I end up shaking my head, amused. My colleagues clearly think I'm courageous — or crazy — especially when I bike through what would otherwise seem insurmountable challenges.

I realize I have privileges that enable me to bike commute and since adolescence I've leaned on those privileges to build our household's structures so that I have to bike commute. Many days my only alternatives are either slower (i.e. Metro Transit and walking) or expensive (taxi service), and neither our budget nor our garage have space for an additional car. These structures encourage my accountability to bike commuting. Rarely are my colleagues intrigued enough to slow down and listen to the choices and structures that prescribe my seemingly courageous action of biking to work. It isn't that I somehow have more courage than my colleagues. Rather, the difference to me with some exceptions, bike commuting is simply the way I get to my job. To those who have made different choices, bike commuting appears courageous (or crazy) but definitely not a mundane fact of life that they themselves could choose.

I wonder, what if labeling a choice, an action, or a behavior as "courageous" gets in the way of doing that act, again and again, until we simply cannot do life any other way?

When these moments of disconnect crop up, I've noticed that one major difference between my colleagues and myself is what we consider the path of least resistance. For them, it's driving. For me, it's biking. I wonder where we might go if we apply this lens when looking at Unity Church's habits. As we continue the transitions within our Executive Team, we will continue to have opportunities to reevaluate and reestablish what are our paths of least resistance. Would we be more comfortable in identifying white dominant culture within our gatherings if we chose to see conversations about race as simply necessary? What if we pushed against the urge to label a protest movement "courageous" — or crazy — would we be more likely to show up in solidarity?

At the annual meeting of the congregation in November, the congregation elected two new trustees (and re-elected trustee Clover Earl). Visit the board webpage to meet Debbie Cushman and Kevin Ely (and the rest of our board!): <https://www.unityunitarian.org/board-of-trustees.html>.

Update from the Ministerial Search Team

Morgan France-Ramirez, on behalf of the Ministerial Search Team: Avi Viswanathan, Betsy Hearn, Mary Baremore, Pauline Eichten, Lia Rivamonte, Jake Rueter, Dan Huelster, and Marg Walker



At this time, the Ministerial Search Team is excited to announce that we are moving to the next step of our search process! As we shared at the annual meeting in November, we have absorbed all the information we received from the congregational survey and listening sessions in our own data retreat, and we have used that insight to create our Congregational Record. As of December 1, our Congregational Record was posted to the UUA MinistrySearch database where it can be viewed by ministerial applicants. The names and Ministerial Records of interested applicants are then released to us in early January. So, as you are reading this, we are just starting to receive applications from interested ministers! Once we receive applications, we will spend the next three months discerning the best fit for Unity Church. We will begin by conducting virtual interviews with an eye towards arriving at three candidates for in-person interviews. If all goes well, we will then be able to select a final candidate at the end of March.

As we await applications, we are still busy preparing. We are finalizing our documents packet, a collection of additional, more detailed materials describing Unity Church, which is sent to applicants. These are things like our by-laws, contractual information, and sample newsletters. However, the main focus of our work between now and January, is preparation for discernment and interviewing. As we create our resume review criteria and interview protocols we will be working with Alfonso Wenker of Team Dynamics to ensure fairness and equity in our processes.

As we enter this exciting next phase of our ministerial search, we want to extend our deep thanks to the congregation and church staff for holding us in this process and for participating so fully in our information gathering process.

Members of Unity's Ministerial Search Team have posted bios and introduction videos on the transitions webpage. Click on over and get to know the members who are doing this important work on behalf of the congregation: [unityunitarian.org/ministerial-transition.html](https://www.unityunitarian.org/ministerial-transition.html)!

