

Sin

A reflection from Karen Hering, Assistant Literary Minister

Each month worship, religious education, community outreach ministry, covenant groups, and Wellspring Wednesday programs will offer opportunities to contemplate, consider, contend with and discuss an intergenerational curriculum based on monthly themes. Our hope is that this approach will bind us more closely together and inform our lives in positive ways. March's theme is... Sin.

I have not counted them, but I have read that Mosaic Law as outlined in the Bible identifies 613 behaviors defining the difference between sinful and honorable living. It is easier to consider the more manageably numbered Ten Commandments or the even smaller number of the seven deadly sins named by Pope Gregory in the late sixth century.

But how do these numbered lists and definitions add up to an understanding of sin that is meaningful in our own times and in our own Unitarian Universalist faith?

Theologians today are less likely to take a numerical approach to sin and more likely to consider it from a wider view, as seen through one of many different lenses. There's the lens of brokenness, of missing the mark, of the absence of faith, of living a lie; the lens of self-centeredness, of alienation or of despair; the lens of violating creation or dominating others.

Each one of these offers its own wisdom about sin, but the more I think about the varieties of sin and the different ways to regard it or define it, I come back full circle to the Bible and the image so often linked to sin in the older and newer testaments – the image of the hardened heart. The hardened heart signifies those who will not heed the holy, who close their eyes and ears and hearts to God and also to their neighbor. The hardened heart represents a loss of perception, perhaps the most basic breakage of our connection to the world around us.

"They made their hearts as hard as flint," says a passage in Zechariah.

I do not need numbered lists of sins to understand the meaning of a hardened heart. A hardened heart, I know instinctively, is what makes it possible to turn away from one another and from the sacred; to pull into protected private worlds; to deny relationships and responsibility; to deny one's own deepest needs and longings, which are after all how the holy often speaks to us.

Many of the scriptural passages talk about hearts that are hardened to God, but in the Bible's covenantal understanding, no clear line is drawn between God and one's neighbor. Hardened hearts, then, refer equally to those that are calloused and closed to the love – and needs – of our neighbor, of our fellow living creatures and of the earth itself. As one contemporary theologian, Eleazar Fernandez, puts it, because we are social beings, all sin is destructive of others. He writes, "There is no separation from the Ground of Being (or the holy) without being separated from the neighbor."

Of course, removing the heart's armor can feel risky. Buddhist monk Pema Chodron notes that beneath this armor is the *bodhichitta*, a soft spot in the heart that is vulnerable and easily wounded. But that very vulnerability, she says, can be a link to all living beings. By touching the soft spot of our own sorrow, we open a doorway through which we can find and restore our connection to others.

Perhaps, then, March is a good time of year to consider sin and hardened hearts, because all around us the natural world is showing us that softening is possible. The solid ice of winter is melting away, the hardened ground grows moist and yielding once again, and the leathery branches of bushes and trees untie their tips for the tender buds soon to

emerge. Can we too follow suit? Can we leave the armor of our hardened hearts behind and, in the softened ground of right relationship, bring love to bud and bloom?

Worship Theme Resources

Books

Son of the Morning (1978) Joyce Carol Oates' fever of a novel tells the story of Nathan Vickery, a young man born with the gift of prophecy.

The Confessions (various) Augustine A demanding, towering classic of Christian literature that focuses on the sin of pride. It is well worth the effort.

Sin, Pride and Self-Acceptance (2003) Terry Cooper. A well-presented overview of both theological and psychological approaches to the concept of sin.

Films

Dead Man Walking is the story of the relationship between Sister Helen Prejan (Susan Sarandon) and Matthew Poncelet (Sean Penn), a man accused of rape and murder. Sister Helen asks Poncelet to come to terms with his sins or his truth in the eyes of God before the end of his life.

Based on the writing of Isak Dineson (Karen Blixen), **Babbette's Feast** is the story of a return from a life of sin, but not the kind of sin that is often imagined. UU theologian Jack Mendelsohn maintains that we are punished by our sins, not for them. Babbette's Feast asks us to show up for life.

Cider House Rules, John Irving's classic of 1985, became a film directed by Lasse Hallström. Orphan Homer Wells (Tobey Maguire) learns the truth about sin and sorrow and learns to find his own path through a complicated world.

Worship theme resources for families are on page 12.

JUST WORDS / WHEEL OF LIFE

Just Words



In 2002 a new play premiered off-Broadway. It was called *Crowns*. The play tells the story of the lives of six African-American women through the hats they wear to church. The play emerged from a book of photographs taken by North Carolina photographer, Michael Cunningham with text supplied by journalist, Craig Mayberry. When asked why African-American women sometimes wear flamboyant hats to church Mayberry replied, "I think it's rooted in the African tradition that says that when one presents oneself before God... that you should be at your best — that you should present excellence before the Almighty, and that tradition of adorning the head for worship is a very African tradition. "We saw and loved the Guthrie's production of *Crowns* in 2004.

