



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 faith and strengthen our bonds with one another in religious community.

One of my favorite poems was penned by Amelia Earhart. I know it “by heart” She writes, “Courage is the price that life exacts for granting peace. The soul that knows it not, knows no release from little things . . .” That is where the sound bite of this poem usually ends. However, it’s the rest of the poem that makes the first part of the poem more salient. Earhart continues, “. . . knows not the livid loneliness of fear, nor mountain heights where bitter joy can hear the sound of wings. How can life grant us boon of living, compensate for dull gray ugliness and pregnant hate unless we dare the soul’s dominion? Each time we make a choice, we pay with courage to behold the resistless day, and count it fair.”

When we think of “courage” it’s natural to recall persons who have done extraordinary things. Amelia Earhart’s attempt to circumnavigate the globe ended in her disappearance, but her attempt nevertheless astonished and inspired millions. As we enter into the month of January, we can’t help but remember the many acts of courage by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph Abernathy, James Forman, Bayard Rustin, Diane Nash, Fannie Lou Hamer, Septima Pointsett Clark, Ella Baker and many others. Some of their actions made it into the news, others were known only through the lens of history and storytelling. We need those stories to remind us that ordinary people are capable of doing extraordinary things.

Yet, in most our daily lives, it’s unlikely to call what we do “courageous.” Is getting out of bed an act of courage? It is if you suffer from chronic depression. Is restraining your temper an act of courage? It is when you know that to lash out in anger to your spouse or child could do serious damage to

your relationship. What about the simple act of being confronted with change? Is that an act of courage? If courage is the ability to face one’s fears, or to exhibit strength in the midst of pain or grief, then yes, of course it is.

Is then courage a muscle we get to develop? Certainly. Not unlike our New Year resolutions, they weaken without use. When we need our muscles most, they likely will fail us if we haven’t used them. Likewise, when we need to draw on courage — whether to face the unwelcome or the unexpected — we must also build our courage “muscles.” How might we do that? One way is to strengthen our ability to face the truth of what is really “real.” Courage then is developing the capacity to wade into the heart of despair or hopelessness and not become paralyzed by it.

There are many things in life that will challenge us. Certainly the biggest challenge of all is facing the end of our lives — or the life of someone whom we love. Of the small changes which have been made this year to our embracing meditation, the one that has provoked the most conversation is this one: “Our lives are blessed by those who knowingly and with curiosity and courage face their final days.” Some have written and spoken verbally about how important and meaningful those two words are to them “curiosity and courage.” Stories have been told of witnessing the end of a person’s life who indeed, did face their death with those two co-equal “muscles.” At the same time, stories were shared about those who didn’t face their end with curiosity and courage. They were frightened, or clinging, or in denial about the imminence of their life’s end. Do we judge them for not being curious or even courageous? Ah, the

complexities and inadequacies of our language! To be curious about the end of one’s life takes energy and attention and not all of us will have that. To be courageous can also mean not being in denial about death — one’s own or others. To face the truth with honesty is another form of courage.

If we circle back to Amelia Earhart’s poem for a moment, what she is saying is that courage enables us to feel alive — even if it is “the livid loneliness of fear.” Think of an artist, who makes a piece of art not knowing if it will truly express the thoughts or feelings that live inside of them. Or the writer, facing the blank page, wondering, “How can I translate this into something that moves me — and then, hopefully have an impact on others?” The courage to create, to continue to persist — can bring with it the rewards of, as Earhart describes “bitter joy.” Bitter because, like climbing a mountain, is achieved only with great effort and sweat and sometimes tears. Yet, there is that moment, of standing on the mountaintop, blessed by the vista of a landscape one could not see while trudging on the trail.

May this month bring you joy — both bitter and sweet. May you find the courage to behold the resistless day — and count each one as fair.

*Rev. Kathleen Rolenz
and this month’s theme team:
Rev. Andrea La Sonde Anastos,
Drew Danielson, Rev. KP Hong,
and Rev. Dr. Tom Duke*

Theme Resources

For further reflection on the theme, see this month’s spiritual practice packet, available online at unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html.

IN THE MEANTIME



The Courage to Covenant

Reflections on Interim Ministry

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, Interim Senior Minister

This past fall, I had the opportunity to officiate at a wedding held here at Unity Church. As we got to the climax of the ceremony — where the bride and groom spoke their vows to one another — my watch starting buzzing. Uh-oh, I wondered.

What was so important that was setting off an alarm on my smart watch? I glanced down at the watch and saw, "Irregular heartbeat detected." I realized that I was so caught up in the unspoken emotions expressed between these two before they said their vows, that my heart was beating as fast as theirs!

Such is the power of covenant — of making promises to, with and for one another. To covenant is a courageous act of commitment.

Unity Church is familiar and practiced with the creation of covenants. The congregation has a deep well of traditions which are foundational to who you are and how you operate in a covenanted community. The board of trustees, chalice circles and other small groups have covenants which remind participants of how we want to treat one another, especially when in disagreement. What is missing, however, is an overarching covenant that the entire congregation is involved in creating and in affirming. This overarching covenant is known by any number of names: Covenant of Right Relations, Healthy Congregation Covenant; Behavioral Covenants, but its purpose is the same; to serve as a guide for congregants be in "right relationship" with one another.

To create such a covenant generally takes time. As your interim senior minister, I don't want to start a process that I can't complete or one that I would have to leave for a brand-new minister or ministry team to enact. But what I can do is to continue the conversation, and to hear your thoughts as to how you would answer this one question (and note, it is modified from the question posed in the December 2023 newsletter): ***What is one behavior you do or have observed someone else doing at Unity Church that builds a community of integrity, open-hearted engagement and courageous action?***

This question was inspired by the team at First Universalist, Minneapolis, who was charged with creating their congregational covenant. I like it because it asks us not to reflect on ideals, but on actual practiced behaviors. At the January Wellspring Wednesday dinners, you'll be asked to respond in writing to that one question. There will also be a place on the website to respond. Watch for a conversation session both in-person and online in February. Together, with a small team of people from Unity, we'll look at the responses to see what similarities are found among them. At the Transforming Conflict Workshop on February 3 (see details on this page), there will be time for participants to look at the behaviors we've collected and maybe try our hand at crafting a draft covenant of sorts. It's my hope that before the congregational meeting and vote on April 21, we'll have a polished version of this draft covenant to share with the congregation.

This is the beginning of the process and not the end. What's most important for me is not the perfectly crafted covenant, but the conversations we have and the ways in which those conversations shape the expressed care we have for one another.

Now if you'll excuse me, my watch is buzzing again! Guess it's my irregular heartbeat that is excited about Unity's future that is unfolding before us.

Keeping the faith with you,
Kathleen

The Wheel of Life

In Memoriam

Burt Riskedahl

September 8, 1940 –
December 12, 2023

Blake Davis

June 17, 1940 –
December 4, 2023

Transforming Conflict

A Workshop with
Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley

Saturday, February 3

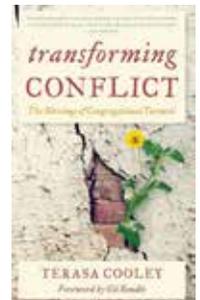
9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Parish Hall and online via Zoom

Register by January 29:

bit.ly/transformingconflict

Transforming Conflict treats conflict as an opportunity to learn and grow, both individually and institutionally. Exploring new understandings of how our bodies and minds respond to conflict, Rev. Cooley offers concrete strategies for personal growth and healthy congregational functioning... — From the back cover of *Transforming Conflict: The Blessings of Congregational Turmoil*.