BELOVED COMMUNITY NEWS

The Artist in Residence Program at Unity Church: Phase Two

Lia Rivamonte, on behalf of the Beloved Community Communications Team and Artist in Residence Team



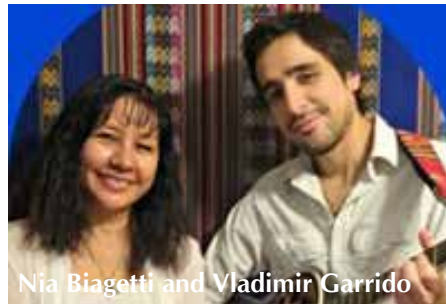
It was October of 2019 when **Rebekah Crisanta de Ybarra** began her artist residency at Unity Church. Rebekah is an interdisciplinary artist who identifies as Indigenous-Salvadoran-Norwegian-American and is based in the Twin Cities. Among the activities Rebekah offered was a hands-on demonstration of her approach to creating the Aztec-rooted ritual ofrenda for *Día de los Muertos*, the altar to honor loved ones who have died. This community presentation was the first official event of the Unity Church Artist in Residence (AiR) program.



Rebekah Crisanta de Ybarra

AiR is an effort to embody multiculturalism through art, inviting gifted artists whose art practices explore the world from the vantage point of their own singular intersectional identities that are not predominantly white-bodied or white-directed.

Much has transpired since that first presentation. In February of 2020, **Ina Yukka**, the mother and son duo of **Nia Biagetti and Vladimir Garrido** brought enchanting Latin American folk music and dance into the building with worship service performances and workshops, but the Covid-19 lockdown prevented their long-planned in-person concert, and the remainder of their residency had to be conducted virtually. Despite needing to move



Nia Biagetti and Vladimir Garrido

into all-virtual programs and events, the AiR Team invited social practice-interdisciplinary artist **Marcus Young** to serve as resident artist. Marcus and his collaborators from *DYFIT* (Don't You Feel It Too) encouraged us to move our bodies in any given space, uniting music and our intrinsic rhythms — in equal parts meditation and celebration — in the practice of public dance.



Marcus Young

It seems ironic that a program meant to concretize our understanding of multiculturalism, inviting us to bring our whole selves into unfamiliar realms as individuals and as a *community* had to be experienced in our own, separate, cozy rooms at home by screen. And while the artists with whom we've been fortunate enough to work thus far have all been exemplary, their work widely known and extolled by critics and audiences alike, the unplanned barriers to participation that have beset the program for these last eighteen months have prevented the type of community engagement the AiR Team had hoped for. Add to this our lack of clarity regarding some aspects of the program including logistics and implementation, and we realized some changes were due.

We asked ourselves how we might nurture deeper artist-community relationships and raise the level of engagement by congregants? We thought about how to be more intentional in what we hope to accomplish: integrating arts opportunities for learning and discovery with Unity's Ends, providing an opportunity for artists to expand their art, and offering the potential for spiritual growth and multicultural understanding for our church community as well as participating artists.

Of course, we'd hoped by now, we would all feel safe to meet in person. But while that has not yet happened, we are excited to move into the next phase of AiR. We have created program guidelines that outline the goals, expectations, and timelines for artist projects and we are reaching out to the broader Twin Cities artist community with a request for proposals (RFP). Eligible artists who take the time to familiarize themselves with Unity Church, our mission, values, and ends before applying for the program will have the advantage.

The application guidelines and deadline for submission will be posted on Unity's website. The team will then cull through the proposals, conduct interviews with a select group of artists, and hope to identify the next artist in residence by April or May 2022.

We hope that what we have re-envisioned will be a program that is more accessible to community members, allows for greater relationship-building, sparks our imaginations, and provides us with creative experiences that engender wonder, curiosity, and a profound recognition of and appreciation for our differences as human beings.

The AiR team members are: Lia Rivamonte, Ahmed Anzaldúa, Julia Brown, and Maura Williams. For more information visit www.unityunitarian.org/artist-in-residence.html.