I thought of *Crowns* on Inauguration Day. It was a holy moment. In a very real sense we were all presenting ourselves and yes we were presenting our Nation before the Almighty. When Aretha Franklin, the Queen Mother of Soul came out in the hush to echo Marian Anderson magnificent "My Country Tis of Thee," to offer her own blessing, the crown she wore — that great grey hat, its bejeweled bow bringing heavens blessing down — stood as a symbol of her royal lineage. Those who ridicule Aretha's crown are demonstrating either ignorance or outright racism.

These dynamics are not easy. What seems like ostentatious taste in hats can turn out to be a sign of deepest respect. A case in point: A colleague of ours, a minister who was raised in a poor and proud black family shed new light on an old conundrum; What to wear to church. Most Unitarian Universalists dress down for worship. The days of suits and ties or modest dresses are long gone. Jeans and flannel abound. Only the occasional throwback still dresses up for church.

What message are we sending to our guests? Most of us imagine we are saying something to the effect of, "you can relax here and be yourself. "But our colleague has a very different take on our informal dress code. "People who are poor," she says, "people who do the dirty work all week, only get to dress up nice on Sundays. They dress up out of respect for the church. They figuratively cover their heads before the Almighty. When they come into one of our churches I think they are put off by what they read as disrespect and even blasphemy. They don't want to be part of a church which doesn't take God seriously."

I'm not suggesting we should change the dress code (though I always wear a jacket and tie to church on Sundays). Our cultural realities govern our decisions in such matters. I'm simply trying to point out that our assumptions about how others experience our church may sometimes be way off the mark. I love our church. I love its ways. But isn't it fascinating to discover that now and again we communicate exactly the opposite of what we intend even here "in the land of the Pilgrims pride."

Blest by the struggle I remain...

Yours,

Rob Eller-Isaacs

The Wheel of Life

In Celebration

Wellington Louis Darst Rice

born February 12, 2009
son of Brooke and Mark Darst Rice

Frederick William Moore

born February 13, 2009
son of
Lisa and Peter Moore
grandson of Betsy and Jim Moore

Daylight Saving Time Begins

On Sunday, March 8, set your clocks forward one hour.

Receive this newsletter via e-mail

Send an e-mail to martha@unityunitarian.org and start saving trees and postage for the church.

commUNITY is the monthly newsletter of Unity Church—Unitarian. It is published monthly, except the month of July. Deadlines are the 14th of each month. Subscriptions are free to those who make pledges to Unity Church and are available to others for \$30 per year.

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MARCH SUNDAY WORSHIP INFORMATION

Sunday services are held at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. except where noted.

Sermon podcasts and archives are available on line at www.unityunitarian.org.

March Worship Calendar

March 1

***The Words We Dimly Hear* — Vail Weller**

What are the ideas which guide the living of your life? What are the blessings and assurances that echo in the liminal spaces between slumber and awakening?

March 8

***Visiting Sin* — Leon Dunkley**

Engaging the concept of sin can be a challenge. Confronting the possibility that sin might engage us can be even more challenging. The traces that we leave on the wind, the footprints we leave in the sand... Evidence of our having lived... sometimes wastefully. Join Leon and Worship Associate Sue Babcock for an exploration of this idea.

March 15

***A Brief History of Sin* — Rob Eller-Isaacs**

From Augustine to Aquinas, from Freud to Matthew Fox, understandings of the nature of sin have shifted and evolved. Though we have rejected the concept of original sin and though many of us have distanced ourselves from shame-based theologies, we can't ignore the fact that they exist. Rob and Worship Associate Craig Allen will attempt to bring us up to date.

March 22

***I know it when I see it* — Karen Hering**

Despite history's best efforts at creating commandments and rules of all sorts and sizes, sin can be hard to pin down in specifics. Karen and Worship Associate Chico Hathaway will explore what these ambiguities mean for our ability to wrestle honestly with the definition of sin – and to address it in the world and in ourselves.

March 29

Sin in Unitarian Universalist Style

— Janne Eller-Isaacs

What is sin in a liberal and progressive faith? Janne will examine how sin has been viewed in Unitarian Universalism and what might be sins in today's church. Janne will be joined Worship Associate Ann Kirby-McGill and by Balazs Scholar Endre Nagy who will explore sin in the Transylvanian church.

Sunday Offering Recipients

Each Sunday, seventy percent of the offering collection is given to non-profit agencies within the larger community. The remaining thirty percent supports the Community Outreach Ministry at Unity Church. Nomination forms are available online at www.unityunitarian.org/generosityministry

March 1 — Unity Singers

Unity Singers has received the distinct honor of performing at the 50th Anniversary of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) 2009 National Convention in Oklahoma City. Unity Singers accepted this honor and challenge knowing the opportunity it gave us to represent the ideals of our lives through our music. We will sing a 25-minute program twice on Thursday, March 5, for approximately 4,000 people. The work is intense and the challenge great to prepare for such a grand experience. Our Singers are up to all of it and stretch continually in all of their work and life commitments in order to accomplish this. Please join us Sunday, March 1, from 1:00-1:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary at Unity Church and enjoy the concert that 4,000 will see in Oklahoma City!

