

Creating

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.

*If you bring forth what is within you,
what you bring forth will save you.*

— Gospel of Thomas

The blank page. The empty canvass. The lines on a page awaiting notes. At some point, even the most creative person will face that empty space, wondering, "What do I want to say?" It's the artists/writer/musicians dilemma, and the challenge facing all of our attempts to be creative. How to bring forth what is within us?

Creating is the theme for March. Why "creating" instead of "creative?" We tend to think of "creative" people as an assignation of a positive attribute. To call someone creative is then to say that someone else is *not* creative. Not everyone is a professional writer, artist or musician, but all of us have the ability to create and the ability to be "creating" and re-creating ourselves every day. All of us are creators. But where does that impulse to create come from?

Rick Rubin is an American record producer who wrote *The Creative Act: A Way of Being*. His small book is a treasure trove of reflections on not only the ways in which we create, but the ways in which we access our internal selves to find that creative spark. Rubin writes: "We begin with everything: everything seen, everything done, everything thought, everything felt, everything imagined, everything forgotten, and everything that rests unspoken and unthought within us."

So, the substance of our own lives is the creative material from which our response to the world emerges. Consider the variety of art that has graced the church over the past couple of years. Art made by people who are incarcerated. Abstract paintings that



convey a deep sense of light and color. Fanciful paintings of children and fairies, of *bokuseki* — the Zen Buddhist pen work bold and black gestures across a white canvass — and so many more. Some of the art may intrigue you, some may touch you less, but all of them represent an artist's attempt to bring forth what is within them. The same is true for the astonishing diversity of musical styles that is now embedded in Unity's musical baseline. Every week your ears may hear a Gregorian chant, a Peruvian text set to a complicated rhythm, a beloved choral piece, a folk tune, a spiritual. Some music or art may speak to our condition, and others may not. Yet, each creative offering reflects the impulse to express the inexpressible, or as Buddhist teacher John Daido Looi wrote: "to make visible the invisible."

Of course creating is not only about producing something tangible. It is, as Rubin acknowledges, a way of being. Parenting requires an incredible amount of adaptability and creativity. Learning how to age, acknowledging one's limitations and adapting to them, all asks us to imagine ourselves into a different way of being. Again, referring to Rubin's book, he writes: "To create is to bring something into existence that wasn't there before. It could be a conversation, the solution to a problem, a note to a friend, the rearrangement of furniture in a room, a new route home to avoid a traffic jam.

What you make doesn't have to be witnessed, recorded, sold, or encased in glass for it to be a work of art. Through the ordinary state of being, we're already creators in the most profound way, creating our experience of reality and composing the world we perceived."

Look around you. Consider the astonishing creations which we may spend money to visit, or that are as ordinary as a tool in a toolbox: the Golden Gate Bridge, the *White Album*, Guernica, Hagia Sophia, the Sphinx, the space shuttle, Autobahn, "Clair de Lune," the Colosseum in Rome, the Phillips screwdriver, the iPad, the Grateful Dead, Philadelphia cheesesteak. Look around you. Then notice what comes to you — and what creative and creating impulse you can bring to the world. Remember the words from the Gospel of Thomas: "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth, will save you."

*Rev. Kathleen Rolenz with this
month's theme team:
Ahmed Anzaldúa, Rev. Tom Duke
Rev. Andrea LaSonde Anastos,
Rev. KP Hong, Drew Danielson*

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



Reflections on the Interim Time

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, Interim Senior Minister

Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? — Isaiah 43:19

When I used to co-lead new member orientation sessions, I would ask those considering membership, “What is the purpose of a church?” The answers would not surprise you: to worship or to reflect on things of meaning and worth, religious education for my children and youth, a place to put my values into action (i.e., social justice). Rarely does someone say “a home for the arts.” Yet, when you think about church — fostering creativity is an important thread that runs through church. Whether making music with our music ministries or creating the annual youth musical, organizing a major fundraiser or teaching in religious education — all of these — and so many more are creative expressions of the Spirit that lives in, among and beyond us.

I also think of church in general as a work of art. It starts with an impulse — a desire to create a particular community around certain religious and spiritual values. That impulse forms a gesture, which organizes into an institution. And then, through the regular practice of creating community, form a church. Each step involves the same elements in creating art — listening, waiting, practice, failing, trying again, repeat.

Someone asked me recently about how I express myself creatively, and the first thing I thought of was the process of writing sermons. When I sit down to write a sermon, I begin by listening and asking questions. *What is going on inside of me right now? What is happening in the lives of the members of this congregation? What is happening in the world?* I must wait for those answers. I stare at the empty page. I go get coffee. I scrub my kitchen floor. And then, something begins to emerge. I see one of your faces or hear your story in my mind’s ear. I cast my eye about the world and feel the pull of the millions of people in various states of creative exuberance or unrelenting despair. I pray to the Spirit whom I call God — sometimes yes, to help me write the sermon! — but more often than not, to try to hear what my ancestors, the ancient ones, have had to say on a particular topic. Then, I force myself to write for 40 minutes, uninterrupted, without editing. At first, it looks like a failure. A ramble that makes no sense to anyone but me. Then, I look closer and see patterns and themes emerging. It takes coaxing and polishing, shaping and editing. It never feels finished, but if I’m lucky, it will feel like enough.

The church is being created and re-created every day. We try something new, we fail, we get embarrassed, we try again, we feel good about our labors, and we repeat. The church is constantly being reborn, again and again, through our creative endeavors and by our commitment to listen, to wait, to practice, to fail, to try again. Unity Church — you are a resilient and abundantly creative people. Even now, your collective hearts, hands and minds are shaping that which is still in formation — that which is being made. We do not yet know what final form it will take, but we do know, that it will be a new thing, if we but perceive it.

Believing in you,

Kathleen

The Wheel of Life

In Memoriam

Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs

February 4, 1953 – February 14, 2024

In Celebration

Lou Martel Gherity

born one more redeemer on

January 23, 2024

daughter of

Ella Thomson and Joe Gherity,
and granddaughter of Jane Thomson.

Flowers for Worship

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

2024 MidAmerica Regional Assembly

The MidAmerica Region is coming together — both online and at the First Unitarian Society of Madison, WI, on Friday, April 19, and Saturday, April 20, for a multiplatform regional assembly!

The Keynote address will be given by the Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, and Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ.

There will be workshops, the Annual Business Meeting of the MidAmerica Region, and opportunities to meet UU leaders from across our faith tradition. For those who are in person, there will even be opportunities to tour this historic church designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

But most importantly, it is a time to come together as Unitarian Universalists from across the MidAmerica Region. Get the details: bit.ly/midra

MARCH 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 also offered via livestream. Religious Education programs for children and youth are held Sundays during our service times.

March 3: Known, Unknown, and Everything In Between

Rev. Jessica Clay | Livestream: youtube.com/watch?v=ZVVtc14zl6I

Join Rev Jessica Clay as she returns to Unity and reflects on her years of parish ministry since she was the Hallman Ministerial Intern in 2016-2017. She will explore the place creativity has in faith, community, and life.

This Sunday is a tri-church pulpit swap! Rev. Rolenz will be preaching at First Universalist, Rev. Jen Crow at White Bear, and Rev. Jessica Clay at Unity Church. Rev. Clay was called as the Senior Minister of White Bear Unitarian Church in 2023. Prior to coming to White Bear, she served as senior minister in Brewster, MA.

March 10: Color and Fragrance

Rev. Lara Cowtan | Livestream: youtube.com/watch?v=5S76sO7RDM8

Many Unitarian Universalists find a spiritual connection with Nature (yes, the N is writ large intentionally!). Having just experienced the warmest winter on record and rising concerns about our planet's climate, what is our spiritual and theological response? Where can we find the individual and collective strength to clearly face the truth of the climate emergency, mourn the damage being done to our blue planet and inspire ourselves and others to action?