WELCOME NEWCOMERS



Welcome Words

Laura Park, Director of Membership and Hospitality

It takes courage to start at a new church. Sometimes, it takes courage to even acknowledge you need church in your life. When you arrive, it takes courage to participate in an unfamiliar ritual, to join people you don't know in the Parish Hall after services, to reach out for connection and belonging. As you deepen your relationship, it takes courage to develop the

spiritual and antiracist multicultural practices that form the double helix of our congregational life together: within our individual spiritual lives, among us as we build community together, and beyond the church's walls as we take our values out in the world.

Could you use some support when your courage isn't quite there? Please lean on me! I'm here to help answer your questions about congregational life and the pathways you might explore to know the church better and deepen your spiritual life. Contact me at laura@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x110. I look forward to getting to know you!

Pathway to Membership Classes

Explore a deeper connection to Unity Church and the commitments and opportunities of membership. Contact Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x110 with questions or to participate.

Finding Yourself at Unity

Sundays • 10:15-11:15 a.m.

Gannett Room in-person and online at bit.ly/fyonline

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. Weekly church emails include the class topic or email laura@unityunitarian.org to receive reminders.

January offerings:

- January 2: No class
- January 9: Q&A with the Minister
- January 16: Worship & Liturgical Year
- January 23: UU History
- January 30: Membership 101

Committing to Unity

Tuesday, January 11 • 7:00 p.m.

- *Develop personal practice to help you find and keep your balance.*
- *Develop the skills of intimacy that let you go deep quickly with strangers.*
- *Take the compassion that rises from doing the first two and use it to bless the world.*

This is how Unity Church talks about its expectations of membership. Does the invitation into this ongoing work resonate with you? Are you ready to make the membership commitment? This session, for people ready to become members, 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 and officially join the church. A private signing ceremony can also be arranged.

Mentoring at Unity

A Path to Deeper Connection

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. You can decide together what connection would be most helpful. You might attend Sunday services together or meet to discuss Unitarian Universalism and your spiritual journeys, or attend a church event together, or find another way to connect. 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, at laura@unityunitarian.org.

Membership Database

Log in today!

Unity Church uses a congregational database called ShelbyNext. Logging in allows you to access your own membership and giving information, as well the church's online membership directory and calendar.

Easy, step by step directions are available here: unityunitarian.org/membership-database.html. If you need additional support, please email martha@unityunitarian.org.

WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

Wellspring Wednesday gathers a multigenerational church community Wednesday evenings to nourish right and holy relationship among us and deepen our life of faith grounded in spiritual practice and antiracist multicultural work. The Wellspring Wednesday experience includes:

- Sharing meaningful time and, when the requirement to mask in the building is lifted, nourishing food together.
- Brief multigenerational worship in-person in the Ames Chapel and on Zoom (bit.ly/wwchapelreg) from 6:30 to 6:50 p.m.
- Opportunities to play, learn, and practice with one another. See upcoming programs below!

January 5

Food for Thought

Register: <https://bit.ly/CSA4Thought>

Would you like to make a difference in the world through your everyday actions around food? Could our consumer choices drive changes in how our food is raised as it did in Europe? Unity's Act for the Earth Team invites you to a conversation with farmers making a difference: Jacqueline Zita of the Women's Environmental Institute and Haley Ball of Urban Roots. Our guests will consider:

- Where does our food come from?
- How can we get our food locally, and why does it matter?
- What is Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)?
- With thin profit margins, how can farmers also support environmental and social justice initiatives?

January 12

A Spiritual Practice to Feed Your Soul: Lectio Divina

Register: <https://bit.ly/Lectio21-22>

Following a centuries-old Benedictine spiritual practice of contemplative reading, meet online to share in Lectio Divina. In this invitation to receive the wisdom and gifts of poetry, each session engages the group in hearing a particular poem read aloud multiple times, listening for "what is found there." Rather than analyzing the poem, group members lift up what they heard and how the poem spoke to them. Led by Shelley Butler, this practice is a rich way to receive the gifts of poetry in a small group setting. Drop-in attendance is welcome. Register once to attend one or all future sessions on the second Wednesday of each month. Also available fourth Sundays at 4:30 p.m. See the page 8 for details.