In this workshop, we'll explore some of the root causes behind conflict, learn about how to create a new culture of learning, explore tools for change, and engage with case studies to help us embody these learnings. After lunch, members of individual congregations will meet to explore how to take these learnings into their congregations.

Pick up a copy of *Transforming Conflict* at the Bookstall, and read it during January!

JANUARY SERVICES | OFFERING RECIPIENTS

Sunday Worship Services

Sunday services are held at 9:00 and 11:15 a.m., except where noted. The 9:00 a.m. service is offered via livestream. Religious Education programs for children and youth are held Sundays during our service times.

January 7: Tolling of Bells

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz | Lorelee Wederstrom, worship associate
Livestream at 9:00: youtube.com/watch?v=1bKnh_NSSwo
We begin each new year with a memorial service for those who have died in the previous year. Everyone will have an opportunity to acknowledge those they've loved and lost.

January 14: The Courage to Be Accountable

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz
Livestream at 9:00: youtube.com/watch?v=e_zTDV3r4-g
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, and Bayard Rustin's commitment to non-violence was a powerful and effective strategy because all those involved in the Civil Rights Movement were committed to practicing the disciplines of non-violence as expressed in Beloved Community in action. What wisdom can we learn from King and Rustin as we move towards ever increasing levels of accountability which require of us both courage and consistency?

January 21: The Call to Racial Justice from our Theological Heritage

Rev. Dr. Andrea Johnson
Livestream at 9:00: youtube.com/watch?v=ecaAVeGy2B0
What calls you to work for justice in the world? This sermon will explore both the historical and contemporary call to justice that arises from our Unitarian Universalist theological heritage.

Rev. Dr. Andrea Johnson is a community minister affiliated with First Universalist Church in Minneapolis. She recently completed her Doctor of Ministry in public theology at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities.

January 28: "There Be Dragons!"

Rev. Lara Cowtan
Livestream at 9:00: youtube.com/watch?v=dChdj144rr4
We can do hard things. Facing our fears and charting a pathway forward.

Flowers for Worship

If you would like to provide flowers for a Sunday worship service, please contact Suki Sun at sunflowerselflove@gmail.com.

Offering Recipients

Each week, sixty percent of our Sunday offering is given to a community non-profit and forty percent supports the Community Outreach Ministry at Unity Church. Donations are gratefully accepted online at bit.ly/sundayoffering.

January 7: Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance (MUUSJA)

MUUSJA is grounded in Unitarian Universalist aspirations to work for justice by creating partnerships among UUs, faith groups, and civic organizations. 2024 is a critical year as we enter a presidential election cycle amidst rising authoritarianism, climate crises, and increased threats to reproductive, gender, and trans rights. This collection will fund the 2024 Get Out the Vote initiative. Church members Terri Burnor, Sherri Knuth, and Lia Rivamonte have all served on the MUUSJA board. muusja.org

January 14: Before Racism

Before Racism is a comprehensive, hands-on program that works with child care and preschool centers focusing on the ways very young children learn about, form, internalize and express attitudes regarding racial identity. Before Racism designs and delivers learning experiences that will have a lasting impact on preventing the development of overt and covert bias and racism. This collection will support the purchase of curriculum materials. beforeraacism.org

January 21: Frogtown Green

Frogtown Green is a resident-led, volunteer-powered initiative working to make St. Paul's most diverse low-income neighborhood greener and healthier. To this end, Frogtown Green advocates for green spaces, promotes sustainable activities, and manages several parklets, urban farms, and gardens throughout Frogtown. Unity Church member Patricia Ohmans is the energy oasis behind Frogtown Green. frogtowngreen.com

January 28: Wakan Tipi

Wakan Tipi, located in the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary and a place of great significance to the Dakota people, has long suffered from neglect and haphazard development. The Wakan Tipi Center will reopen in two years with the purpose of connecting people to this sacred landscape through immersive experiences in Dakota history, lifeways, language, and values. This collection will fund outreach materials to raise community awareness of this vital St. Paul project. wakan tipi.org

If you would like to nominate an organization to receive the offering, please visit unityunitarian.org/sunday-offering.html.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES



What Did We Learn?

Debbie Cushman, Trustee

Back in August, I wrote about the congregational survey we'd all be invited to take in the fall. The purpose of the survey was two-fold: to collect input on the aspects you find most critical in seeking a new settled minister as well as the state of Unity's achievements toward our ends statements. Through this survey process and cottage meetings, you were asked for your thoughts and dreams about tomorrow's Unity. The board, the MST (Ministerial Search Team) and the executive team would like to extend a big thank you to everyone who participated in these opportunities!

Here's a recap of how we showed up to share of ourselves and with one another. Out of a membership of approximately 870 people, 367 filled out the 2023 congregational survey, a considerable increase over 2022's 233, and nearly equal with the totals for 2021 and 2020. In addition, the MST conducted 21 cottage meetings with approximately 250 total attendees, including repeat attendees. A talking circle format was used for the cottage meetings, to encourage participants to listen to each other, as well as share their hopes for the future. The MST reports that attendees were truly engaged, receptive to the talking circle format, and have shared that they feel the cottage meetings are something we should do regularly as a congregation to listen deeply and make connections. Of particular note was the overlap in findings across the two data-gathering methodologies. This is both encouraging and helpful since it supports the MST's immediate work with greater clarity. The data will also support us as we look forward to beginning the process of renewing the ends in the fall of 2024.

Alright, so what did we learn? Here's just a brief summary:

The 2023 survey found that the congregation believes that the three most important ends are:

- Generously give and openly receive compassionate care.
- Discover and pursue our individual and collective work to advance justice, wholeness, and equity for people, our Earth, and all life on it.
- Ground ourselves in personal practice and communal worship that grows our capacity for wonder and spiritual deepening.

Regarding the traits most important in a new minister, the congregation indicated the following:

1. Preaching ability/presence: The ability to inspire from the pulpit while communicating a clear message that aligns with Unity's mission, values, and ends is essential for all ministers.
2. Administration/staff relationship skills: Our new called minister should have a clear vision for the future and collaborate with leadership and staff to create and implement strategies that realize that vision. Understanding the congregation's culture and the importance of good policies, practices, and procedures is crucial. The minister should assess other's strengths and limitations and delegate tasks effectively while fostering personal responsibility and a sense of belonging.
3. Spiritual leadership skills: The ideal minister should be spiritually grounded with a developed personal spiritual practice, allowing them to preach from experience and lead by example. They should also nurture a rich spiritual life in Unity Church members.

4. Engaging lay leadership and members: Unity has a large, devoted and active congregation. During cottage meetings it was emphasized that having a minister engage and foster lay leadership is critical for our work as a church.
5. Intellectual leadership skills: The next set of key qualities on the congregational survey results were nearly equal in importance with each other. This is the "Mary Poppins" list for the "perfect" leader:
 - Social action/justice commitment
 - Committing to antiracism work
 - Building a multicultural spiritual home
 - Pastoral care/calls
 - A sense of humor also ranked highly on the survey!

Instead of perfect or best, the MST is working on *the wisest choice* for Unity based on the work we did in the December "Disrupting Dominance" workshop with Alfonso Wenker. No one is perfect but we will strive for the wisest choice for our church.