Spiritual Ecology and Eco-Spirituality look beyond our sense of justice and connect more deeply with how we engage with nature on a person and spiritual level. Let us explore the sacred thread that weaves the essence of humanity into the tapestry of all creation, and then re-engage with the world from this awareness.

March 17: Life Is a Thistle Bush

Barbara Hubbard | Livestream: youtube.com/watch?v=Tq8dZgicZ24

Who among us really expected life to be a bed of roses? Barbara Hubbard (outgoing executive director) will speak about how the Unity Church community has inspired, shaped and transformed her life's journey.

March 24: Dostoyevsky Reads Hegel in Siberia and Bursts Into Tears

Rev. KP Hong | Livestream: youtube.com/watch?v=3G0ZijoWgZE

In his essay of the same title, the Hungarian cultural critic László Földényi stages an encounter between Dostoyevsky and Hegel, between our creaturely sense of transcendence as finite-limited-mortal beings and radical Enlightenment's belief in unbounded progress and mastery. In a world mediated through switches, buttons, credit cards, screens, redlined neighborhoods and land as commodity for ownership, what do we mean by the sacred? In this moment of climate change and degradation of life, when the wounded world seems "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing," how do we remain attentive to the sacred song of life itself, to claim a deeper sense of belonging to the earth, shared history, and to each other? Worship associate Nancy Dilts and Rev. KP Hong amplify the work of honest storytelling, asking us to more creatively name this sacred life and work against its degradation.

Easter Family Sunday, March 31: When Jesus Woke

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz | Livestream: www.youtube.com/watch?v=jsltZYbF5u8

What really happened on that Easter morning? A resurrection? An awakening? No one can say for certain, but we can say this — Jesus of Nazareth's life after his death changed the world. On this Easter Sunday, it also has the power to change us. Come find out how.

Maundy Thursday Service

Thursday, March 28 | 7:00 p.m.
Ames Chapel

The word "Maundy" comes from the Latin word *mandatum* or commandment, which Jesus gave his disciples, "A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another, as I have loved you." This is a contemplative service which remembers Jesus on the last night of his earthly life by rituals of washing of feet and an extinguishing of candles.

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.

March 3: FreeWriters offers Hennepin and Ramsey County jail inmates free writing exercises which often open doors to deeper inner resources previously untapped. freewriters.org

March 10: ComMUSICation was founded to make high quality after school music programs accessible to local youth. commusicationmn.org

March 17: The Pauli Murray Commissioning Fund supports GALA Choruses in creating a new commission based on the life of Pauli Murray: African American activist, teacher, attorney, poet, and Episcopal priest.

March 24: Shobi's Table is a mobile cafe ministry fostering community networks by making delicious and nutritious meals available to everyone, regardless of whether or not they can pay. shobistable.org

March 31: Mano a Mano International Partners works to create partnerships with impoverished Bolivian communities to improve health and economic wellbeing. manoamano.org



Change Is Afoot

LauraSue Schlatter, Trustee

We see it all around us. Change. Barbara Hubbard's long-planned retirement is upon us, we are welcoming more new staff, and the Ministerial Search Team (MST) is in the mysterious quiet time of their work. On the day I wrote this, we got the news that our beloved Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs died after living bravely with cancer for two years. Some change is bittersweet, some joyous, some uncertain, and some just hurts. But whatever else, for many of us, change makes us feel anxious and threatened.

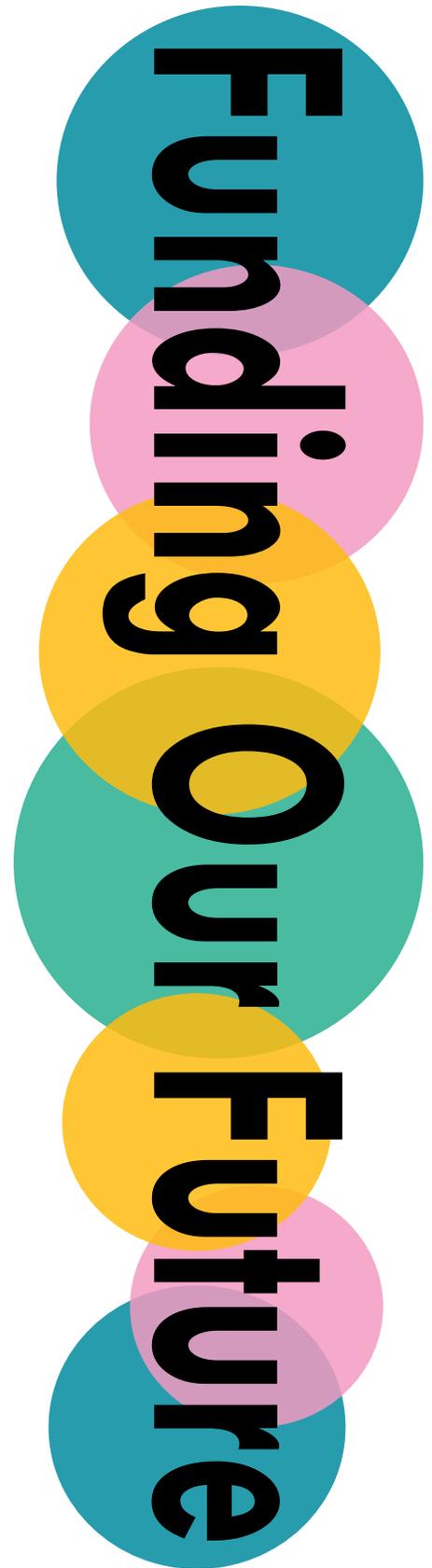
Last year, Rev. Rolenz told the board about Rev. Terasa Cooley, whom she hoped to bring to Unity for a weekend workshop and preaching. She said Rev. Cooley had written an excellent book about conflict — *Transforming Conflict: The Blessings of Congregational Turmoil*. I bought the book, lost it, and found it again six weeks ago when my cat knocked it off a bookshelf. The book, Rev. Cooley's workshop on February 3 and her service on February 4 brought valuable lessons about turning conflict into opportunities to learn.

What does conflict have to do with change? If change makes us feel anxious and threatened, we may be more inclined to respond to one another with our "lizard brains" — our fight, flight, or freeze responses. That part of our brains, our amygdala, does not allow our reason to engage until it is soothed. Rev. Cooley reminds us first to soothe ourselves. Many of the practices we know from church are the soothing practices we need to reengage our thinking brains — breathe, sit silently, chant, sing, hum, move. Once our "lizard brains" are soothed, Rev. Cooley provides tools so we can begin to talk with one another, even when we are in conflict. The "ladder of inference" teaches us that we may or may not be starting with a common understanding of basic reality and facts, but from there, we select and interpret our own reality, make assumptions and conclusions about it and base our beliefs and actions on those assumptions and conclusions. We need to step down that ladder of inference until we are at a common level of understanding. We may never agree with the person we're in conflict with, but we may come to learn something. Both of us may be transformed.

There is much more to Rev. Cooley's book, and her lessons. As we traverse these next few months, we would do well to look at, and learn from them. We will relieve our anxiety by practicing the rituals and celebrations that go with change. Celebrate Barbara Hubbard's 25 years of dedicated service to our church — and celebrate even more the luscious freedom her retirement will bring her! Celebrate and support Laura Park and our other staff as they move into their new roles! Celebrate the work of our MST as they move into the final stages of their discernment about our next called minister. Take a moment to thank them whenever you see one of them.

Comfort one another as we gather in grief and love, remembering the life of Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs, and sending her children, and grandchildren all the additional love the waves of time and distance can carry.

We have much work to do together in the coming months. We will come together in joy and grief, in a meeting to call a new minister, to say goodbye to Rev. Rolenz. These changes are hard, but if we remember that love is at the center of what we do, we will come through the changes together, and stronger, to do our work in the world.



SEE PAGE 10

MINISTERIAL SEARCH TEAM



A Million Fractals of Transformation

Tara Romanov Messana on behalf of Unity's Ministerial Search Team

The Ministerial Search Team (MST) is hard at work vetting ministerial candidates.