Practicing Perseverance: Seated Meditation and Yin Yoga

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

What is our reaction to the uncomfortable? Using yoga poses accessible to all body types, this session will bring into awareness the stories we tell ourselves about our discomfort. We will explore our ability to stay in that discomfort and to witness the authenticity we can find in that space. Experience a "within" embodied spiritual practice and how it might inform our "among" practice of being in right relationship with one another and our surrounding community. 75 minutes.

January 19

Spiritual Extraverts and Introverts

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

While most spiritual traditions have developed practices to support spiritual growth, figuring out which practice will be fruitful for any one of us can be challenging, especially when those practices may be presented as universal (and therefore sure to work for everybody). How do we discern, among the myriad possible practices, which will be right for us? Why is it that some practices simply don't work for us? This class introduces a longstanding perspective on the two primary paths of spiritual development and the practices associated with them, along with possibilities for finding a good fit between one's usual spiritual style and a practice.

Open Page: Writing Our Way toward Courage

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

"It is in the small things we see it," writes Anne Sexton of courage. "The child's first step, as awesome as an earthquake. The first time you rode a bike. . . ." But its reputation also rises from larger evidence of daring and defiance. This guided writing session explores the nature and sources of courage and its movement large and small within our lives.

Board Game Night

In-person in the Center Room

Open to everyone; kids are welcome with their adult(s)! We'll have a variety of board games available for ages 10 and up that are easy to learn, or bring a favorite board game that you would like to play. Bring a board game for the younger set, too, if an adult comes with it to facilitate the game.

January 26

ReMembering Singing Water

Register whether you attend in person in Parish Hall (proof of vaccination required) or by Zoom: <https://bit.ly/singingwater>

ReMembering: Singing Water is an original choral film that explores Minnesota as a place of both home and exile for immigrants, LGBTQ people, and Indigenous people. Interconnected stories are brought to life through choral music, spoken word, animation, and life size puppets.

ReMembering is a collaboration with water protector Sharon Day; puppeteer Sandy Spieler; singer-songwriter Sara Thomsen; and features performances by Kymani Kahlil, Tara Tanağidan To Win, and the Ikidowin Youth Acting Ensemble. Several artists will be available for a Q & A following the film.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE / OUTREACH MINISTRY

Qigong and Tai Ji Practice

Tuesday, January 18 • Noon-1:00 p.m.

In-person at Unity Church

The winter season is time for reflection, rest and restoration. Take an hour to listen to your inner truth. Teacher Lisa Schlingerman will guide you through Qigong, Tai Ji movements and breathing meditations that will calm the mind, conserve your energy, and keep the body warm.

The practice is a safe and gentle form of exercise for people of all ages. No experience is necessary. For our shared wellness, masks, vaccination, and an RSVP are required.

To attend, please sign up using this link: <https://forms.gle/FJ27NiGRNa52JnrU6>.

As always, wear comfortable shoes and loose clothing if possible. Because Lisa donates her time for this session, we will gratefully receive any donation you wish to make to her in gratitude for her teaching.

Lectio Divina

A Spiritual Practice to Feed Your Soul

Sunday, January 23 • 4:30 p.m.

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

Following a centuries-old Benedictine spiritual practice of contemplative reading, meet online to share in Lectio Divina. In this invitation to receive the wisdom and gifts of poetry, each session engages the group in hearing a particular poem read aloud multiple times, listening for “what is found there.” Rather than analyzing the poem, group members lift up what they heard and how the poem spoke to them. Led by Lisa Wersal, this practice is a rich way to receive the gifts of poetry in a small group setting. Drop-in attendance is welcome. Register once to attend one or all future sessions on the fourth Sunday of each month. Also offered second Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. See page 7.