March 8 — Mental Health Association of Minnesota

The Mental Health Association of Minnesota (MHAM) was the state's first mental health advocacy and education organization, incorporated in 1939. MHAM's mission is to enhance mental health, promote individual empowerment and increase access to treatment and service for and with persons with mental illnesses. In addition, MHAM represents people with mental illness at the state legislature. Unity Church member Hal Freshley has served on the board of MHAM.

March 15 — Unity Church Tower Club

Tower Club, Unity Church's High School Youth Group, has committed to participating in "A Night on The Street," a fundraiser for Plymouth Neighborhood Foundation (PNF) in Minneapolis. The event raises youth's awareness about homelessness and raises funds to build a new housing and services complex for youth transitioning from homelessness or aging out of foster care. Tower Club youth will participate in an event sponsored by PNF. They will spend a night in cardboard boxes, learning firsthand about basic struggles facing people who are homeless.

March 22 — Tubman

Tubman is a nonprofit organization that helps women, children and families struggling with relationship violence, substance abuse and mental health. Throughout the Twin Cities, Tubman provides safe shelter, legal advocacy, therapy, and long-term support, guiding individuals and families on the journey from chaos and fear to healing and restoration. Unity Church member Barbara Cederberg has served on the Tubman board of directors for five years.

March 29 — Balazs Scholar Program

This offering will go to the Unity Church Partner Church Team for a donation to the Balazs Scholar Program at Star King School for the Ministry. The 2008-2009 Balazs Scholar is Endre Nagy who will participate in the March 29 Sunday service with Unity Church ministers. This donation to the scholar program is in lieu of an honorarium for Endre Nagy and to also fund church support for our partner village of Homorodszentpeter in Transylvania, Romania. In addition to this educational support, part of this offering will be used for funding future villager visits to St. Paul.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES / CHURCH AND PSD ANNOUNCEMENTS

A Reflection on *Sin*

from Neely Crane-Smith, Trustee

As a born-and-bred Unitarian Universalist, I'm not too comfortable with the concept of sin - that is, the capital-S "Sin" that reeks of hellfire and damnation and lot of other things that I don't believe in. I've read about it in books and heard about it on television and in movies, but what does that have to do with my own spiritual journey - or the spiritual journey of Unity Church? What can Sin teach us? I believe it begins with looking at Sin as a transitory stage, a temporary place which we move through on our journey to wholeness and joy. Sin needn't be a stain, but a space to examine ourselves and open to deep spiritual healing.

Our Ends Statements ask us to look to the future and dream big in three realms of human interaction - Within, Among and Beyond. As I cautiously approach this month's worship theme, it occurs to me that Sin can be similarly separated. There are Sins Within, the times that we do not treat ourselves with the respect and love that we deserve. There are Sins Among, the pain we bring to those closest to us through anger, ignorance, misunderstanding. And there are Sins Beyond, those that we perpetrate that ripple throughout the entire world. There are Sins that help us grow and there are Sins that scar us forever.

I believe ours is a saving faith, a faith that (as Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed preached right here at Unity) drags the last sinner kicking and screaming into heaven. Examining Sin Within, Among and Beyond creates a space for forgiveness, for understanding, for compassion - a place to drag the sinner within us, fighting all the way, to the light.

Seeking Worship Associates

Do you enjoy thinking about and discussing matters related to the life of this church and the larger community? Do you enjoy exploring world literature that connects with our worship themes? Are you interested in collaborating with other members of the worship team in helping to shape our worship services? If you find yourself nodding in assent, you may wish to apply for this wonderful opportunity.

The Worship Associate program at Unity Church has openings for the coming church year. This program offers a singular chance to have a voice, both literally and figuratively, in the most visible, public element of church life — the worship service. We are seeking individuals who take pleasure in sharing their clear speaking voice and strong presence with others. No less important is the willingness to commit to attending two half-day and one full-day planning session per year in addition to intermittent meetings with the ministerial team. This is a two-year commitment.

Please Note: The first retreat you will be required to attend will take place on April 11, from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Look for the Worship Associate Table in the Hall between services on upcoming Sundays for more information.

Support Group for Caregivers

Caring for a loved one who is seriously ill, disabled, or in emotional distress can be a rich and rewarding privilege. It can also be physically and emotionally exhausting. Who cares for the caregivers who undertake this noble, often confusing, task? How do caregivers navigate the difficult terrain of well-meaning family and friends when tensions are high and energy is low? How do they ask for or decline help?

We want Unity to be a place of "exhalation" for overwhelmed caregivers who would benefit from a safe, quiet place where they can be listened to with love and compassion (and without judgment or shame)—a place where they can replenish themselves and get help to develop strategies for dealing with the day-to-day challenges they face.

If you are interested in attending such a caregivers' support group, please e-mail Cynthia Orange (cynthiaorange@mac.com) or Janne Eller-Isaacs (janne@unityunitarian.org) and indicate what days and times would work best for you (Tuesday-Friday mornings or afternoons; Tuesday-Thursday evenings; or Saturday mornings or afternoons) and what times would not work for you at all.

Save the Date!