Through this sacred work we're reminded of so much beauty, compassion, love and calling. The March theme of creating is about grounding ourselves in the possibilities of this creative and relational work we've been called to do.

We want to ask you to think of the possibilities, too.

But what do we mean by possibilities? The possibilities... of your own faith and spiritual practice, in the relationships you've built at Unity Church (and will continue to add to), the covenants and sacred moments that we hold together as a community... the grief and longing of being in covenant with one another, but also in the dreaming and hoping.

What does Unity Church mean to you, what do you take with you, what do you give, and what do you hope for? Many of you took the opportunity to share this and more at our fall cottage meetings, by completing the congregational survey, and through participation in workshops with Alfonso Wenker and Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley. These acts of communion are all part of our calling as Unitarian Universalists.

In her *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* book, adrienne maree brown writes:

i am not afraid
of what i came here to do
i'm made of stardust
we are not afraid
of what we're called now to do
we're all made of god

The work of the congregation is part of our calling, whether it's a long-term commitment like serving on the MST, small acts of generosity and kindness like recognizing and

welcoming a new visitor in the Parish Hall, or being vulnerable with another Unity member and talking about what it is you might be afraid of during this transition time. These are what adrienne maree brown calls "fractals" or "critical connections." These small acts build relationships and help set the environment needed for creating transformation... the kind of transformation that you build by practicing kindness and generosity on a small scale then seeing those fractals and critical connections grow to what we wish to see at a universal level.

But how do we do this and what is it that we're supposed to do?

We keep showing up... for ourselves and for each other. You showed up through cottage meetings. You didn't just talk, you listened. This month and in the coming months, you can show up by greeting one another and asking, "How are you?" You can ask the Unity groups that you're part of, "How can we engage in the work to prepare for a new minister?"

You've also been grieving and we will continue to grieve through all of this change. The beloved ministers who cannot stay with us forever, the beloved ministers whom we've been so honored to know and love, be transformed by and transform with.

We can all work to be open to new possibilities at Unity Church and in welcoming a new minister, one who the MST is working hard to find, one who we believe is the wisest choice for our beloved congregation. This new minister will be someone who is ready to show up, to share their gifts and gain new gifts, to engage and get to know us, and someday love us and vice-versa, so we can all be part of the transformative work that we want for ourselves, for Unity Church, and for our community and world.

The desire for transformation came up many times in the cottage meetings

and congregational survey. We were listening and we thank you, again, for sharing. But now is not the time for waiting. Now is the time for getting comfortable with the ambiguity and discomfort of transformation. Now is the time to lean into trust.

We want you to lean into the possibilities, but "how" you might ask?

Micah Hobbes Frazier writes about how we are like butterflies transforming, "as we change and transform, we also have everything we need already right inside of us." There is comfort knowing we have everything we need... already inside of us. There is also comfort in knowing that change is part of transformation and so is community, because we cannot do this work alone. Octavia Butler wrote (and Rob Eller-Isaacs often quoted): "All that you touch you change. All that you change, changes you. The only lasting truth is change. God is change."

We create possibilities through connections, a million fractals that allow us to imagine... together, a future full of wholeness. If "what you pay attention to grows," like adrienne maree brown says, then let us connect, invite and sit with the possibilities of what our future together looks like. Let's sit together in this time of transition. Let's hope and dream, and let's hold each other in the uncertainty, so we can continue to transform and make ourselves, Unity Church, and the world, more beautiful.

Make Complexity a Friend

Reflection from the Transforming Conflict Workshop

Suki Sun, Beloved Community Communications Team



Who would have thought Transforming Conflict, the workshop led by Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley on February 3, would be woven with so many different shapes of tenderness, lightness, and playfulness?

The first big laugh burst in Parish Hall when one of the bullet points showed “No Return to ‘Normal.’” How many times have conflicts that I experienced arisen from my refusal to embrace the transforming potential of changes?

In my way was the false brief that these changes served no chance as evolutionary pivot points but only broken promises to “my good old days.”

Especially in a group setting, even though I never say these words aloud — “We just don’t do that” or “We always do things like that” — I can no longer deny that these thoughts are exactly my go-to reactions when facing conflicts. Then, my tendency has been to cut the conflict short and walk away.

Before this workshop, I always thought my aversion to conflict was deep-rooted, and I had plenty of reasons to justify it: I grew up in China where all kinds of “saving face” conversation strategies lubricate the harmony of the society; I am a Libra, a natural peace seeker, and a people pleaser. Dr. Terasa inspired a willingness in me to cultivate the required taste for the deep flavor of conflict. Perhaps the first step to uproot my bias against conflict is to normalize the conflict.

When I learn to look deeper into the uniqueness of each person with what Dr. Terasa called “holy curiosity,” I can transform my uneasiness into openness while listening to different voices and learning something.

There are no *difficult* people, only *different* people. There are no *difficult* conversations, only *different* conversations.

Put another way, to normalize conflict is to normalize difference. And

difference here is not something that needs to be adjusted, aligned, or fixed, but to be encouraged and celebrated.

One of my favorite quotes from Dr. Terasa at the workshop was, “You are part of us not because you act like us.” Her famous saying, “I see you. I care about you. I want to learn from you,” was like a mantra, repeated several times during the workshop, and it resonated with me every time.

Conflicts that I used to perceive as “difficult” are an invitation for me to practice deep listening and to build deep connections with others, even if they have different interests; sharing the interests of others is a profound learning experience. The interests of other people may interest me, too!

In my own culture, the first character in Chinese for conflict 冲 also means “to splash amid the waterfall.” What a lively and poetic scene of natural force! Could conflicts be as normal as the ever-flowing water in nature? When meeting uneven territory, water creates more wonder than stagnation, like a waterfall with amazing dancing and singing.

In this sense, conflicts especially latent conflicts, are vital signs that manifest energy and the dynamic of relationships and organizations. They are life-giving opportunities for me to adapt, change, and transform into something beyond my own small self. After all, what is a 100% conflict-free zone? A dead zone.

Another memorable laugh happened in the workshop when Dr. Terasa jokingly described some people in conflicts as “highly amygdalated.” She explained that part of the amygdala in our brain elicits a simple black-and-white reaction: danger vs. no danger. Because it bypasses complex cogitations, the by-product is a false sense of urgency. In a societal conflict,



not only do I see danger as losing and safety as winning, but also, I want to win *now*. Unfortunately, the amygdala-hijacked version of us always has the loudest voice speaking in ways that silence others, or stays silent when I need to speak up.

That’s why building my amygdala awareness is so important. Once I notice my amygdala is activated, I can consciously bring back my authentic self by applying some soothing strategies like breathing out longer than breathing in, in a steady rhythm, and sending calming messages to my brain that I am in a much safer place than what my nervous system tells me.

The whole workshop was packed with many strategies and tools for transforming conflicts, but I found that approaching with a beginner’s mind offered a fresh view of conflicts that allowed me to lean in and cherish the learning opportunity in each conflict.

F. Scott Fitzgerald once said, “The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function.” The biggest takeaway from the Transforming Conflict workshop was to “make complexity a friend.”

CONGREGATIONAL CARE / ARCHIVES TEAM



The more things change...

Rev. Lara Cowtan
Minister of Congregational Care

It is somehow March. Which I'm sure, for each of us, elicits some kind of, from-the-body, response. Another day closer to some celebration or anticipation; another day farther from a time or person that still

takes space in your heart.

March is a month of transformation. As we anticipate the first buds of springtime, here at Unity Church, there are many changes underway.

Long-time Executive Director and holder of all keys, Barbara Hubbard, is retiring with a celebration to honour her service on Sunday, March 17.

Laura Park is exchanging hats and offices to move into the Executive Director role and we welcome Philippa Anastos as our new Membership Coordinator and Program Assistant, and Julie Fliflet as Director of Finance.