Chalice Circles

Join a Chalice Circle at the start of the new year. Registration is open for the following in-person circles beginning in January:

- Third Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m.
- Fourth Thursday of each month at 1:00 p.m.

The circles, led by trained facilitators, meet once monthly from January through June as an invitation to experience the spiritual practice of conversation — both speaking and listening from the heart with a small group of 6-10 people. Each month, participants receive a packet with readings, podcasts, short videos, and other resources related to the month’s theme. They choose 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 to share their experiences. Register online at: unityunitarian.org/chalice-circle-registration.html.

Obama School Update

Nancy Heege, Obama School Ministry Team

Greetings for the New Year! It’s a good time to reiterate our team’s four goals:

- Enhance the learning of Obama scholars
- Support the faculty and staff at Obama School
- Promote Obama School in the community
- Create a Unity team that supports and encourages a positive volunteer experience

Some of our goals have been challenging in the past twenty months because we haven’t been able to volunteer in the classrooms or library due to the pandemic. Despite this, we are an active team, staying in touch with the faculty and staff, monitoring the changing landscape as the Saint Paul School Board considered school closings, supplying food for a monthly meeting of the teachers, and connecting with our Unity volunteers and encouraging them to take the Intercultural Development Inventory [IDI]. We even took on some gardening tasks in the fall until some territorial bees let us know our presence wasn’t wanted.

We will hold a volunteer meeting on Thursday, January 13, at 10:00 a.m., via Zoom. Details to follow.

On the agenda will be discussion of the school board’s December 1 decision about the future of the school. After long debate and many listening sessions, the board decided that Obama School will close in June of 2023 and reopen again in 2024 or 2025 after extensive remodeling. The school will then house a Montessori program for elementary and middle school students. Current Obama scholars will be encouraged to register.

We look forward to good things happening in 2022!

Gun Sense Team Update

Gun Sense. At first pass, that seems like an oxymoron to some. However, with four-in-ten American adults admitting they live in a household with a gun (Pew Research Center), and with approximately 38,000 total deaths in the U.S. involving guns in 2019, including 24,000 suicides and 14,000 homicides (according to the BBC), learning how to navigate and mitigate that reality safely — sensibly — is important. What can we do, and how can we do it? This is part of the work and focus of the Gun Sense Team here at Unity Church.

We want to hear from YOU. What are your specific questions or concerns around gun ownership? Gun violence? Gun laws and policy? Do you have questions about the Gun Sense Team here at Unity? Please ask your questions or let us know your interest in joining us in this work: www.unityunitarian.org/gun-sense.html. Beginning in January, we will meet on the second Tuesday of each month, at 4:30 p.m., on Zoom.

LIBRARY-BOOKSTALL / ART TEAM



The Library-Bookstall Team

Ring in the New Year with Optimism and Pessimism

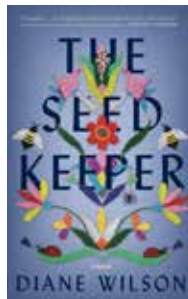
Shelley Butler, Barb Foss, Vicki Kappus, and the Library-Bookstall Team

Did you stay up to ring in the new year? Somebody once said that the optimist stays up to welcome in the new year; the pessimist stays up to make sure that the old year is really over. With so many uncertainties still before us, perhaps you are feeling “both-and” like I am, a bit optimistic and pessimistic at the same time. Still, as I look around Unity Church, I see many things that are certain and cause for optimism. From the Library-Bookstall side of things, here are a few things we can count on:

1. The Unity Bookstall and Unity Libraries are open on Sunday mornings following both worship services.

Among many great titles you will find in the Bookstall and the Anderson Library, take a look at the highly acclaimed *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Defund Fear: Safety Without Policing, Prisons, and Punishment* by Zach Norris, which is the UUA Common Read title this year, and from one of our Unity authors Michael Orange, his new book *Embracing the Ghost*.