Sunday, April 26, 2009, for the Ordination Ceremony of Cary Eustis to Unitarian Universalist Ministry. The Unity Church congregation voted to ordain Cary at the Annual Meeting in November. Come join in affirming our congregational focus on ministry to the larger community.

2009 Prairie Star District Conference

April 3-5, 2009 • Duluth, Minnesota

During the conference, we will explore our stewardship of the environment (and all of our resources!), hear from candidates for the Presidency of the UUA, and enjoy great fellowship with other Unitarian Universalists. All information is available at <http://www.psdoua.org>. Early registration ends March 6!



Living the Seventh Principle

THE GATHERING / HALLMAN MINISTERIAL INTERN

The Gathering Was a Hit

from Becca Pournoor and Ann Hite

Over 120 Unity women and visitors attended The Gathering, a one day, in house retreat that was a first step in making connections, creating community, and planting a seed for future women's programming at Unity. Ruth Mackenzie opened the day with the voices of Unitarian women, song, and history. Twelve workshops were offered that ranged from delving into spiritual practice, writing one's bucket list, journal writing, sexuality, and drumming.



Women connected over a delicious lunch prepared by Sara Langworthy, mailboxes were provided for sharing notes, massage and spiritual direction were available, and the Women's Drum Center and registrants rocked us to a final closing. Women commented that the retreat "...was fabulous! Leaders were strong,



...and everyone's voice contributed. "One woman said that she "met new people and had deep conversations." Another was happy for the chance to meet "people in an environment where they were truly open to making new connections." And finally, what was often stated with lots of exclamation points was that the retreat "WAS GREAT!!!"

The retreat committee has met to debrief and discuss the best ways to involve the larger community of Unity women in creating a variety of options for us to stay connected before the second annual Gathering. So, The Gathering committee invites all Unity women interested in women's programming to a meeting on Sunday, March 8, from 3:00-4:30 p.m. in the Robbins Parlor. Please contact Christy Randall by March 1 to request childcare. If you have questions contact Becca Pournoor at bpournoor@msn.com or Ann Hite at amh1960@gmail.com.



An Intern's Public Journal Entry Six • From Leon Dunkley

- 1 oz unsweetened chocolate
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 dash vanilla
- 1 dash ground cinnamon
- 1 pinch salt
- 3 cups milk

Carefully melt the chocolate over very low heat, or in the top of a double boiler over simmering water. Add the spices and the milk and stir to mix well. Heat until very hot but not boiling. Serve with dollop of whipped cream or float some marshmallows on top.

And there you have it — Chocolate Sin. This is a recipe for dessert.

I don't like chocolate. My mother disowns me when I say that. "You are not my son," she says... as if she loved chocolate. It's a family joke. After all of these years, it's still funny.

I don't like chocolate but neither of us like sin. Sin seems like such a bummer but what *is* sin, really? I am in the habit of believing that I don't know what it is. I am comfortable in my habit. I am secure. In Christian theology, a sin is the condition of being denied God's grace. Sin is when God turns His back on you ("His back," as if the ineffable has a gender... and a torso). This is just a language game. I play it because I am uncomfortable with the idea of sin. It scares me. I play the language game because I cannot accept the tragedy of sin. The turning away of God... Like a good UU, I don't really believe that God can turn away from us. I *do* believe, however, that we turn away from God. We can close ourselves off from the Holy. Maybe that is the sin. Were I (or any of us) to close off from the Holy, wouldn't this be sin?

- 1 oz unsweetened loneliness
- 1/4 cup God's denial
- 1 dash of arrogance
- 1 pinch bitterness to taste
- 3 cups guilt

Sin is a recipe for disaster.

Reverend Jack Mendelsohn maintains that we are punished *by* our sins and not simply *for* them. Sin is a bummer... and even worse, it's a waste of good chocolate.

COMMUNITY / FELLOWSHIP / LEARNING

Wellspring Wednesdays

Cost for Wellspring Wednesday dinner: \$6/adult, \$4/child ages 5-12, \$2/child ages 2-4, \$18(max)/family

March 4

dinner: sweet potato soup, fruit, cookies

- Report on the 1st International Convocation of UU Women
- *Unnatural Causes* ~ A documentary on health-care
- Collaging as a Spiritual Practice
- Welcome to Unity ~ Our Class for Newcomers
- Dream Interpretation, Part 2 of 4
- Teens Serve It Up with Action!

March 11

Dinner will be served in celebration of the lives of Ben Toole, Randall Toole and Margarete and Dietrich Stammeier through the generosity of Byron and Johanna Toole. The menu includes: lasagne, caesar salad, garlic bread, and banana pudding.

- Melvin Carter: Ward 1, Council Member: Local Opportunities Around the Central Corridor
- Dream Interpretation, Part 3 of 4
- Singing Meditation
- Mano a Mano Ministry Team
- Teens Serve It Up! Bakin' in the Kitchen

March 18

dinner: pizza, salad, dessert

- *The True Story of a WWII Undercover Teenager*
- Dream Interpretation, Part 4 of 4
- Rise Up Singing
- Mother/Daughter Book Group
- Teens Serve It Up with Action!