The news of Unity's beloved Minister Emerita, Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs death on February 14 is still freshly weighing on our hearts.

Meanwhile, Unity Church is also preparing to meet the candidate for senior minister in April, and there is much anticipation, curiosity and even anxiety about what fresh changes this will bring about.

So much change, some laden with grief and some bubbling with excitement

As I sit here in what was Janne's office, both humbled and uplifted by her tremendous ministry and expansive heart, I feel incredibly blessed to be here with you at this time, to be a stable through-line of ministry in this time of transition. I have now been here for six months, and feel like this is where I belong. I am your Minister of Congregational Care, and I am not going anywhere. While so many things are changing, some things will always remain. I am here with you for whatever comes next, all the celebrations of joy and the depths of grief and challenge. This resilient and beautiful congregation knows how to go through hard things and come out stronger, and it knows how to begin again in love.

With you, I too am excitedly looking forward to this next chapter in Unity's story, and very happy to writing it together with you all.

Do you have a concern or celebration you wish to have shared in the Embracing Meditation during Sunday worship? Would you like to request a call from the minister or a helping hand or listening ear of a care team member? Please send us an email at pastoralcare@unityunitarian.org. If you are experiencing an urgent need for pastoral support, call 651-300-9123.

From the Archives Team

Liberating A/V Material from the Dungeon

In January the Archives Team hosted two staff members from the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS): Kate Hujda, the Curator of Manuscripts and our main contact, and Leif Kopietz, the Archival Collections Cataloger who has been working through the over 100 boxes we previously sent to MHS.

We learned that Leif has been diligently going through the received material and organized it into subject areas.

We described the large amount of audio-visual material still at Unity.

Were they interested in receiving it? Not only were they interested, they have a plan. Unity made a donation to

MHS to support cataloging the new material. That will be redirected to fund digitizing the A/V material in the collection. We're pretty excited about that!

Based on that response, two team members spent much of January pulling the many containers of A/V material from the various spaces where they had been cached. They sorted out duplicate items and made sure each container had a list of contents and was labeled and numbered. The result? Forty-two containers of cassettes, CDs, reel-to-reel tapes, and videotapes covering years as early as 1958 up to 2010. Most of these are sermons, but there were also tapes of Wider Ministry programs and other miscellaneous lectures. Leif noted that this material fills in many gaps in the existing Unity collection already at MHS.

The Archives Team goal is always to make Unity's historical material more accessible as we don't have the space to keep it or to make it available. We're happy with this vital partnership with MHS.



In early February, Hannah and Haley arrived with a van to collect the containers for transfer to MHS.



Containers of A/V material temporarily stored in the Junior High North room in the basement.

Archives Team: Louise Merriam, Carol Miller, Patt Kelly, Eve Johnson, Pauline Eichten and Susan Foote (emerita).

WELCOME NEWCOMERS



Welcome Words

Laura Park, Director of Membership and Hospitality

This is my last column as your Director of Membership and Hospitality! As I write this, I've officially started my role as Executive Director, and next week Philippa Anastos will start as our Membership Coordinator and Program Assistant. I have so loved the work of helping us welcome the stranger to the congregation and illuminating the paths to deeper involvement in Unity Church. Thank you to established congregants for nurturing mutual belonging with our newcomers, and thank you to our visitors for taking the risk to explore this religious community. I look forward to serving you in my new role!

Pathway to Membership Classes

The offerings below invite you to explore a deeper connection to Unity Church and the commitments and opportunities of membership. If you have questions or would like one-on-one conversation about getting connected or about membership, please contact Philippa Anastos, Membership Coordinator and Program Assistant, philippa@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.

Weekly church emails include the session topic or find the session schedule at the Welcome Table in the main lobby or in Parish Hall, or email philippa@unityunitarian.org to receive Saturday morning email reminders.

This month's offerings:

March 3: Membership 101

March 10: Religious Education for Children, Youth, and Adults

March 17: Building Tour

March 24: Membership 101

March 31: No session (Easter Sunday)

Committing to Unity: Joining Unity Church

Tuesday, May 7 | 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 Philippa Anastos know you're interested in participating or to ask questions. She can also arrange a private signing ceremony.

Welcome New Members



L-R: Steve Talsness, Maggie Dornfeld, Ralph McQuarter, Emma Thoron, Eileen Galvin, Scot Nortrom

Eileen Galvin, Scot Nortrom, and their two boys Kieran and Finn have attended Unity Church for 10 years. Eileen enjoys being a Spirit Play teacher and has served on the Religious Education Ministry Team for a number of years. They are excited to see their son participate in his first Unity Church musical.

Ralph McQuarter works on the state administration of children and family services to Minnesotans. Introduced to Unity Church two years ago by long-time member Estelle Brouwer, Ralph is excited to formally become part of the Unity family. During the summer, Ralph and Estelle are active sailors on Lake Superior.

Emma Thoron (she/her) loves to travel and spend time outdoors with friends and family. The community, programming, and service brought her to Unity Church.

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.

STAFF TRANSITIONS

Staff Transitions

We have been through several staff changes recently and thought we'd consolidate them for you!



Laura Park (she/her), Executive Director

Laura Park officially began her position as Executive Director of Unity Church on February 1, 2024, assuming responsibility for administrative and strategic oversight of the church with the Executive Team.



Julie Fliflet (she/her), Director of Finance

Julie began overseeing the church's accounting and financial reporting functions in January 2023. A CPA, Julie comes to us with over 25 years' experience in non-profit financial management and we are fortunate to benefit from that experience during the twenty hours a week she'll be working with us.



Robert Baker (he/him), Facilities Manager

Robert assumed his responsibilities in November 2023 overseeing the maintenance of our extensive facility. Previously, Robert managed the facility for the UU Church of Concord New Hampshire, so he also knows Unitarian Universalism.



Philippa Anastos (she/her), Membership Coordinator/Program Assistant

Philippa started February 2024 overseeing Welcome Teams and the classes in the pathway to membership, and providing program support for Wellspring Wednesday programming, our Community Outreach Ministry Teams, fellowship groups, Chalice Circles, and UU Wellspring. A natural connector, Philippa comes to us with wide-ranging experience in writing, mentorship, and data analysis.



Heidi Birkholz (she/her), Events and Tech Coordinator

Heidi moved into her new role as Events and Tech Coordinator in January 2023. In this capacity, she coordinates Wellspring Wednesday meals, reserves rooms and coordinates technology for Wellspring Wednesday and other programming, coordinates memorials and weddings, and coordinates community rentals.



Claire Newhouse (she/her), Lead Facilities Specialist

Claire began coordinating the work of our team of facilities specialists in January 2023, having worked on the facilities staff since August 2022. Claire also runs Chalice Camp for Unity Church kids and friends each summer!

We've also added several **Facilities Specialists**, please greet them as you see them: **Sherifatu Akibu, Marcos Del Angel, Dion Jones, Carlos McAdory, Sani Shaibu, and Mo Todd.**

Finally, two departures to note:

Teresa Connor ended her time as **Facilities Operations Coordinator** January 7. We miss her steady presence and are grateful to have her as a regular volunteer at the church already!

Barbara Hubbard ends her time as Executive Director March 17. See the information on this page about her retirement celebration.



The Unrestricted Gifts of
Barbara Hubbard
A Celebration of 25 Years

Sunday, March 17
4:00 PM
Unity Church–Unitarian

We will celebrate Barbara Hubbard's ministry as Unity's executive director and send her into retirement with our love, gratitude and joy!

To share a story or photo of Barbara for the celebration or to make a contribution to the retirement gift fund visit unityunitarian.org/bh-retirement.