This has been just an overview of key highlights. Much more will be shared in the congregational record and with ministerial candidates as we move through winter and spring.

If you'd like to hear more about the survey and cottage meeting results, please mark your calendar for Wellspring Wednesday on February 28 when several of us will put our heads together to share a presentation and field questions. We look forward to seeing you!

MINISTERIAL SEARCH TEAM

A Conversation with Angela Wilcox, MST Chair

This month's newsletter update from the Ministerial Search Team (MST) is presented from a different perspective — Taylor Burr, a long-time member of our congregation, interviewed Angela Wilcox, chair of the 2024 MST.

Taylor: I had the opportunity to sit down with Angela and discuss some of the important lessons that the MST has learned from the fall cottage meetings, and their processes, in their effort to present a candidate to call to our congregation, and who will call us. Here are some of the key takeaways from our conversation.

Can you tell us about the ministerial search process?

Angela: We as a congregation and the MST have a process that the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) has defined and refined over the years and that every Unitarian Universalist (UU) church follows. As UUs we have much more involvement in that process than many other denominations. We held a retreat with the UUA to take us through their processes. Then we started planning cottage meetings and working on the survey, and as we were doing that we started to write (our) congregational record.

Taylor: *I heard that you had conversations with the last search team to benefit from what they learned.*

Angela: We hosted the active members from the 2000 and 2022 search teams. We had a lovely lunch, shared stories, held our questions in a cottage meeting format with a talking piece and deep listening. We went around the circle tree times, asking:

- What does the search team need to understand?
- What do we need to make sure the congregation understands?
- How do we understand that gap between what the congregation wants and their perceptions of the candidate?

There were some themes that emerged from the previous search teams that echoed what we heard from cottage meetings.

Taylor: Angela also emphasized how much gratitude the '24 MST has for

the two previous search teams' work and wisdom.

The congregation is charged with embracing and transforming conflict as a part of this process, please share more about that.

Angela: Coming up on the first weekend in February, Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley Will be at Unity Church doing a workshop (see page 2) on Saturday, February 2, and as the pulpit guest February 3. Her book *Transforming Conflict: The Blessings of Congregational Turmoil* is a beautiful book about being in a faith community that requires conflict to change and grow.

I really hope people will keep looking for ways to engage even when the search team has gone quiet. January, February and March is the congregation's time to really get comfortable with understanding what calling a minister means to them.

We'll also just keep talking, listening, talking, listening in small groups. All the work in our congregation can happen in conversations between individual people, so let's just keep talking.

Taylor: *Can you speak to your understanding of the upcoming selection?*

Angela: One thing I've learned was how in-depth the process is up to the time of calling the new minister with a vote of confidence. Unlike a democratic political vote, the UUA has stipulated that the MST go through a detailed process to narrow the candidate down to one person so the congregation will move forward with a clear message of unity.

At the MST lunch, someone framed it as an affirmation of our faith in our church. It is a leap of faith that we believe that our church works and that we can work with this minister who has come here.

Hopefully the minister is learning from us as we are learning from the minister



and that is what being in covenant with each other means. We're such a diverse congregation and it's going to be someone for everyone. Right? And if everything is not there, it's going to be supplied by the greater team, and we'll figure it out.

Taylor: In our discussion, we covered themes the search team heard in listening sessions, the process in which the search team is involved, including their training with the UUA, interactions with current church leadership, and in discussions with Rev. Keith Kron and Alfonso Wenker. We also discussed the many considerations the team has moving into the broader selection process. More to come from our dedicated team and exciting process!

Note from the MST: Thank you to Taylor for taking the initiative to offer to do an interview. We appreciate your time, talent, and curiosity.

With the work we've done together and the gifts from those who have walked this path before us, we have a shared anxious excitement as we start reviewing candidates. As we start this new year together, we are filled with gratitude to you, the congregation — for your support, fellowship, and for sharing your stories during the changes behind and ahead.

Find information about items mentioned in this article online at unityunitarian.org/ministerial-transition.html.

BELOVED COMMUNITY STAFF TEAM

Identity and Capacity: A Personal Reflection

Ray Wiedmeyer, Beloved Community Communications Team, Ministerial Search Team, Mano a Mano Warehouse Manager

I like to think I am free from bias and that's a rather comfortable feeling. This spring however I had an uncomfortable thought that gave me pause. I had been listening to a lecture given by a male minister and I noticed how comfortable I was with the delivery and message. The comfort felt quite close to how I felt upon hearing many of Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs's sermons. There were a couple moments of comfort with that awareness, but then discomfort followed close behind. Was the comfort I was feeling a sign of some bias I had around white male ministers? I didn't want to believe that, but the thought has stuck with me for months.

You see, I had just been nominated to be a possible candidate on the Ministerial Search Team (MST). I was excited about the possibility of serving but I was now conscious of the fact that any kind of unchecked bias would not serve me, the team, or the congregation. If I was to be a valuable member of the MST, I needed to not let my biases rule my thinking. I realized I might have some work to do.

Recently I attended a workshop at Unity led by consultant Alfonso Wenker called "Engaging Awareness, Disrupting Dominance." The first lesson that day was to notice when a like or irritation came up for me around another person and to notice how that showed up in my body. The ministerial lecture months before had left a sort of soft glow that I had not experienced in a while. More recently, working with a volunteer at Mano a Mano (manoamano.org), I found myself assuming certain things because of the woman's shy demeanor and ethnic background. I came to a certain judgement that first meeting only to find at later volunteer sessions that in her other paid employment as a student, she used skills I would

never have imagined she had. My bias based simply on her gender, her demeanor and her ethnic heritage made me fall for the "single story" that many of us may have heard about from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie on YouTube (bit.ly/cnasinglestory).

Let me be clear I know we all have biases, that's quite normal. It's when that bias becomes a perceived identity, we lay on another, that we get into trouble. We then make judgements about their character, skills, and life experience. It's a "single story" that helps me keep the dominant culture dominant. It allows me to only see their age, skin color, gender or hair style as the important measure of their worth. It's a snap judgement that might help me find my people, but knowingly or not, excludes others, and keeps me from really being ready for the Beloved Community that I say I yearn for.

It brings me back now to actually serving on the ministerial search team. In cottage meetings and through the congregational survey, the Unity congregation shared with us what you think is important in a new settled minister. You have shared with us the strengths and the capacity you think that person needs to have, to help us grow into the community we seek to be. If we stop at identity, we may very well fail to see the "other's" capacity. Identity and capacity are two different but very important parts of who someone is. One's skin color, gender, hair style, age or perceived physical ability should not be ignored but also should not block us from seeing another's capacity to do the job. How do we discover that capacity? How is that capacity shaped and expressed by their identity? This is the work of the MST. And hopefully yours as you move out into the world.



That brings me to the last step Alfonso talked about once we make that connection between identity and capacity. Heaven knows how many books I have read seeking to raise my awareness, but how do I put that studied awareness into change? I must practice looking beyond my bias. It does not come naturally. So, if you see me pause, take a deep breath, share that I might have a certain bias or make certain assumptions about something before giving an opinion, you will know I am working on my white male privilege. I am noticing a bias, naming it, and then hopefully navigating in a way that does not center "me" but rather centers the "we" that creates Beloved Community.