March 25

dinner: meatloaf or lentil loaf, mashed potatoes, green salad, chocolate cake

- Philanthropic Travel: Service Vacations and Global Volunteering
- Transylvanian Guests: Endre Nagy and Eva Patko
- Film and the Impossible Soul
- Teens Serve It Up! Bakin' in the Kitchen

Interweave Takes a New Direction

Two years ago in the spring, Unity Church voted to become an officially Welcoming Congregation to the LGBTQ community. Following that successful effort, a group of Unity members decided to revive Interweave, a Unitarian based outreach ministry organization that works to end oppression based on sexual orientation and gender identity as well as connecting Queer individuals, communities and their allies. This year, our work has focused on educating the larger community. We hosted a PFLAG panel and a showing of "For the Bible Tells Me So," which was co-sponsored by OutFront Minnesota, a prominent organization working to advocate for and promote LGBTQ rights in Minnesota.

Interweave's work is turning a corner this spring as we join up with a Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance (MUUSJA) sponsored group, UU's Out For Marriage (UO4M), which is organizing to support a statewide campaign to achieve marriage equality in Minnesota. UO4M has had two meetings to discuss effective strategies for UU involvement in this issue. At this stage meetings are being held on the first Monday of each month at Unity. All are welcome to attend. Read "This Week at Unity" on Sundays in your Order of Service for reminders of these meetings. The next meeting will be on Monday March 2, from 7:00-9:00 p.m. in the Foote Room.

Interweave's next course of action, on behalf of UO4M, will be to mobilize our community to attend OutFront's Just Fair Lobby Day on Thursday, April 23. Knowing there were a significant number of people from Unity who attended last year, we hope to increase that number this year, especially as it will be the official kick-off to the marriage rights campaign. Numbers will be crucial to sending a strong message.

Members of Interweave will be in the Parish Hall once a month to share updates and opportunities for becoming involved in this and other actions. Stop by to say "hello" and find out how you can get involved.

Committed Couples Class

This class is designed to support the work of nurturing our most intimate relationships. We will share in large groups, with our partners, in small group exercises and in individual work. Topics to be covered are: childhood wounding and its effect on relationships, how we manage conflict, the ways we avoid intimacy, the gift of sexuality, and bringing the romance back.

Led by Janne and Rob Eller-Isaacs, the Committed Couples Class will be held Tuesdays, March 31 through May 12 from 7:00 to 9:15 p.m. Registration is free/\$100 [pledging/non-pledging]. To register, please contact Julie Handberg at the Church Office.

Contact Christy Randall at the Church Office by Sunday, March 22, to request childcare.

Unity Men's Group

The Unity Men's Group meetings will now be held on Monday nights at 7:00 p.m. The following is the schedule for the next six months. All interested men are welcome to attend for an evening of discussion and sharing. Meetings typically last until 8:30 p.m. If you have any questions, please contact John Hubbling at 651-231-6443.

March 16: Competition: the male Achilles heel. Led by Leon Dunkley.

April 20: What does it mean to be a male in the UU Church? Led by Nels Otto.

May 18: Stereotyping men. Led by John Hubbling.

June 15: Getting balance in life. Led by Leon Dunkley.

July 20: Making connections with other men. Led by John Hubbling.

COMMUNITY / FELLOWSHIP / LEARNING



Second Saturday Pancake Breakfast

March 14 • 8:30 – 10:00 a.m.

You'll enjoy local sausage, OJ, all you can eat pancakes, and lots of lingering and good conversation. **Bring a friend!** Cost: \$3 per person or \$10 per family.

Winter Soldiers of the War on Terror

Saturday, March 14 • Following the pancake breakfast

A million civilians have died in the Iraq War. Four million are refugees. What is it like for our soldiers over there on this 6th anniversary? Last March, 72 veterans, active duty soldiers, experts, and Iraqis who had the great courage to go public with their first-hand experiences gathered for the Winter Soldier hearings in Washington, D.C., and gave 30 hours of vetted testimony. Michael and Cynthia Orange served as witnesses. Come, hear their heart- and gut-wrenching testimony and discuss what it means for us, the 99% of the population not asked to serve over and over again in our country's wars.

Cynthia is a freelance writer, creative writing teacher at the Loft in Minneapolis, and has written and coauthored four books. Michael is an environmental consultant and he teaches classes on the Vietnam War. He served with the 1st Marines in Vietnam ('69-'70) and authored, Fire in the Hole: A Mortarman in Vietnam. They have been married since 1973, members of Unity Church since 1990-something, and live in St. Paul.

What's New at Unity Libraries?

Geneste M. Anderson Adult Library • Bookstall
Elizabeth M. Whitman Children's Library • Bookmobile

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and women are created equal.— Elizabeth Cady Stanton

No, the attribution is not a mistake; the quote takes on a whole new meaning coming from 19th century women's movement architect Elizabeth Cady Stanton, doesn't it? Women's History Month in March was created to honor and remember the contributions of women. In Unity Libraries:

- *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: A Radical for Women's Rights* by Lois W. Banner
- *The Woman's Bible: A Classic Feminist Perspective* by Elizabeth Cady Stanton
- *Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride* by Pam Munoz (Children – Biography)

Speaking of March, the soothsayer warned Julius Caesar, "Beware the Ides of March," and we all know how that turned out. But did you know that "Ides" simply means the middle of the month? In ancient, polytheistic Rome, the Ides of March was a festival day, celebrating the god Mars, son of Jupiter and Juno.