Funding Our Future

Unity Church–Unitarian AUCTION FUNDRAISER *with a twist*



~~~~~  
Saturday  
March 2  
2024

Doors Open  
6:00 PM

Live Auction  
8:00 PM



Admission, including delicious food and beverages: \$20.00  
Fun, fellowship, and exciting bidding.  
Fill up your scavenger hunt punch card.  
Childcare available.

Visit [unityunitarian.org/fundraiser](https://unityunitarian.org/fundraiser) for details about bidding on auction items, purchasing tickets, and volunteering.  
Unity Church-Unitarian | 733 Portland Avenue, St. Paul, MN

# LIBRARY-BOOKSTALL TEAM



## The Library-Bookstall Staff Liaison is Retiring

Shelley Butler, Library-Bookstall Team

Was it 2007 or 2008 when I learned that the staff person that I thought was the Library-Bookstall Team liaison really wasn't? It was empty in Parish Hall that weekday as I chatted with Barbara Hubbard.

"Isn't Justin our staff liaison?" I asked.

"Well, no. I think I want to do it. I'll talk to Justin," Barbara said.

Thus, the best of all possible worlds for a team at Unity began, as well as relationships that we will always cherish!

We asked lots of questions, of which these are only a fraction: Barbara, we need you — where's Barbara? What do you think about hosting book readings? Or holding a book launch for [insert one of many names here]? Do you think we could schedule and hold a coffeehouse (on a Friday night when staff are often not scheduled)? How about publishing an arts journal? What do you think about holding a coffeehouse and publishing a journal for the next fifteen years? How about adding reading/sitting areas to the Anderson Library, and more shelving? We'd like to contract for outside online library cataloging service, OK? We'd like to use the Center Room during the busiest month of the year on one of the busiest Sundays of the year — no problem, right? We're going to need an iPad when we put the Bookstall inventory online and start selling through Square — could you help with that? What do you know about the Andersons and could you talk about them at the Open House?



It's not like the executive director of Unity Church didn't already have plenty to do, but Barbara almost always managed not only to make time for us and our many ideas, programs, events, and publications, but she made things happen for us that may not have happened without her leadership and support. Even more, she showed up time and time again, year after year, never seeming to lose her enthusiasm for our events and team.

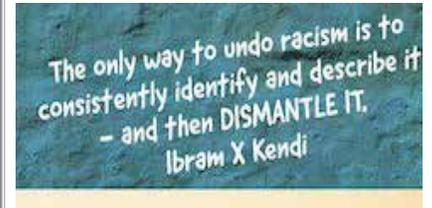
The executive team of which Barbara has been a part, created a culture of trust, fostered shared ministry, and provided encouragement for us to use and expand our gifts and talents in service to the church. Unity is so much the better for many of our past ministers, but the service and leadership of Barbara is unique in Unity's history; never has there been an executive director that gave and contributed so much to the betterment of the church.

On behalf of my co-team leaders, Barb Foss, Vicki Kappus, and Lizabeth Bougie, as well as all the Library and Bookstall volunteers, past and present, we offer our humblest thanks with much love to our fearless leader, Barbara Hubbard. We will miss you more than we can say, but we can't wait to hear about your happy, new retirement adventures!

## Antiracism Literacy Partners

Tuesday, March 5 | 7:00 p.m.

Online via Zoom: [bit.ly/ALPmar524](https://bit.ly/ALPmar524)



This program highlights useful books, podcasts, and videos in our ongoing practice of learning about systemic racism and the work of dismantling it. Participants report that their understanding of a resource increases exponentially when explored with a partner or a group. Come to choose a resource, sign up for a buddy or small group, and make plans for your discussions. Resource/discussion guides provided. For more information, contact Becky Gonzalez-Campoy at [beckygc83@gmail.com](mailto:beckygc83@gmail.com).

## In The Justice Database

Organization for Refuge, Asylum and Migration ORAM protects and empowers LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees globally, providing critical and lasting assistance to LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees on their journey to safety, through effective global advocacy, on-the-ground programming and livelihood skill-building, while creating sustainability and systemic change. [bit.ly/JusticeData](https://bit.ly/JusticeData)



# 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 \$10/adults, \$5/child (ages 5-12), \$3/child (ages 2-4), and \$25/family. If you need financial assistance to help cover the cost of dinner, please email Laura Park at [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org). If you plan to join us and need a special dietary preparation (vegetarian, vegan, dairy-free options are available), please email Heidi Birkholz at [heidi@unityunitarian.org](mailto:heidi@unityunitarian.org).

## Help prepare a Wellspring Wednesday meal!

Sign up — [bit.ly/wwhosp](http://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! Kids are welcome with their adults! Questions? Contact Heidi Birkholz at [heidi@unityunitarian.org](mailto:heidi@unityunitarian.org).



## March 6

*Dinner: Turkey shepherd's pie, kale sweet potato salad, chocolate chip cookies*

### Hidden Hunger

In-person Parish Hall and online via Zoom: [bit.ly/hidhung](http://bit.ly/hidhung)

March is Minnesota Food Share Month and Unity's Act for the Earth Team is partnering with Unity's Evergreen Quilters to sponsor a lively conversation around food access. There is enormous stigma associated with hunger and it is largely hidden. Our speakers will unpack hunger layer by layer, examining the role history and geography play in food insecurity. Ramsey County and local organizations are getting healthy food to people who need it, with dignity and respect. Can earth-friendly practices be part of the solution? Learn how we can help! Speakers include Carissa Dillon, MPH, RD Planning Manager, Food Security coordinator, Ramsey County; Julia McCarthy, Director of Programs, Keystone Services; Angie Goettl, MEd, Assistant Director, Hallie Q Brown Community Center.

### Article II: What's in it for you?

In-person Robbins Parlor

At the 2024 General Assembly, delegates from member congregations will vote to either affirm or reject the updates to Article II of our Unitarian Universalist bylaws. These updates reframe what has been known as the Purposes and Principles of Unitarian Universalism, putting love at the center of a constellation of core values. We'll re-cap the Article II revisions, the comprehensive process that led to the revisions, and offer information about how you can be a delegate to this year's all-virtual General Assembly.

### Beginner Violin with Mayra Mendoza

In-person, Choir Room

Beginning violin lessons appropriate for all ages. Learn basic violin posture, note reading, and more! Email Mayra at [mayraquitzia@gmail.com](mailto:mayraquitzia@gmail.com) if you plan to attend.

### Religious Education New Family Orientation

In-person, Gannett Room

Interested in learning more about Unity's religious education programs for children and youth? We offer Religious Education New Family Orientation on the first Wednesday of every month. Let Nelson Moroukian ([nelson@unityunitarian.org](mailto:nelson@unityunitarian.org)) know a week in advance that you plan to attend.

## March 13

*Dinner: Roasted chicken, parmesan potato wedges, tomato cucumber salad, cookies*

### Communal Singing with Anthony Trecek-King of the Handel and Hayden Society

Join us for an evening with internationally-acclaimed choral conductor Anthony Trecek-King. Together with Ahmed Anzaldúa, Unity's Director of Music Ministries, Dr. Trecek-King will lead attendees in a communal singing experience. As a conductor and clinician, Anthony Trecek-King has earned international acclaim conducting choirs and orchestras throughout the world, and will conduct the Minnesota Chorale and Border CrosSing in a concert at Unity Church on March 16.

### Lectio Divina

Online via Zoom: [bit.ly/Lectio2023-24](http://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. A different poem at each session. On Wednesdays, join the Zoom from the Gannett Room at church!

### Beginner Violin with Mayra Mendoza

In-person, Choir Room

Email Mayra at [mayraquitzia@gmail.com](mailto:mayraquitzia@gmail.com) if you plan to attend.

# WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

March 20

*Dinner: Sausage and peppers on polenta, green salad, brown butter bars*

## Book Reading and Signing

### ***A Widow's Guide to Becoming a Handyman* by Susan Huehn**

In-person, Robbins Parlor

Come hear Unity's own Susan Huehn read from her book that is part memoir, part immigrant story, and part how-to-guide. Called "big hearted and artfully crafted," Susan's story of the sudden death of her husband, and the grief and healing that followed is set against the backdrop of her quirky and needy old farmhouse. Books will be available to purchase.