WELCOME NEWCOMERS



Welcome Words

Laura Park, Director of Membership and Hospitality

You, the visitors to Unity Church, are people of courage. You tell me you are seeking to build a faith of nuance and complexity, reaching out past your loneliness to form the human connections that sustain and nourish, preparing yourself for the transformation within yourself that can change our community and the world. It takes persistence and commitment to begin that journey, and I'm so glad you're here.

As you explore our way of the spirit, let me know what questions I can answer about congregational life and the pathways you might explore to deepen your life of faith and antiracist multicultural practice. Contact me at laura@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x110. I look forward to getting to know you!

Pathway to Membership Classes

The offerings below invite you to explore a deeper connection to Unity Church and the commitments and opportunities of membership. Questions? Please contact Laura Park, Director of Membership and Hospitality, laura@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x110.

Finding Yourself at Unity: For Visitors and Inquirers
Sundays 10:15 a.m. | Drop-ins welcome; childcare in the nursery.

Gannett Room or online via Zoom: bit.ly/fyonline

Attend the sessions in any order, which include Unitarian Universalist History; Faith Formation for Children, Youth, and Adults; Congregational and Pastoral Care; Q & A with a Minister; Worship & the Liturgical Year; Social Justice & Community Outreach; Membership 101 & Congregational Life, and a Building Tour. Join the repeating eight-session cycle at any time. This month's offerings:

January 7: Community Outreach and Social Justice

January 14: Building Tour

January 21: Q&A with the Minister

January 28: Unitarian Universalist History

Committing to Unity: Joining Unity Church

***Tuesday, January 9, 2024 | 6:30-8:30 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? 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. Let Laura Park know you're interested in participating or to ask questions. She can also arrange a private signing ceremony.

***Please note:** Given the bylaw changes the congregation adopted at the annual meeting on November 18, 2023, this will be the last structured opportunity to join the church and be eligible to vote on the ministerial candidate in April 2024, provided you also make a contribution on your 2024 pledge. You may sign the book in a private ceremony until February 25 and still be eligible to vote; again, provided you also make a contribution on your 2024 pledge.

Fellowship Groups

Visit unityunitarian.org/fellowship-groups.html or contact Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org.

Afterthoughts offers time after 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 third Saturday of each month, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Kung Fu meets Saturday mornings, 9:00-10:00 a.m., in the Body Room.

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

Men's Coffee Group meets every Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. for light-hearted conversation.

Men's Conversation Group meets on Zoom Monday, January 15, from 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Men's Retirement Circle: Monday, January 8, 22, 29, 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 on the first Wednesday 1:00-2:30 p.m., and third Wednesday 7:10-8:00 p.m. of each month. Bring your knitting, embroidery, etc.

Unity Book Club meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m. January 9: *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* by Jonathan Haidt

Women in Retirement meets on the second and fourth Thursday of each month, from 1:00-3:00 p.m., in the Center Room. Social hour at noon!

Young Adult Group (ages 18-35) — all are welcome. Email kp@unityunitarian.org

WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

January 10

Dinner: Pasta fagioli, fennel apple salad, oatmeal cookies

Taking Action for End-of-Life-Options: Understanding your values about dying, autonomy and choice

Parish Hall and online via Zoom:

bit.ly/eol1017

Reverend David Breeden, Senior Minister at First Unitarian Society, Minneapolis

This session will review the concerns of those who oppose end of life options legislation, such as the belief that adults should not have the right to end their own lives. By wrestling with the arguments against medical aid in dying, we will clarify our own values about human life, death fears, and autonomy.

A Taste of Coming of Age: What is our role (as individuals and the church) in striving for Beloved Community?

In-person, Robbins Parlor

This is the third of the five questions that young people in Unity's Coming of Age program address through their credo statements each spring. In this session, facilitated by Coming of Age mentor and teacher of teachers Nate Schultz, we will turn the floor over to you, inviting your responses, and listening in as others grapple with their thoughts. This session is open to all. Additional sessions taking up each of the five questions in turn will be held throughout the church year.

Beginner Violin with Mayra Mendoza

In-person, Choir Room

Beginning violin lessons appropriate for all ages. Learn basic violin posture, note reading, and more! Send Mayra an email at mayraquitzia@gmail.com if you plan to attend.

Lectio Divina

Online via Zoom: bit.ly/Lectio2023-24

Participate in a centuries-old monastic practice of listening, contemplating, and responding to sacred texts, modified with poetry for UU small group spiritual practice. Led by Lisa Wersal or Shelley Butler. On Wednesdays, join the Zoom from the Gannett Room at church.

January 17

Dinner: Chicken tinga tacos, lime slaw, tres leches

Theologies of Racial Justice with Rev. Dr. Andrea Johnson

In-person, Robbins Parlor

This three-part series will explore Unitarian Universalist theologies of racial justice and the liberal theological tradition in which they are rooted. What theological resources equip Unitarian Universalists to live out the antiracist, anti-oppression values of our faith? See page 9 for series details.

Session 1: Constructing Unitarian Universalist Theologies: Historic Traditions and Future Prospects

This session will focus on three key questions of the series:

- What is theology, in general, and what purpose does it serve in our lives?
- What is theology's public role and responsibility beyond a specific religious community?
- How do historic Unitarian and Universalist theologies call us to racial justice work within the context of religious community?

Taking Action for End-of-Life-Options:

Acting on your values about dying, autonomy and choice

Parish Hall and online via Zoom: bit.ly/eol1017

Dr. Rebecca Thoman, Program Director for Doctors for Dignity, Compassion and Choices and Rev. Harlan Limpert

Learn the history of End of Life Options (EOLO) in Minnesota, and review the legislative process and best-case predictions for 2024. We will prepare to support EOLO by learning how and when to contact our legislators, how to tell persuasive stories as constituents, and how to attend committee hearings.

Minnesota Multifaith Network and Minnesota's Interfaith Landscape

In-person, Center Room

Unity Church is a supporter and founding member of the Minnesota Multifaith Network (MnMN), which supports faith and interfaith leaders and organizations working to build a more just and loving world. MnMN fills a critical role in Minnesota's increasingly diverse religious landscape as it weaves networks of good relationships and cooperation across all religious traditions, increases the impact of faith-based justice and service work, and equips leaders for all kinds of interfaith work. Tom Duke, Unity Church member who has been involved in MnMN since its founding, will describe MnMN's work and plans, overview Minnesota's many interfaith organizations and their work, and describe opportunities to get involved.



Board Game Night

In-person, Anderson Library

Open to everyone; kids are welcome with their adult(s)! We'll have a variety of board games available that are easy to learn, or bring a favorite board game.

Beginner Violin with Mayra Mendoza

In-person, Choir Room

Send Mayra an email at mayraquitzia@gmail.com if you plan to attend.

Textile Arts

In-person, DeCramer Room

All ages and levels of experience are welcome! Join Textile Arts for creation and conversation on first Wednesdays, 1:00 to 2:30 p.m., and third Wednesdays, 7:10-8:00 p.m. Bring your knitting, crocheting, tatting, embroidery, needlepoint, and cross stitch for a gathering of fellowship and service.