If you are interested in reading about pagan roots, check out the newly acquired, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America* by Margot Adler, in the Anderson Library.

Photo: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and daughter, 1856, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division



Book Club Update • Everyone is welcome!

The **Second Tuesday Book Club** will meet from 7:00-8:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 10. The book they will be discussing is *The Thirteenth Tale* by Diane Setterfield. Each book has a "sponsor" who begins the meeting by presenting a bit about the author and the book. Book for discussion on April 14: *The Latecomer* by Kao Kalia Yang.

Writing and Reading as Spiritual Practice

Open Page:
reflecting with pens in hand

Sunday, March 8 • 2:00–4:00 p.m.

Reflection Topic: *Redemption*

The poet William Stafford once said of his poems, "I have woven a parachute of everything broken." On Sunday afternoon, Assistant Literary Minister Karen Hering will lead a guided writing session exploring the many different parachutes that save us. A reflection on the topic of *redemption* (the church's upcoming monthly theme for April), this is not a writing skills workshop but an opportunity to correspond with "the still, small voice within." No writing experience required; only an empty page and an open heart and mind.

Lectio Divina:
a practice of spiritual reading

Sunday, March 15 • 11:00 a.m.–noon

*It is difficult
to get the news from poems
yet men die miserably every day
for lack
of what is found there.*

— William Carlos Williams

Dietrich Bonhoeffer called it "spiritual reading." Other Christians following a sixth century Benedictan practice call it "*lectio divina*," or holy reading. Both names describe a reflective practice of meditating on the written word and listening for "what is found there" that each reader most needs in a given moment.

Assistant Literary Minister Karen Hering will introduce the practice of *lectio divina* this month using poems and readings focused on the March theme of *sin*.

For more information, contact Karen Hering at the Church Office.

ANTI-RACISM LEADERSHIP TEAM

Understanding and Dismantling Racism

"... unless we are willing to do the hardest work, that of knowing ourselves, we are at great spiritual risk as we approach the reality of race and class, and the making of justice in our world. ..."

— Rev. William Sinkford, UUA President, November 2001

Unity Church is on a journey toward becoming an actively anti-racist institution, what the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) calls the "Journey Toward Wholeness." The recently adopted 2009-2013 Ends Statements include a commitment to becoming a visible leader/partner in the work of anti-racism and racial healing — within, among, and beyond the Unity community.

To further this transformational journey, Unity Church is sponsoring a 2-1/2 day workshop designed to

- provide an in-depth understanding of systemic racism
- explore individual, institutional and cultural expressions of racism
- identify the effects of racism on everyone
- further develop the foundation for an anti-racist institutional transformation at Unity Church

When

March 13-15, 2009

Friday, March 13 • 6:00 p.m. check in/registration; 6:30–9:00 p.m.

Saturday, March 14 • 8:30 a.m.–6:00 p.m.

Sunday, March 15 • 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Because of the sequential nature of the presentations, full-time attendance is expected from all participants.

Where

Jeremiah Program (Life Skills classroom)

932 Concordia Avenue • St. Paul, MN 55104

Cost

No cost to pledging members of Unity Church, free will donation accepted

\$50 to non-pledging members or friends of Unity Church

Scholarships available if cost is a barrier

Food

Morning and afternoon snacks will be provided. People are on their own for lunch.

Registration

To register, contact Song Thao at the Church Office, 651-228-1456 or song@unityunitarian.org. Space is limited to 30 people. Register early.

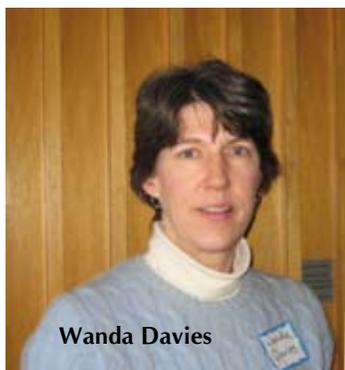
Questions

Contact Pauline Eichten at 651-312-0228 or peichten@pclink.com.

Workshop Leaders

The workshop will be jointly led by trainers from MCARI and the UUA. MCARI (Minnesota Collaborative Anti-Racism Initiative) has been our training partner since 2002.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS / PATHWAY TO MEMBERSHIP



Wanda Davies



Lisa Stuehringer



Tom Marron



Jenna and Luke
Stevens-Royer



Robin Moede



Jane Miller



Dave Hage and Therese Sexe



Meg Leach



Alice Vega



Larry Shelley
and Julie Jensen



Suzanne Schons



Nancy Garrett and
Kevin Leuthold



Mary Kay Watson
and Debbie Wygal

Welcome to Unity:

Our Class for Newcomers

This class is geared to newcomers, visitors, and those seeking to learn more about Unitarian Universalists and Unity Church. *Welcome to Unity* covers the mission and vision of the church as well as the basics of historical and contemporary Unitarian Universalism. *Welcome to Unity* is the first step for all those seeking to learn more about our faith.