2. The Unity Congregation Book Read 2022 title is *The Seed Keeper* by Diane Wilson. Join us in reading this overwhelmingly popular and stunning novel through February and discuss on Wednesday, March 2. Find the reading guide at www.unityunitarian.org/library-bookstall.html. Register here: <https://bit.ly/BookRead22>.



3. Cairns: The Unity Church Journal of the Arts, Vol. 13, 2021 is here! Purchase from the Bookstall, or to have *Cairns* delivered, order from the Unity Online Bookstall: <https://bit.ly/UnityOnlineBooks>.

4. New in the Justice Database are two important environmental organizations that we learned about from the Water Protectors who visited Unity in December 2021: **Honor the Earth** and **Welcome Water Protectors**. Learn more about both here: <https://bit.ly/JusticeData>.



May this new year bring blessings and new possibilities. Here's to a cup o'kindness for you!

Parish Hall Artist: Heather Friedli



Heather Friedli was born in Los Angeles, CA, in 1982. She lived half her childhood with her mom and grandmother in Los Angeles, CA, and Albuquerque, NM, absorbing the colors, beauty and culture of the Southwest; then moved and lived her second half of childhood with her aunt, uncle, and grandmother (yes, same one!) in Luxembourg and Detroit, MI. She graduated with a fibers and textiles degree from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2005. In 2010 Heather through-hiked the Appalachian Trail, the completion of which inspired her to create a series of work highlighting her family's native Odawa and Mexican heritages within impressionistic and dreamlike natural landscapes. She continues to explore the earth through artventures and wilderness travels both with her family and solo. She currently lives and works in Saint Paul, MN, with her husband and two children.

Recently, she has opened her own Friedli Gallery & Studio at 943 West 7th Street, St. Paul, where she hosts ever-changing exhibits of the works of many different artists plus art classes of varying types (www.friedliartsgallery.com).

Heather Friedli is best known for her contemporary impressionist oil paintings depicting the land in which she lives and explores. Bold brush strokes and brilliant colors light up scenes of cloudscapes, water, and native flora. Many pieces are created in the context of her wilderness adventures; she often brings her paints outdoors to create work that shares with the viewer her understanding of and immersion in the landscape. With these colorful works she seeks the spiritual world through the lens of her mixed American, Indigenous Odawa, and Mexican heritages, and lived intimacy of place. Her work is creative, soulful, bold, and powerful.

These paintings are her achievement in synthesizing personal love and submersion in the natural world through wilderness adventure travel, bringing the viewer into her sphere. Those experiences, being in the outdoors and seeing the beauty and power of nature are often represented in large scale works. She paints with a passion for the land, looking around and internalizing the colors and expressing them onto canvas.

A reception for the artist will be held on Saturday, January 22, from 10:00 a.m.-noon, in the Parish Hall.



Not afraid of anything, not nobody, not no how!

Drew Danielson,
Coordinator of Youth and Campus Ministries

I'm confused about whether kids these days are very courageous or if they are profoundly timid. OK, I'm confused about the same question for myself. I think it's about mixed messages that lots and lots of us have received in modern

America where we're all supposed to feel good about ourselves. I'm talking about a lot of mixed messages really, but a key one is that we should be confident in ourselves enough to be courageous, while also being told it's not OK to make mistakes and you should always be certain before you attempt anything.

When I started teaching in an urban alternative school, it was truly eye-opening to me to hear the constant, daily, loud, aggressive, largely threatening statements of bravado and courage expressed by most of my students. Good lord these were tough, fiercely independent kids, absolutely sure of themselves and wanting everyone to know it. But of course once I got to know them I saw the truth of it, which was that most were really not confident at all and were actually scared, scared to be messed with, scared to fail, scared to prove themselves. I'm not criticizing them because I understand they needed to protect themselves, the dangers they wanted to ward off were very real.