January 24

Dinner: Tagine, Lemon Couscous, Salad, Halva

American Indian Recovery Act

Parish Hall and online via Zoom | Please register: bit.ly/wwairareg
Come learn about the American Indian Recovery Act, a proposed Minnesota state bill intended to generate \$25-40 million annually for Native programs in the state, through a surtax to the state deed tax on real estate sales. Doe Hoyer, Repair Network Organizer with the Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery, and Tom Houle, member of the Twin Cities Repair Community for Makoce Ikikcupi, will present on the legislation, discuss the need for faith communities to engage in structural change organizing and reparations, and share possible ways that Unity Church members can advocate and organize support for this bill as part of a Unitarian Universalist delegation at the capitol this legislative session. Sponsored by Unity's Indigenous Justice Community Outreach Ministry Team.

Beginner Violin with Mayra Mendoza

In-person, Choir Room
Send Mayra an email at mayraquitzia@gmail.com if you plan to attend.

January 31

Dinner: Chicken Wild Rice Soup, Bread, Kale Salad, Lemon Bars

The Process and Politics of Reparations in Saint Paul

Parish Hall and online via Zoom: bit.ly/reparstp
Join Unity Church members Russel Balenger and Jane Prince, both currently completing their service on the Saint Paul City Council, and Trahern Crews, convener of the Saint Paul Recovery Act Community Reparations Commission, to discuss Saint Paul's approach to reparations. Sponsored by Unity's Racial and Restorative Justice Team.

A Taste of Coming of Age: How do we live in the face of death and loss?

In-person, Robbins Parlor
This is the fourth of the five questions that young people in Unity's Coming of Age program address through their credo statements each spring. In this session, facilitated by Coming of Age mentor and teacher of teachers Nate Schultz, we will turn the floor over to you, inviting your responses, and listening in as others grapple with their thoughts. This session is open to all.

Beginner Violin

In-person, Choir Room
Send Mayra an email at mayraquitzia@gmail.com if you plan to attend.

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• **Wellspring Wednesday**
• Wellspring Wednesday gathers a multigenerational church community to
• nourish right and holy relationship among us and deepen our life of faith,
• grounded in spiritual practice and antiracist multicultural work. Dinner begins
• at 5:45 p.m. in Parish Hall, a short chapel service begins at 6:40 p.m. in Ames
• Chapel, and programs begin at 7:10 p.m. Childcare is available.
• The cost for dinner is \$8/adults, \$4/child (ages 5-12), \$2/child (ages 2-4), and
• \$20/family. If you need financial assistance to help cover the cost of dinner, or
• if you plan to join us and need a special dietary preparation (vegetarian, vegan,
• dairy-free options are available), email Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org.
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Theologies of Racial Justice

Rev. Dr. Andrea Johnson

This three-part series will explore Unitarian Universalist theologies of racial justice and the liberal theological tradition in which they are rooted. What theological resources equip UUs to live out the anti-racist, anti-oppression values of our faith?

Session 1 | Wednesday, January 17 7:10 p.m. | In-person, Robbins Parlor
Constructing Unitarian Universalist Theologies: Historic Traditions and Future Prospects

What is theology, in general, and what purpose does it serve in our lives? What is theology's public role and responsibility beyond a specific religious community? How do historic Unitarian and Universalist theologies call us to racial justice work in the context of religious community?

Session 2 | Tuesday, January 23 6:30-8:00 p.m. | Online via Zoom:
bit.ly/theorj

The Inescapable Network of Mutuality: Martin Luther King's Beloved Community and Bernard Loomer's "Big" God
This session will focus on how non-theistic, non-creedal Unitarian Universalists can authentically intersect with a faith-based approach to racial justice work.

Session 3 | Tuesday, January 30 6:30-8:00 p.m. | Online via Zoom:
bit.ly/theorj

The Audacity to Imagine Sisyphus Happy: Anthony Pinn and African American Naturalistic Humanism
What if our work for justice turned away, as theologian Anthony Pinn does, from finding suffering redemptive? This session will explore a hope that helps humanists turn "punishment into possibility; angst into awareness; and repetition into awareness."



Anderson Library 35th Anniversary Open House and Celebration

Unity Church has had a library of one kind or another almost since the beginning, but our current Anderson Library is 35-years old and it's time to celebrate! Please join the Library-Bookstall Team on Sunday, January 28, at 10:00 a.m., for the 35th Anniversary Anderson Library Open House and Celebration! Meet the Library-Bookstall Team, learn more about the resources and services we offer, and check out a book or two from the over 35 new books added so far for this year. 35 for 35! Of course, you can check out books anytime that the library is not otherwise in use, but it's not often you can do that with a treat!

We Cannot Turn Away: Engaging on Israel and Palestine

Unity's Antiracism Literacy Partners program is offering this special session to provide a starting point for greater understanding on the conflict in Israel and Palestine. Details on page 11. New in library: *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel* by Ari Shavit

In The Justice Database

Alliance for Middle East Peace

ALLMEP is a coalition of over 160 organizations with hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and Israelis fostering cooperation, justice, equity, shared society, mutual understanding, and peace among their communities. bit.ly/JusticeData



January Parish Hall Artist Naomi Hart

I grew up an artist in a literary family that transitioned from a conventional home to a remote homestead in the woods of northern Minnesota when I was an adolescent. I was heavily influenced by the two storytelling cultures that surrounded my childhood; the Jewish narrative of my father, and the Indigenous American culture of the reservation we lived on.

I learned through them both to find sanctuary and identity in the natural world. I learned the story of humanity embedded within its history, and was awakened to its potential to guide and nurture. This childhood vision and acceptance of a symbiotic relationship between man and nature served as a tremendous resource when, many years later, I began to search for a meditative practice through trauma healing and recovery.

As we emerge from the global pandemic, there is an increase in the intentionality of mental health practices, a deeper understanding of generational trauma, and a renewed vision of our connection to the natural world. We have developed a greater emphasis on telling "Our Story" which has been the anthem of my artistic practice and my healing journey.

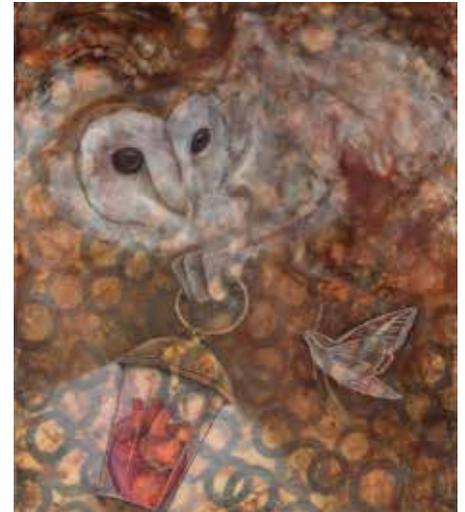
Storytelling is woven into the fabric of both recovery and therapeutic practices. In my approach to artwork, the history of storytelling and a love for the natural world depict my journey of transformation. My creative practice casts a light on trauma healing practices and encourages the discovery of therapeutic resources within nature. I want viewers to find their own story entwined with mine; to compel a sustainable, collective understanding of personal balance and health.

To draw these common threads, I use broadly recognized recurring images from nature that are rooted in every culture's history of storytelling. For example, throughout my work you will see images of moths who are our ancestors and affirm our footsteps, butterflies who present invaluable lessons of transformation, and birds who are a conduit between mankind and the gods.

I often link these symbolic creatures to man-made elements that depict enlightenment or alignment, and to human anatomy in order to accentuate the connection we have within the flow of the natural world. Human figures are presented as child-like with a sense of vulnerability as strength or preparedness.