### **A Taste of Coming of Age: What does it mean to be human and alive?**

In-person, Gannett Room

This is the first 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. Next month, Nate will invite you to share your credo.

## 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.

## Textile Arts

In-person, DeCramer Room

All ages and levels of experience are welcome! Bring your knitting, crocheting, tatting, embroidery, and needlepoint for a gathering of fellowship and service.

## Beginner Violin with Mayra Mendoza

In-person, Choir Room

Email Mayra at [mayraquitzia@gmail.com](mailto:mayraquitzia@gmail.com) if you plan to attend.

March 27

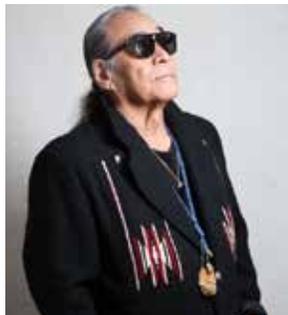
*Dinner: Baked potato bar with pot roast topper, zippy salad, thumbprint cookies*

## Mitakuye Oyasin

### **Poems and Words from a Dakota Poet's Journey**

In-person, Parish Hall and online via Zoom: [bit.ly/dktaoepo](https://bit.ly/dktaoepo)

Unity's Indigenous Justice Community Outreach Ministry Team welcomes Tatanka Ohitika Dakota Akitica (Strong Buffalo, Dakota Warrior), an enrolled member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota, and a decorated Vietnam veteran, for an evening of poetry and conversation. He has been writing poetry and performing spoken word before there was anything called American Indian poetry. He is the founder of Oyate Hotanin, (Dakota for "Voice of the People") an organization working to lead a movement for the next 500 years that supports a new era of art, healing, and change. His words have been translated into more than 17 languages, in a variety of media, to contribute to a world where we use creativity and options other than war, racism, classism, and exploitation to solve our problems.



## Beginner Violin

In-person, Choir Room

Email Mayra at [mayraquitzia@gmail.com](mailto:mayraquitzia@gmail.com) if you plan to attend.

## Fellowship Groups

For more information email Philippa at [philippa@unityunitarian.org](mailto:philippa@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, March 4 and 18, from 7:00-9:00 p.m.

**Men's Retirement Circle:** Monday, March 11 and 25, 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. March 12: *His for Hawk* by Helen Macdonald

April 9: *The River We Remember* by William Kent Krueger

**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](mailto:kp@unityunitarian.org)

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

## Working Together to End Gun Violence

**Bob Albrecht, Gun Violence Prevention Team**

As the Minnesota legislature moves deeper into its 2024 session, Unity's Gun Violence Prevention Team (until recently known as Gun Sense) will closely follow bills introduced that seek to curb gun violence in our state. Following relative success during the 2023 session which brought about new laws around universal background checks and red flag gun confiscation, this year the state house and senate will consider most notably issues surrounding safe gun storage and lost and stolen reporting. Also up for debate are the matters of magazine bans, bans on semiautomatic firearms, and restrictions on carry permits.

Our team encourages all within our community to stay aware of pending gun violence legislation. Know who your legislators are, learn about their positions on these important issues, and ask them to take a stand.

It is especially important that our outstate Unitarian Universalist communities embraces this conversation. There are approximately 20 outstate Minnesota congregations and fellowships and it is critical that their voices be lifted. If you know people in these congregations, please reach out to them and ask that they contact their elected representatives.

When we stand together, we'll show our legislators that there is a groundswell of Minnesotans calling for action now to end the gun violence epidemic in our state.

Please feel welcome to join us in our work! Monthly meetings take place on the third Thursday of each month, 3:30-4:30 p.m. (next meeting is March 21), in-person at church and online via Zoom. For more information or to be added to our email list, please contact us at [unityunitarian.org/gun-sense.html](http://unityunitarian.org/gun-sense.html).

## Engage with Housing Justice

**Judith Miller, Housing Justice Team**

Looking for opportunities to serve persons without stable housing? Consider these housing justice options:

- **Interfaith Action launched Faithful Hospitality**, an initiative to provide mobile shelter to help Hennepin County shelters deal with an overflow of families experiencing homelessness. Houses of worship will offer shelter, as they did prior to the pandemic, as well as volunteers to help guests feel safe and welcome. Overnight shelter host volunteers are needed to provide warmth and hospitality to guests. Overnight hosts are on duty 7:00 p.m.-7:00 a.m. on weekdays, and 7:00 p.m.-8:00 a.m. on weekends. More information at [bit.ly/phvol](http://bit.ly/phvol).
- **Project Home** always appreciates volunteers to serve meals to families on weekends. Chef Omar takes care of meal preparation, but 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 participate: [tinyurl.com/PHMealTeams2023](http://tinyurl.com/PHMealTeams2023).
- Watch for updates about the many exciting opportunities during the **Habitat for Humanity 2024 Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Work Project** coming this fall. During its nearly 40-year history, the Carter Work Project has traveled to 14 countries and brings together thousands of volunteers, celebrities, elected officials, and other VIPs to build homes and cast a global spotlight on the urgent importance of affordable housing. The 2024 Carter Work Project will launch Habitat's construction efforts at The Heights on St. Paul's East Side, Twin Cities Habitat's largest-ever development!



## Active Hope for Climate Resilience

**Saturday, March 23**

**9:00 a.m.-noon | Unity Church**

**Registration: [bit.ly/ucactivehope](http://bit.ly/ucactivehope)**

This three-hour workshop is an introduction to the work of Joanna Macy, an eco-philosopher and activist who has inspired thousands from around the world to maintain Active Hope in light of the ecological crisis. She gives us frameworks and practices of gratitude, grief, interconnection, and ultimately transformation to stay engaged and resilient in our work to save ourselves and our planet. The workshop will be offered by Jean Hammink and Julie Remington from Unity's Act for the Earth Team. It is part of an ongoing Active Hope program to bring this spiritual grounding work to all those at Unity who care about the climate crisis. Questions? Contact Jean Hammink at [jhammink@earthlink.net](mailto:jhammink@earthlink.net).

## MUUSJA Is Expanding its Board of Directors

Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance has a working board that relies on the experience and skills of board members



to help support the mission and operations of the organization. They are specifically seeking individuals with expertise in the areas of development/fundraising, financial management, and organizational skills. Please contact Board Secretary Gail Bishop at [atbishop1@charter.net](mailto:atbishop1@charter.net) to learn more.

MUUSJA works to connect Unitarian Universalists and allies to help shape a just and loving world. [muusja.org](http://muusja.org)

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

## Act for the Earth Connections

Anna Newton, Act for the Earth Team

When I work with Unity's children in the garden on summer Sundays, I introduce the day's theme with a story. I love children's picture books: striking artwork and a good story open hearts in ways nothing else can. I recently ran across a book called *Everything is Connected*. The artist draws a "thread" to literally connect the front cover to the back and everything in between: animals, plants and humans, joy and sorrow, love and poverty. It is a profound and beautifully simple message, and challenges us to see ourselves in relationship with the earth and all beings.

My husband and I know the route between St. Paul and Cedar Falls well. Modern agriculture is on full display: endless corn and soybean fields punctuated by convenience stores. Enter the store and an array of sandwiches beckons, the air fragrant with the rich garlic smell of pizza. Milk and cheese share shelves with beer. There is a superb selection of every snack food imaginable. Then it dawns on me, *this is the local grocery store*. Aside from apples, what is largely missing are fresh fruits and vegetables. While I could pick up a frozen entree and reheat it, I would be hard-pressed to find ingredients to actually *cook* something healthy. The concept of food deserts is most often used in an urban context, but rural communities face similar challenges. How can this be? Our industrial food system promises us abundant, inexpensive food, yet access to *healthful* food is not a given. Here a connecting thread has broken.