But that population was not unique from the ones I know from other schools, or here at Unity, in that they know it is important to project courage, especially when they don't really feel it.

Maybe this has always been human nature, but I sense it is heightened in our time. In Coming of Age classes and in Tower Club I feel the dilemma often. When they start digging in to things that rightfully threaten to shake their certainty, they usually stop and become entrenched. Of course they do — it's scary to question your convictions! So rather than keep digging in order to really feel something, to really get at what might be an alarming truth, you aggressively feign confidence. And that is showing courage.

No it's not.

It occurs to me that the problem is largely one I lay at the feet of our misguided esteem of individualism. I think the courage I'm talking about isn't something comes from individual strength or certainty. My sense is that we have to learn courage, and it has to be taught. It also has to be supported. My courage expressed alone, without support can become just empty bravado. On the other hand if I can act with a confidence that comes from hashing over ideas and possibilities, gaining insight, testing against others, and being supported throughout, that's when I can go "with the courage of my convictions."

I know not everyone has those supports, and what I'm talking about isn't the only kind of courage. But I feel it does belong in this faith community, that our kids, and yes we adults, have to accept we maybe need each other in order to be courageous.

UU Families Meal Ritual Workshop

Would you like family mealtime to feel more centered and provide a regular sense of connection for your family? Unity's UU Families Initiative invites you to virtually attend a meal ritual workshop. Families with kids of all ages will learn a simple ritual to do at the beginning of meals. Here's what one parent says about their family's experience with the meal ritual:

I grew up in a Christian household that said grace together before meals, so having a UU-specific ritual to use in that context with my own family filled a hole I'd been feeling. At the same time, the sentiments are universal enough that when we've shared them with our extended family of other (or no) faiths, our UU ritual has often become the go-to way to begin those meals together. We've used it for years, and it's an integral part of our family life now.

This workshop has two parts. The first meeting is a parent orientation on Wednesday, January 19, from 8:00-9:00 p.m. The second meeting is on Sunday, January 23, at 5:00 p.m., so the entire family can learn and practice the ritual with a meal at home. As part of this workshop families are provided with supplies for each child to make a chalice that is used during the ritual.

Please register by January 10:

bit.ly/uufamilymeal

MUSIC MINISTRY / FELLOWSHIP GROUPS



Music Notes

Ahmed Anzaldúa, Director of Music Ministries

I was recently asked to address the national membership of the American Choral Directors Association with a short column on "access" for our publication, the Choral Journal. As I was writing, it seemed to me that it also connects to our theme of courage, so I've decided to share an excerpt of my column for this month's newsletter. I hope it will help to give some insight into some of my decisions when it comes to our music ministry.

As we know, choral singing can provide an extraordinarily meaningful experience both to listeners and to participants. It can also be culturally relevant and give us insight into how we relate to the world and each other. However, all of these benefits are lost for those that cannot access our art form. When we sing in choir, who is not in the room? What is keeping them away? Financial, geographical, and cultural barriers all play a part. Unfortunately, musicians and organizations have been conditioned to see access as a chore, an item on a checklist to secure grant funding or appease an irritating voice in our community, instead of what it is: an integral, essential part of our art.

Access is inextricably connected to relevance: information becomes more relevant as the effort required to obtain it and absorb it decreases; the lower the effort, the higher the relevance. When considering access, we typically first think of geography and finances, or associate the concept with making accommodations for people with disabilities or special needs. This makes us overlook aspects of our choral singing practice that add an unnecessary effort for participants to obtain and absorb the information we are trying to communicate. Our insistence on abiding by outdated notions of concert decorum, dress, and etiquette, our reticence to include familiar music from popular genres alongside revered choral works, are as much barriers to access as expensive ticket prices and participation fees.