Through my healing journey I have found it imperative to develop the ability to embrace, explore and wonder with the innocence and passion of a child. My artwork presents a broad acceptance of self despite the ups and downs of a healing journey. I very intentionally depict balance and harmony by exposing, accepting and honoring the vulnerability and imperfections of my human self.

My studio practice involves an Encaustic Mixed Media process I have developed which layers my etchings and detailed drawings with a huge array of materials all embedded within many layers of hot beeswax. I layer rice papers, powdered pigments, intentionally rusted fabrics and more to create a surrealist distortion of sharply rendered imagery. The wax's translucency adds history and depth to each piece, softening and creating warm approachability.



Taking Action for End-of-Life-Options: Two Crucial Meetings

74 million Americans live in a state that allows medical aid in dying, but not the residents of Minnesota. It doesn't have to be that way — Minnesotans should have a choice! A bill for end-of life options (EOLo) will be introduced in the Minnesota legislature in early 2024. The law, if passed, would allow a terminally ill, mentally capable adult with a prognosis of six months or less, the option to request, obtain and take medication — should they choose — to die peacefully in their sleep if their suffering becomes unbearable.

As Minnesota Unitarian Universalists, it's time for us to advocate for this end-of-life choices legislation, first advocated by the national Unitarian Universalist Association in 1988.

Join us for two important Wellspring Wednesday meetings, both offering in-person at Unity Church and online via Zoom: bit.ly/eol1017.

Wednesday, January 10
Understanding your values about dying, autonomy and choice.
Speaker: Reverend David Breeden, Senior Minister, First Unitarian Society, Minneapolis

Wednesday, January 17
Acting on your values about dying, autonomy and choice.

Speakers: Dr. Rebecca Thoman, Program Director for Doctors for Dignity, Compassion and Choices and Reverend Harlan Limpert

More details on Wellspring Wednesday page 10.



Antiracism Literacy Partners Program

Unity's Antiracism Literacy Partners is now meeting on Tuesdays!

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 9, at 7:00 p.m., online via Zoom: bit.ly/ALPjan924. Antiracism Literacy Partners (ALP) is a group spiritual practice in which partners or small groups commit to delving deeply into a resource for the purpose of greater understanding of racism and of dismantling it. Questions? Contact Becky Gonzalez-Campoy at beckygc83@gmail.com.

New this session, "Why We Cannot Turn Away: An Israel-Palestine Primer." Join this ALP group to learn and think more deeply about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict today and historically, and to live into compassion for all. The primer is a compendium of articles and information with links to films, articles, and podcasts as a starting place for a more nuanced understanding of this complex time and place. Also offered this session:

- *The Quaking of America: An Embodied Guide to Navigating Our Nation's Upheaval and Racial Reckoning* by Resmaa Menakem
- *On Repentance and Repair* by Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg
- "Doctrine of Discovery" film paired with *Becoming Kin: An Indigenous Call to Unforgetting the Past and Reimagining Our Future* by Patty Krawec
- *Kindred* by Octavia Butler

Queer Theology

Second Tuesday of each month | 6:30-8:00 p.m. | In-person, Center Room

Queer Theology is a theological practice that attempts to erase boundaries that exist in religious traditions, to include rather than exclude more voices. This Queer Theology discussion group will use readings from Marcella Althaus-Reid, Judith Butler, Patrick Cheng, and others to help participants connect their personal experiences with the world beyond the self. Open to adults of all genders and sexual orientations. Contact Mike Huber for access to the readings (using Google Drive) or if you have any questions: mikehuberece@gmail.com.

Lectio Divina

Wednesday, January 10 and 23 | 7:10 p.m. | Online via Zoom: bit.ly/Lectio2023-24

Participate in a centuries-old monastic practice of listening, contemplating, and responding to sacred texts; modified with poetry for Unitarian Universalist small group spiritual practice. Led by Lisa Wersal or Shelley Butler. Held at 7:10 p.m. on the second Wednesday and fourth Tuesday of each month. A different poem at each session. Questions? Contact Shelley at library@unityunitarian.org.

Participate in a Zoom Chalice Circle

For anyone who may have missed the earlier opportunity to join a Chalice Circle, registration is open for a Zoom Chalice Circle that will meet on the third Thursday of each month, February 15-June 20, from 1:00-2:30 p.m., online via Zoom. To register, please contact Rev. KP Hong by January 26: kp@unityunitarian.org.

This circle, led by a trained facilitator, meets once monthly, 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 with a practice, a question, and the theme.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

Gun Sense Team

Bob Albrecht, Gun Sense Team

Did you know a group within Unity comes together monthly over our mutual concern about gun violence prevention? We meet the third Thursday of each month, 3:30-4:30 p.m., at church and online via Zoom. Our next gathering will be January 18, and we invite you to join us in this work!

The Gun Sense Team is currently discerning whether or not we will change our name to better reflect what our work is about.

We are pleased to be planning a Wellspring Wednesday session to be held February 28. The centerpiece of this event will be a presentation by team member Richard Birger about personal firearm safety. This will be an intergenerational, educational event for all! Those from all age groups are encouraged to attend and participate in the conversation. We will also discuss Senator John Marty's focus around gun safety issues during the 2024 Minnesota legislative session.

Look for the Guns Sense Team table in Parish Hall on Sunday mornings beginning later in January. Visit with team members to learn about key issues as they move through the legislative process and learn how you can lend your voice at this critical time in history.

For more information and/or to be added to our email list, please contact us at unityunitarian.org/gun-sense.html.

Housing Justice Team

Dayna Kennedy, Housing Justice Team

You may know that Unity Church participates in a summer build week with Habitat for Humanity. You may not know that Habitat welcomes volunteers year round. If your circumstances allow you to be free one weekday, and you enjoy working with your hands or think you'd like to try, Habitat would be glad to hear from you. Unity member Dutton Foster has been a member of a year-round group, the St. Paul Regulars, which works on build sites on Thursdays. Rest assured that no experience is required; site supervisors find tasks appropriate to each volunteer's skill level. If you have questions or would like to join the ongoing work, please contact Dutton at duttonfosters@comcast.net.

Project Home is looking for volunteers to serve meals as part of their weekend meal teams. Chef Omar takes care of meal preparation! Serving shifts are available in Saint Paul at Provincial House for lunch or dinner on Saturdays and Sundays. Sign up to volunteer or create a team of 3-6 people. Supervised older children are welcome to sign up. tinyurl.com/PHMealTeams2023

If you'd like to find out more about our team, check out our monthly online meeting held on the second Tuesday of each month from 4:30-5:30 p.m. Please contact Judy Miller for the Zoom link or with questions, jmkmam@comcast.net.

Planetary Health

Envisioning our Future with New and Ancient Eyes

Presented by Teddie Potter, PhD
Wednesday, February 7 | 7:10 p.m.
Unity Church and online via Zoom



The urgency to safeguard the health of the planet is felt by us all. Dr Potter is a leader in the international movement, Planetary Health, that offers a fresh way of seeing, based on old ways of knowing and Indigenous wisdom. Planetary Health is a solutions-oriented, transdisciplinary field and social movement focused on analyzing and addressing the impacts of human disruptions to Earth's natural systems on human health and all life on Earth. Her goal is to leave us feeling hopeful and called to join the global planetary health community. Everyone, everywhere has a role to play in achieving the Great Transition, the transformation to a world that optimizes the health and well-being of the planet and its inhabitants — of the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Dr. Potter writes: "Everything is interconnected. The Mississippi River flows through our veins, maintaining the lives of our cells. The air we pollute is the air we inhale. The food we ingest impacts our health and the health of the entire planet. This *Interconnection within Nature* is one of the five core domains of Planetary Health. "

Dr. Potter (bit.ly/ucutepot) is a clinical professor and the inaugural director of the Center for Planetary Health and Environmental Justice at the School of Nursing at the University of Minnesota. She serves on, guides, and chairs numerous health and environment organizations nationally and locally. Most recently she partnered with the International Council of Nurses to launch Nursing for Planetary Health, a global nursing movement.