Welcome to Unity Schedule:

Wednesday, March 4
7:10 – 8:30 p.m.

Sunday, April 19
12:30 – 2:00 p.m.
Includes light lunch

Wednesday, May 6
7:10 – 8:30 p.m.

Finding Yourself at Unity:

A Deeper Exploration of Who We Are

Finding Yourself at Unity includes Unitarian Universalist and Unity Church history (including a tour of the church), opportunities to share parts of your religious journey, discussion of the expectations and benefits of membership, and a chance to meet and be in conversation with the Ministers, Director of Religious Education and others.

Finding Yourself at Unity Schedule:

Saturday, April 25
9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Includes a potluck lunch

Committing to Unity:

Joining Our Faith Community

Committing to Unity is designed for those who are ready to make the membership commitment. This class explores the deeper meanings and expectations of membership and shared ministry.

Committing to Unity Schedule:

Tuesday, March 24
6:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Saturday, May 16
9:30 a.m. – noon

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY



Easter Blooming Plant Sale

This year Easter is on April 12. For our Partner Church in Transylvania this is an important liturgical celebration day, a Holy Day, where communion is celebrated by the congregation. Our partners in Transylvania are Unitarians; they and their ancestors for over 400 years have been Unitarians. Our Partners are also Christians. In Transylvania, Unitarianism is a way of being Christian that includes having a Catechism (if you are interested in seeing the Catechism of the Hungarian Unitarian Church in Transylvanian Romania, it is in English at: www.unitarius.hu/english/catechism.html).

For our Partner Church, their faith is what may be called a "received faith," one into which they were born; one which is given them with all the richness of its heritage and the knowledge that their forebears relied on this faith for sustenance throughout the travails of history. For this faith some of their ancestors died. Even now, the Romanian government takes steps to diminish support for Unitarianism and increase support for other faiths.

This year the Unity Partner Church Team continues its work in building on our relationships, as we hope to raise the funds to bring two couples from the village. Gyongyi and Denes Gergely and Balazs and Ida Mate will be visiting in November, 2009. See their pictures on the newsboard at the Partner Church table.

To help in this effort, the Partner Church Team will be holding a blooming plant sale from March 8 until March 29. Look for the Partner Church table in the Parish Hall or in the cloister to place your order. You will be able to pick up your plants at church on Palm Sunday (April 5) so that you will have them in your homes on Easter.

Restorative Justice Team Hosts "Getting Around Kit" Drive

We all know it's hard to get a new start in a down economy. Now, imagine yourself as someone just getting released from a correctional facility with a felony on your record. How do you find a job or get housing when so many others are looking for the same thing? Those who have searched for employment or housing after release from a correctional facility attest that it can be done, but it takes an honest desire to change one's life, a lot of hard work and a little help.

This month, the Unity Restorative Justice Team is doing their part to help ex-offenders get a new start by raising donations for "Getting Around Kits." Amicus, a local nonprofit partner of Unity which works with offenders, ex-offenders and juveniles in the criminal justice system, has found that one of the biggest challenges for those being released from a correctional facility is their lack of affordable transportation. Searches for jobs, housing and other basic needs often mean miles of walking or riding the bus if one can afford the transit fare. Through the "Getting Around Kits" Unity members will be asked to help provide hats, gloves, shoes and other necessities as well as assisting in providing that vital tool for new starts – a bus pass.

Every Sunday in March, Restorative Justice Team Members will be at a table in the Parish Hall seeking donations which will go toward purchase of various transit options, ranging from single ride tokens to monthly transit passes and "Go-To" cards. Those donating in this way will have an opportunity to include a supportive message, letting the ex-offender know that the bus pass came from someone who supports their efforts to make a new start and wants them to succeed. Good condition in-kind items for traveling outdoors such as gloves and hats will also be accepted.



Please stop by the table, learn a little more about the transportation challenges faced by ex-offenders and consider donating. For more information, please contact Steve Nelson at 651-788-6573.

FROM THE GREEN SANCTUARY/
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE MINISTRY TEAM

Whole Farm Orders



Buy meat, cheese, produce and much more from local, sustainable farms and pick it up right at Unity Church from Whole Farm Cooperative. For this month's pickup, place an order at wholefarmcoop.com or 320-732-3023 by Wednesday, March 11.

Orders will be delivered to Unity Church on Wednesday, March 18. Pay by sending a check, with the invoice enclosed with your order, to Whole Farm.

Evergreen Foodshelf

The third Sunday of every month is Evergreen Food Drive Sunday. March 15 items are peanut butter, jam, and jelly — but all non-perishable food and household items are welcome and needed!

Donations can be brought anytime and left in the barrels located at both the Holly and Portland Avenue entrances. All food is taken to Sharing Korner Food Shelf.



Thank you!

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY



Philanthropic Tourism

Wednesday, March 25 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Philanthropic Tourism is what the *New York Times* calls the new trend toward service or volunteer vacations, in which travelers combine traditional sightseeing or adventure with service activities such as teaching, building, providing medical services and more.