As the Act for the Earth Team considers the theme of food, we want to understand the thread that connects us to farmers, land and climate. Talking with farmers we learn how they raise their products, and the money exchanged stays in local communities. When we choose organic food, it encourages more organic practices, but it is expensive. When I witness rural and urban food deserts, a nagging question emerges: Can we repair connections across economic and geographic disparities so everyone has access to fresh healthy food, farm workers are paid a living wage and the planet is protected? Act for the Earth has chosen to explore this question this spring.

Forging connections with other groups at church magnifies our impact. Unity's Evergreen Quilters deliver food to the Hallie Q. Brown Food shelf weekly. When the children's garden had more produce than we could handle, I reached out to them, and our produce is now featured in their deliveries, then our garden volunteers stepped up to help with deliveries as well. When Act for the Earth planned a program on food insecurity, it was natural to reach out again. Our two teams are co-sponsoring the March 6 presentation, Hidden Hunger (see page 12). Please join us, and help us spin a thread, and weave the fabric that holds all of us together!

## Unity's Evergreen Quilters

Feeding People for Over 25 Years

Evergreen Projects was formed at Unity Church in the late 1980s to collect food for our Summit-University/Rondo neighbors. They delivered food and funds to the Little Red School House food shelf operated by the indigenous community from the school's basement. After Little Red School House closed, Evergreen supported Sharing Korner food shelf, an organization serving thousands of families out of a home in the Frogtown neighborhood. Sharing Korner closed in June of 2016.

Since 2016 Evergreen Quilters has supported Hallie Q. Brown food shelf, an organization serving the Summit-University/Rondo neighborhood. Each week food that is donated by the congregation is collected and delivered to the food shelf by Unity volunteers. Evergreen Quilters also supports Hallie Q. Brown financially, using proceeds from the bi-annual sales of their handmade quilts and other fabric arts. Watch for the Evergreen Quilters queen size quilt raffle and sale coming to Parish Hall in April. One hundred percent of the proceeds are divided equally between the Hallie Q. Brown, Jeremiah Program and Project Home.

*Do you have the capacity to donate more food?*

**March is Minnesota FoodShare month** and more than ever, Minnesotans are relying on food shelves to feed their families. In fact, according to a recent Star Tribune article, more families visited food shelves in 2023 than any time in recent history. Unity Church has partnered with Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf since 2016, and here are a few facts about the service they provide:



- 22,864 clients were served in 2023
- During weekly visits, clients may pick their preferred food
- Approximately 25 pounds of food per person is distributed per visit
- 460,056 pounds of food was distributed in 2023
- Hallie Q. Brown sources culturally specific foods
- Delivery within 10 miles of Hallie Q. Brown is available

Each week Evergreen Quilters volunteers deliver the food and products donated by Unity Church members and friends to the food shelf. In 2022 the congregation donated 3,145 pounds of food and household items, in 2023 we donated 3,541 pounds of food, in January 2024 we donated 256 pounds of food.

Do we have the capacity to donate more? Can we donate 4,000 pounds in 2024? Two tons of food would be an incredible gesture of support.

**For March the food shelf requests donations of soup, tuna, canned chicken, long grain white and brown rice, pasta sauce, canned diced tomatoes, tomato sauce and paper grocery bags.** Thank you for your generous support!

# MARCH ART EXHIBITS / SPIRITUAL DEEPENING

## March Parish Hall Exhibit

Kim Gordon

Kim Gordon is a Minneapolis painter and batik artist and teacher. She was introduced to batik during a painting residency. Her initial intrigue soon became serious study of this ancient and process-oriented technique. Batik is one of the oldest ways to create patterned fabric besides weaving. It uses a fluid pigment or dye and a “resist” — hot wax — to slowly build designs. The dye is applied in layers, from lightest to darkest, and the hot wax is selectively applied to areas the artist wishes to remain that color or value. The wax “resists” subsequent layers of pigment. By layering pigment and wax one can gradually increase color and value range. Each layer of wax protects what is underneath it. This way a complex image can be created. The brush strokes visible in these batiks are not strokes of pigment, but are strokes of wax. Batik uses transparent pigments. Each layer of color is modified by the colors beneath it — a light blue wash over yellow becomes green. Gordon works on Kinwashi, a very fiber-rich Japanese paper, delicate looking but strong enough to withstand the repeated applications of paint and wax. She uses both watercolor and Dye-Na-Flow for her pigment layers, and paraffin for the resist. The final step is to iron the wax out of the paper.



Gordon’s passion is the natural world and her years of plein air oil painting have provided a foundation for her work in batik. The intense batik process leads to careful study of subject. Observation is both a celebration of the natural world and an internal journey which, in turn, leads to a renewed connection with the natural world.

## March Center Room Exhibit

Fresh Eye Arts

During the month of March in the Center Room, the Unity Art Team is hosting an exhibition of artists from Fresh Eye Arts, a fine arts program supporting artists with disabilities. Fresh Eye Arts is a service offered by Midwest Special Services (MSS), a day services provider serving the Twin Cities Metro area. The program provides the opportunity for artists to explore, learn, create, show, and sell their work. Fresh Eye artists are self-driven and supported in their professional development. The program provides artists with high quality materials and access to art facilities that include screen printing, ceramics, and more and is designed and supported by professional teaching artists. Before becoming Fresh Eye Arts, the program was simply known as MSS Creative Arts. MSS has been focused on the intersection of arts and disability since 1999. Artwork created by Fresh Eye artists has been sold nationally and internationally, and its artists have exhibited work at the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport, The Show Gallery Lowertown (St. Paul), GAMUT Gallery (Minneapolis), The Textile Center (Minneapolis), SHRINE gallery (NYC), COACHELLA (Indio, CA), Galerie C.O.A. (Montreal, QC) and many other spaces including our Fresh Eye Gallery in Minneapolis.



The featured artists ([fresheyearts.org/featured-artists](http://fresheyearts.org/featured-artists)) include Dan Stallsworth, Stacie Sampson, Danielle Day, Deja Day, CJ Weydert, Eddie Twait, Paul Macharia, Josh Selvig, and Kira Elasky. Please come meet the artists and learn more about the program at a reception in the Center Room on Friday, March 8, from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

## Lectio Divina

March 13 and 27 | 7:10 p.m.

Zoom: [bit.ly/Lectio2023-24](https://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](mailto:library@unityunitarian.org).

## Queer Theology

Tuesday, March 12 | 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. Open to adults of all genders and sexual orientations. Contact Mike Huber for access to the readings or if you have any questions: [mikehuberece@gmail.com](mailto:mikehuberece@gmail.com).

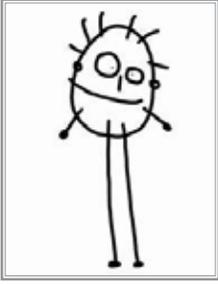
## Sangha Practice

Tuesdays | 4:30-6:00 p.m.

Ames Chapel

At the heart of Buddhist practice is the commitment to awaken — to step into our doubts and predicaments and hear the roaring of life at the still point of a turning universe. Through weekly practice of meditation, we discover a clarity of mind attentive and accountable to each moment of life’s flow, and touch the mystery of our original face. This group is open to anyone interested, no experience is necessary, and instructions will be provided. For more information, please contact Rev. KP Hong at [kp@unityunitarian.org](mailto:kp@unityunitarian.org).

# MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH



## Creative Types

**Drew Danielson, Coordinator of Youth and Campus Ministries**

Why does “you’re so creative” feel like a back handed compliment?

My daughter Harper has been called an artist since she was five, or younger. She has taught herself to draw and paint and write and sing. She is amazing, and I think she is in a very good place studying Art and Design at Iowa State.

But don’t call her talented. She resents when people call her talented because she feels it implies she was freakishly lucky to be granted these wonderful, magical gifts that come with being an artsy-pants eccentric with her head in the clouds. She senses a lack of appreciation for how hard she has applied herself, how many hours of trying things and practicing and perfecting she has always put into art work.