Connecting Unitarian
Universalists and allies
to help shape a just and
loving world. muusja.org



Save the date!

Community Outreach Ministry Team Summit

Saturday, January 20, 2024 | 9:30-11:30 a.m.

This gathering is for all members of the Community Outreach Ministry Teams (COMT) to hear about how the year is going so far, to listen to your needs and concerns, to coordinate programs and to strengthen our important ministries of justice and service.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY



REGIFT...and REJOICE

Holiday Regifting Sale

Donate unwanted treasures! Shop for regifted bargains!
Sunday, January 14 | After services | Parish Hall

Did Santa bring something that's not your size, your style, or your idea of fun? Donate your brand-new but unwanted gift to Unity Church!

How it works: Bring your unused new (or indistinguishable from new) items to the "regifting tables" on Sunday, January 14, before either service that day. We will sell items at a discount at the Regifting Sale. Unsold items will be given to charity. All proceeds from the Regifting Sale benefit the work of the Community Outreach Ministry Team that supports Mano a Mano International Partners. Mano a Mano builds clinics, schools and infrastructure, and trains teachers, doctors and subsistence farmers in rural Bolivia. Questions? Contact Andrea Bond at abond50@me.com

A Journey to Learn with Mano a Mano



The Mano a Mano Community Outreach Ministry Team invites you to join a May 6-13, 2024, trip to Bolivia. Through this unique travel experience, you will meet high Andean subsistence farm families and become immersed in their daily lives; learn first-hand about how Bolivians grow the food they eat and sell; learn of the challenges they face as their climate changes; meet subsistence farmers who manage to survive in their high mountain communities with meager material resources; and witness their determination to remain on their land and improve life for their children. To learn more about the trip, attend an information sessions held on Sunday, January 14, at 10:15 p.m., in the Science Room, and 12:30 p.m., in the Decramer Room. For contact Ann Mabbott at amabbott@hamline.edu.

Partner Church Team

Summer Pilgrimage to Transylvania



Join fellow Unity Church members on a summer pilgrimage, led by Minister of Congregational Care Rev. Lara Cowtan, to the Unitarian homeland of Transylvania. The current itinerary includes gathering in Budapest, Hungary, on July 31, 2024, and traveling to historic sites in Hungary and Romania where the Unitarian faith was debated and defined in the Reformation Age. Pilgrims will spend six days living with families in the Unitarian village of Homoródszentpéter, with whom Unity has had a partner church relationship for almost three decades. The small village offers an intimate immersion into the minority Hungarian Unitarian culture in Romania. Pilgrims will return to Budapest on August 13 for a farewell.

On Sunday, January 28, Unity's Partner Church Team will hold information sessions from 10:15-11:15 a.m., in the Center Room, and 12:15-1:15 p.m., in the Anderson Library and via Zoom (bit.ly/ucupilgrim). The sessions will cover travel and cost details (pilgrims will be asked to make a down payment in March and final payment in May, some scholarship aid is available). Come learn about the opportunities for spiritual growth on pilgrimage. Families and young adults to consider joining us for this special opportunity. Questions? Email the Partner Church Team unitypartnerchurch@gmail.com.

Donate to the Food Shelf

Hallie Q. Brown food shelf received 201 pounds of food from us for the month of November — thank you! Here is the list of what they would appreciate during January: toilet paper, paper towels, disinfectant wipes, all-purpose cleaner, shampoo, conditioner, body lotion and wash, and hand soap. Donations are also gratefully accepted online: hallieqbrown.org. Thank you for your support!



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

What makes a congregation beautiful is its life, irreducible to its numbers or programs or access to resources. But surely *resources* and *relevance* matter — numbers and innovative programs and possibly in a trendy neighborhood café church able to attract “Zoomers” — for any institution vying for a place in an accelerated late modernity with dynamic change everywhere about us? Accruing resources and chasing relevance. Are not these what give life to the church? Dietrich Bonhoeffer, theologian and prophetic voice in the twentieth century, offers a surprising answer: what gives life to the church is its courage to embrace the child.

Before modernity and science pushed mystery to the margins, the medieval church as the proprietor of mystery remained indisputably relevant to the social imagination and social order. Any thought of an irrelevant church would have been incomprehensible. But when mathematics, telescopes, and natural selection began to eliminate mystery and unmoor the church from the center of relevance, how would the church attract and win resources? For if anything is clear, resources create life. A church full of life is a church full of resources, and vice versa. Isn't it?

But the church is not another “volunteer-society” where people come to obtain resources, maintains Bonhoeffer, especially human resources such as counseling centers, support groups, exercise classes and affinity groups that meet at the local café. A volunteer-society narrows persons as driven by interests, and the congregation exists to meet their interests. Belonging and commitment are negotiated on what members expect to receive from the collective storehouse of resources, and relationships are instrumentalized toward accruing such resources. Is there anything inherently wrong or mistaken about a volunteer-society? No, says Bonhoeffer, except when it is mistaken for the “life-community” we know as family and friendship and church, where children (emblematic of those deemed as questionable resource) are valued not for their potential as future productive members, laborers, consumers, voters, and instruments of progress but as revelations of sacred personhood, just as they are, asking for seconds and thirds and wreaking havoc on our resources. The volunteer-society can only be a poor imitation of the church as life-community where sacred personhood is shared, and in that encounter is epiphany and revelation of our own immeasurable humanity.

Resources and relevance... and revelation? These three each have their part, but the greater part belongs to revelation. For what gives life and beauty to the church radiates from the courage to embrace the child as a sacrament of dignity and love, and in doing so, we glimpse the face of the divine.

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

Unity Church Youth Musical

For youth in grades 6, 7, and 8

Ready to reveal your fun socks? Wondering what Cluck the Chicken is up to? Join the fun!

The musical is a unique production created each year for Unity by Mary Blouin Auffert and Sandy Waterman.



All junior high kids (grades 6, 7 and 8) are invited, and everyone who auditions will get a part in the play.

Auditions

Sunday, January 7, at 1:30 p.m. at Unity Church, Foote Room

Parent/Guardian Meeting

Required parent meeting will be held during the auditions on Sunday, January 7, 2024, at 1:30 p.m., at Unity Church. Meet with the co-producers, learn more about the production, and sign up to volunteer.

Important Dates

Rehearsals begin January 9, 2024, and are held Sundays, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., and Tuesdays and Thursdays, 7:00-8:30 p.m. at Unity Church.

Tech week is March 4-March 6.

Performances are March 7, 8, and 9.

Volunteers from the Unity Church community, ages 6th grade to adult are welcome to help with the crew, staging, costumes, technical help, marketing and programming. For high schoolers, this can count towards service hours.