Whenever there is talk of making any art form more accessible or inclusive to a specific community, it can be perceived as threatening to those that already interact with it regularly. Some of the elements that act as barriers to outsiders can at the same time be beloved by regular participants; what may be perceived as off-putting and pompous by an outsider may be perceived as grand and majestic by the insider. Reconsidering elements like concert dress, our superficial notions of what constitutes excellence, and the leadership structure in an ensemble for the sake of access may be seen by insiders as threatening to choral singing itself. This gut impulse to protect our art form from being supposedly distorted is understandable, but it is also misguided. It implies that our art form is fragile, when in fact communal singing is one of the oldest and most resilient forms of artistic expression in human history. It suggests the nonsensical idea that increasing the reach of our art to more people will somehow damage its purity.

If our goal is to help make choral music more accessible, to welcome new communities into our art form, we must do it on their terms, not ours. Our role is not to police taste and keep the gates, our role as choir directors is to provide a creative space for everyone to sing, a musical home for each other.

Fellowship Groups

For more conversation about getting connected, contact Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org.

Afterthoughts offers time immediately following the 9:00 service to discuss the service.

Caregivers Group meets on the third Thursday of the month.

Evergreen Quilters: This quilting group meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-9:00 p.m. and fourth Saturday of the month.

Families Living with Mental Health Challenges meets the first Saturday of each month, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Five Animal Kung Fu meets Saturdays, 11:00 a.m.-noon.

Living With Grief Group meets on the third Tuesday of the month.

Men's Breakfast Group meets monthly on the first Saturday for breakfast in the Parish Hall from 8:30-10:00 a.m.

Men's Coffee Group meets every other Wednesday, January 12 and 26, at 10:00 a.m. for light-hearted conversation.

Men's Conversation Group meets Mondays, January 10 and 24, from 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Men's Retirement Circle: Monday, January 3, 17, 31, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

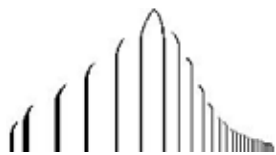
New Look at the Bible meets the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m.

Recovery from White Conditioning meets Wednesdays, 6:00-7:00 p.m.

Textile Arts Group meets online the first and third Wednesday of each month, January 5 and 19, from 7:00-8:30 p.m. Bring your knitting, embroidery, etc.

Unity Book Club meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m. January 11: *State of Terror* by Hillary Rodham Clinton and Louise Penny. February 8: *How Iceland Changed the World: The Big History of a Small Island* by Egill Bjarnason

Women In Retirement meets the second and fourth Thursday of the month, 1:00-3:00 p.m.



UNITY CHURCH-UNITARIAN

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Monday, January 17 • 8:45-10:30 a.m. • www.mlkbreakfast.com



Winter Warm-up Drive

Help people recently released from prison by donating warm clothing and hygiene items. 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.

New items only please!

- Winter coats, long underwear, T-shirts, hats, gloves, boots, and scarves
- Deodorant, toothpaste, hand lotion, soap, shampoo, hand sanitizer, and washcloths
- Tote bags to carry items

The majority of individuals seeking services at Amicus are men, therefore the priority is collecting items suitable for men. Size XL and larger are of the greatest need.

How and When to Donate

- Drive runs January 2 through the end of February.
- Donate financially or drop off items at Unity Church in the Parish Hall on Sunday mornings or at the front desk M-F, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
- Questions? Please contact Ray Wiedmeyer at 651-808-7790 or raka1260@gmail.com for more information.

Support Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf

During November, 330 pounds of food was donated by church members and friends to Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf. Thank you! That is the most donations this year!

Help the food shelf get ready for the long winter and consider bringing one food item every time you come to church.

For January and February the food shelf is seeking donations of:

- Toilet paper
- Paper towels
- Disinfectant wipes
- Shampoo and conditioner
- Body wash and lotion
- Hand soap

Let's continue to support the wonderful work of our community food shelf and bring much needed supplies and food to our neighbors during the winter months.