I admit I was taken aback when she first expressed this. I mean I want to claim she gets her artistic abilities from me, and I crave praise for my talents, but I get her point, that “creative types” are often seen as counter culture oddballs who aren’t logical or practical or dependable. They don’t work hard, they just have “it” and can turn it on whenever. But what is this “it?”

In February, Coming of Age focused on the question “How is the Sacred present in and felt by each of us?” We partly define the sacred as the things or activities or practices that keep us connected to higher power or that which is bigger than us. The youth commonly identify things they know where they feel “transported.” I hear it described as “being in the flow” – the sense of time is lost, they feel energy and purpose, mind and body are operating at peak levels, they are touching some well of inspiration that is way beyond the ordinary. It can be making or listening to music, writing, or running, playing a sport, dancing, being in deep discussion, or being intensely involved with other people. Whatever the venue or the medium, the key element of “flow” is that a unique power is coursing through you.

I’ve heard that power described as creativity, and that resonates. It can feel like magic but then that’s what Harper is leery of. Because she knows it isn’t pixie dust, it’s a skill. And like any skill, it comes with application and practice. When it all comes together it can be beautiful and inspired and magical, but it did take vision, and effort and work.

That tendency to identify ourselves and others as creative/not creative is counterproductive. We all have different talents and it makes sense that we encourage all of us to use them, apply ourselves. We do great things when we step into the flow together. It’s been a long if tepid winter, we’re all Covid hungover, we’ve been in interim status for so dang long, and we’ve lost so much.

I need to feel magic again, or pardon me, “flow” — all of us finding our creativity by plugging in to a vision. Let us all be “creative types” with our dreams in our heads and our hands busy.

## Childcare 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](https://unityunitarian.org/childcare-request-form.html). Katrina Nichols, Unity's Nursery Coordinator, will contact you to confirm the reservation.

# 2024 Chalice Camp

**Week 1: July 8-12**

**Week 2: July 15-19**

Chalice Camp at Unity Church is offered Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m., for children and youth ages 5-18 (youth in grades 7-12 serve as junior counselors and counselors).

Campers will explore the heritage and history of Unitarian Universalism through varied and engaging activities, everything from puppet shows to field games. Chalice camp offers children a safe, child-friendly environment to be exposed to topics such as racial inequality, gender, social class, and our identities while incorporating the fun and excitement of typical summer camp activities.

Registration and counselor applications: [unityunitarian.org/chalice-camp.html](https://unityunitarian.org/chalice-camp.html).



# MUSIC MINISTRY



## Music Notes

**Ahmed Anzaldúa, Director of Music Ministries**

As a musician, I've found that the best catalyst for my own creativity is coming in contact with other musicians. Listening to a live performance, collaborating on a project, or simply finding the time to chat with other folks in my line of work tends to reignite my excitement for what I do, and often sparks new ideas. In line with the month's theme,

Unity's Music Ministry will be hosting several wonderful musicians during the month of March. In addition to enjoying their artistry, I am looking forward to how these interactions might help shape our own musicians going forward.

World-renowned choral conductor Anthony Trecek-King will join us for a Wellspring Wednesday program the evening of March 13 (see page 12), open to everyone. He will be conducting the combined forces of Border CrosSing and the Minnesota Chorale in a concert program titled *In This Lan'* at Unity Church the evening of March 16. Dr. Trecek-King is the resident conductor of the Handel and Haydn Society in Boston and among his many accolades are a Pulitzer Prize (*Madame White Snake*, Zhou Long), a Grammy (*Fantastic Mr. Fox*, Boston Modern Orchestra Project), and the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award from the Presidential Committee on the Arts (Boston Children's Chorus).

On March 24, the week after Dr. Trecek-King's residency, we will be joined by South African choir 29:11 International Exchange, who will take part in the morning's worship services and work with Unity's choirs. 29:11 International Exchange's mission is to facilitate hope and reconciliation through music, cross-cultural collaboration, and individual artist development. This is 29:11's third year visiting Unity Church and, if their previous two visits are any indication, it will be a memorable and joyful experience.

The last week of March, Unity will host the Mädchenchor der Sing-Akademie zu Berlin, a wonderful German youth choir on an international tour. The Sing-Akademie zu Berlin, also known as the Berliner Singakademie, is a choral society founded in 1791, one of the oldest choral societies in the world. During their visit they will stay with Unity families, work with me and the choirs at Unity Church, present several concerts in the Twin Cities, and join Unity's Music Ministry for worship services on Easter Sunday, March 31.

Want to sing with a choir  
at Unity Church?

Visit  
[unityunitarian.org/music-ministry](http://unityunitarian.org/music-ministry)

Email  
[ahmed@unityunitarian.org](mailto:ahmed@unityunitarian.org)



*The Dream Maker*  
See page 19!

## In This Lan'

Saturday, March 16

7:30-8:45 p.m.

Unity Church—Unitarian

Reserve your seats: [bit.ly/inthislan](http://bit.ly/inthislan)



Join Border CrosSing for a Puentes/ Bridges "Reimagining the Choral Canon" concert in collaboration with the Minnesota Chorale, featuring guest conductor Dr. Anthony Trecek-King. This concert features works by Margaret Bonds, H. T. Burleigh, Stephen Feigenbaum, Stacey Gibbs, Moses Hogan, Joel Thompson, Dr. Trecek-King, and Trevor Weston.

Dr. Anthony Trecek-King is a highly acclaimed choral conductor, scholar, pedagogue, and media personality with a career spanning over 20 years. He is an active guest conductor and serves as a Resident Conductor (chorus) with the Handel and Haydn Society. Recognized for his ability to create moving performances that exhibit a surprising range of dynamics and depth of expression, Dr. Trecek-King excels at cultivating vocal and instrumental musicians at all levels. Through his collaborative rehearsal style, he bridges the gap between high art and humanity, captivating audiences while maintaining exceptional sonic quality.

Tickets are pay what you can: no one will ever be turned away from a Border CrosSing concert because of a lack of funds.

Unity Church–Unitarian presents the 35th Annual Youth Musical

# THE DREAM MAKER

Starring Unity's 6th, 7th, and 8th Graders

Music and Lyrics by Sandy Waterman

Written and Directed by Mary Blouin Auffert



Performances in the Sanctuary at Unity Church!

Thursday, March 7 | 7:00 PM

Friday, March 8 | 7:00 PM

Saturday, March 9 | 5:30 PM



2024

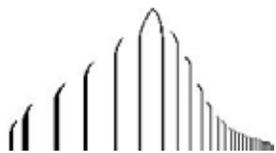
**Buy Tickets!**

In Parish Hall on Sundays  
and at the door

on the night of the show

\$5/child, \$10/adult, \$20/family





# UNITY CHURCH-UNITARIAN

Sanctuary Entrance: 733 Portland Avenue • Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104  
Business Entrance: 732 Holly Avenue • Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104  
651-228-1456 • fax: 651-228-0927 • [www.unityunitarian.org](http://www.unityunitarian.org) • [unity@unityunitarian.org](mailto:unity@unityunitarian.org)

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Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, Interim Senior Minister  
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**TIME SENSITIVE  
MATERIAL**

## 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 Church 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. The pilgrimage will end in Bucharest on August 13.

On Sunday, March 17, Unity's Partner Church Team will hold another information session from 10:15-11:15 a.m., in the Center Room and via Zoom ([bit.ly/partnerpilg24](https://bit.ly/partnerpilg24)). The session will cover travel and cost details. Pilgrims will be asked to make a down payment by the end of March and a final payment end of May. Come learn about the opportunities for spiritual growth on pilgrimage. Families and young adults, please consider joining us for this special opportunity. Questions? Email the Partner Church Team at [unitypartnerchurch@gmail.com](mailto:unitypartnerchurch@gmail.com).

## THE DREAM MAKER



The 35th Annual Youth Musical  
See page 19!