Questions? Ask a co-producer! Contact Gabby Mead at gabrielledmead@gmail.com or Theresa Nelson at theresanelson820@gmail.com.

Child Care for Church Events

Unity Church offers childcare for church-wide events, free of charge. Nursery care is consistently provided for every Sunday service and Wellspring Wednesday program — no reservation is needed. Outside of these times, reservations for childcare are required. Please request childcare one week ahead of time by completing the online form: unityunitarian.org/childcare-request-form.html. Katrina Nichols, Unity's Nursery Coordinator, will contact you to confirm the reservation.

MUSIC MINISTRY / ARCHIVES TEAM



Music Notes

Ahmed Anzaldúa
Director of Music Ministries

Looking ahead into 2024, my thoughts are on continuing to welcome folks to take part in Unity's music ministry. Unity has an outstanding choral program: three adult choirs, a youth choir, and a children's choir, and also

serving as a home for OneVoice, the Twin Cities Threshold Choir chapter, Mila Vocal Ensemble, and my own group Border CrossSing. Unity's choirs welcome everyone, and there are opportunities to sing for experienced choral singers and newcomers alike. There are opportunities to sing for people looking to just drop in and sing (our pick-up choirs and Zoom hymn sings) as well as for those looking to commit to a choir throughout the year. Our choirs have an open door policy and anyone can drop in at any time. I encourage you to look through the Music Ministry page on Unity's website to learn more about each of our groups!

As a choir director I am, of course, biased. I consider communal singing as the most elemental, direct way to engage with music. However, there is more to our music ministry than our choirs. Our band has been playing once a month in worship, and it's been wonderful to see various people in our congregation bring their musical gifts to our worship services and events organized in our community. Do you play an instrument? Do you sing? Do you compose? Would you like to bring your musical gifts to Unity? I encourage you to reach out to me or to other folks in our music ministry this coming year to figure out how to make this happen.

Perhaps the music at Unity isn't your cup of tea. Maybe you wish that we offered a specific kind of musical ensemble or there's a genre of music that you'd really like to see at Unity that we don't really offer. I encourage you to organize and get something started! I am here to help and support you, and we have resources at Unity to bring these ideas to life. The Director of Music Ministries (me) is not a gatekeeper or an arbiter of the congregation's musical taste; my role is to create a spiritual home for your creativity and musical ideas, in service of our congregation's ends and aspirations.

One Voice Mixed Chorus Presents: Dark Night, Star Bright

Saturday, January 20 | 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, January 21 | 2:00 p.m.

The Cowles Center: 528 Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis

A concert exploring the transformative power of change and bright new beginnings. Tickets are \$20-\$35, online at onevoicemn.org.

From the Archives Team

The Papers of Arthur Foote

The Archives Team recently obtained three boxes of material related to Rev. Arthur Foote, the beloved minister of Unity Church from 1945 to 1970. It happened because of family ties. Susan Foote, former daughter-in-law, visited family in Maine, where Rev. Foote had retired. She learned that Pepper Cwik, Foote's granddaughter, hoped to find a good home for her grandfather's papers.

Conveniently, Louise Merriam was at her summer home in Maine and arranged to connect with Ms. Cwik. During that visit Louise identified the items for Unity Church, packed them up and shipped them to St. Paul.

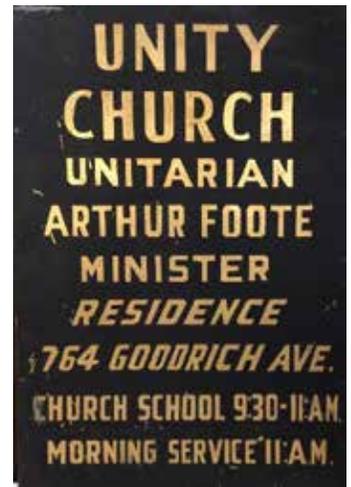
The team made an initial survey of the materials, weeding out items we could send elsewhere. These went to archives at Harvard Divinity School and Meadville Lombard Theological School. What remained were sermon notes, texts of speeches, Sunday readings and sermon pamphlets, correspondence, assorted music composed by Foote, and items related to his retirement.

Two items in particular stand out. One is a set of two notebooks covering the years of Foote's ministry at Unity. In these he listed the sermon titles, hymns, and readings for each Sunday. He also recorded the attendance at each service.

The other notable item is the church sign, pictured here. Not only does the sign show the service time, but it also displays Rev. Foote's home address on Goodrich Avenue, not something you would see on a church sign today.

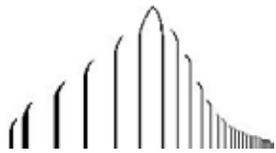
Eventually, we will transfer most of the Foote material to the Minnesota Historical Society, the official home of Unity Church archives. However, the Archives Team hopes that the sign and a few other items will remain at Unity, either in digital format or displayed on the walls to expand our understanding of Unity's rich history.

Archives Team members include Louise Merriam, Carol Miller, Patt Kelly, Pauline Eichten and Susan Foote (emerita).



commUNITY is the monthly newsletter of Unity Church. Deadlines are the 15th of each month. Subscriptions are free to those who make pledges to Unity Church and are available to others for \$30/year.





UNITY CHURCH-UNITARIAN

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Rev. KP Hong, Minister of Faith Formation
Barbara Hubbard, Executive Director
Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, Interim Senior Minister
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**TIME SENSITIVE
MATERIAL**

Offer Your Gifts of Hospitality

You: a friendly, caring person looking for an easy, accessible way to connect and give back.

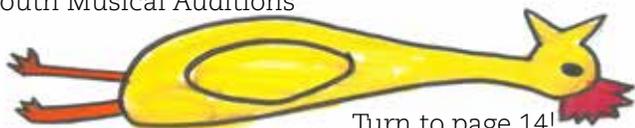
Unity Church: a community with several opportunities to engage through hospitality!

We are currently recruiting folks for:

- **Sunday Coffee Hour Hospitality.** Sign up (bit.ly/coffeehosp) for one Sunday or several to keep the coffee flowing and the dishes clean. Provide a warm welcome as people get their coffee after service. Training provided and the dishwasher is *fun!*
- **Wellspring Wednesday kitchen support.** Sign up (bit.ly/wwhosp) for Monday grocery shopping, Tuesday night prep from 4:00-6:00 p.m., Wednesday support (cook, serve, clean up) from 4:00-5:30 or 5:00-7:30 p.m. We have such a good time in the kitchen together!

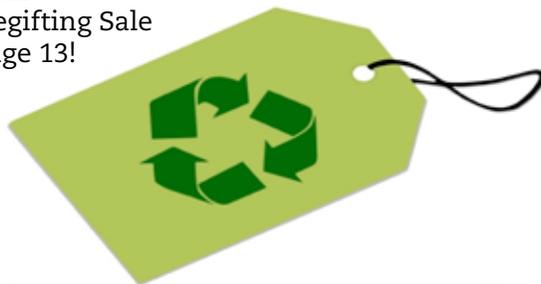
One time, a few times, or many times, we could use your help! Many of these opportunities are perfect for families too. Questions? Contact Heidi Birkholz at heidi@unityunitarian.org for more specifics.

Youth Musical Auditions



Turn to page 14!

Mano a Mano
Holiday Regifting Sale
Turn to page 13!



REGIFT...and REJOICE

Transforming Conflict

A Workshop with
Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley
Details on page 2!