Unity Church member Laney Ohmans who recently returned from teaching English at a tribal girls school that Vivek and Vidyulatta Pandit founded through the UUA Holdeen India Program in rural Maharashtra, India, will describe the work she did during her "summer vacation." She'll be joined by a panel of travelers, each of whom has a different tale of philanthropic tourism to tell. Resources and information from local and national service vacation organizations will be available.

Healthy Communities Action

Do we believe that all people have a right to health care? • Does the church have anything to say about whether people should have rewarding jobs and livable wages? • Does caring for our neighbor involve ensuring that all people have efficient public transportation for work and daily life?

Join members of Morningstar Baptist and UNITY Baptist, St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran and Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, House of Hope Presbyterian and Dayton Avenue Presbyterian, and Unity Church–Unitarian for a conversation with:

Matt Entenza ~ Candidate for governor of Minnesota– and –

Erin Murphy ~ Minnesota House of Representatives

During this conversation we will

- review core values of our faith traditions
- share stories related to these themes
- hear from state leaders about their priorities and concerns
- explore how state leaders can work more effectively with churches in community to create a healthier Minnesota!

Monday, March 16 • 7:00 p.m.

St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church • 100 North Oxford Street, St. Paul

This "Healthy Communities Action" is co-sponsored by ISAIAH.

Compost Bin and Rain Barrel



SALE!

Compost Bin
Sale \$47
Reg. \$79

Save GREEN
Go GREEN!

For more info & to order go to:
www.recycleminnesota.com

Pick up your pre-ordered bin at the
Living Green Expo
State Fair Grounds, May 2-3

Rain Barrel
Sale \$65
Reg. \$115

Order Deadline
March 27th



Reach Out to the Center for Victims of Torture



"2009 CVT Sneakernet Campaign"

How many old flash drives do you have in your desk drawer? Want to put them to good use? CVT has program offices in West Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo and supports the work of international torture treatment centers run by partner organizations. These organizations don't have computer networks and rely on flash drives to transfer information from site to site; they could use many more.

Please donate any extra flash drives you have lying around. Delete as much data as you can and then CVT volunteers will do an additional scrub to get rid of any possible residual data or software and reformat the drives. Please bring the flash drives to Pat Haff's office at Unity Church. If you have any questions, contact Samir Nassar at samir.nassar@gmail.com.

Wanted!

Volunteer Receptionist at the St. Paul Healing Center

CVT needs volunteer receptionists to keep the door open a few evenings each week. If you have an hour or so to give every few weeks, please contact CVT's Director of Volunteers, Beth Wickum, at atbwickum@cvt.org.

For more information about the Center for Victims of Torture, please visit their website www.cvt.org. To learn about the special partnership that exists between Unity Church and CVT contact Pat Haff at the Church Office.

www.cvt.org



Parents' Night Out

Friday, March 20 • 6:00–8:00 p.m.

Unity's Ministry with Children and Youth is sponsoring a Parent's Night Out on Friday, March 20, from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. Free childcare will be provided by nursery staff for children ages 6 months to 12 years. Parents are required to spend time with other adults from Unity Church. Children should eat dinner before arriving. Snacks will be provided. Today is the deadline to register. Contact Christy at the Church Office.

High School Book Sale March 21-22

Unitarians read the most amazing books... And then they donate them to the Unity High School Book Sale! Donations will be accepted until Friday, March 20. Proceeds support Youth Ministries including the annual pilgrimage to Boston.

As in years past, members of Unity Church are welcome to join us for a Midnight Madness sneak preview at midnight, March 20-21: buy your books before the booksellers and the public snatch them up (we can't guarantee flawless organization at that point, but it sure is fun!).

Booksale hours are:

Saturday, March 21
8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Sunday, March 22
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Fill a grocery bag for \$5 during the final hour of the sale!

R.E. Dates for your Family's Calendar

Friday, March 13: COA Mentor and Youth Potluck

Sunday, March 22: Story Sunday, New Workshop Rotation Cycle: Endings

Sunday, March 29: No R.E., Spring Break

UU Kids and the Concept of Sin

Chances are good that the word 'sin' has actually never crossed your lips in conversation with a child. Chances are fair that if a UU kid asked a UU adult what sin is, they'd get an evasive answer that alluded to sin's relativistic non-existence. Chances are excellent, though, that our UU children will encounter the idea of sin in their world. Surely it's better to offer them our own possible definition from a liberal religious point of view than to leave them wondering about a word wielded with such convincing authority in our culture.

Here are some definitions from religious teachers that you might try out – first with yourself, then with the children in your life:

Try this with elementary school-aged kids:

"Sin is its own punishment." — Saint Augustine

Our Universalist heritage leads us to doubt that a loving God would punish us for our shortcomings. Still, we know that certain acts have negative consequences in this life; often, these consequences are more immediate and more impressive than any punishment we can devise as parents. How do feelings or actions like rage, envy, dishonesty, violence, and greed cause us to suffer? Do our 'small sins' hurt us less than our big ones? Should we only avoid these sins for our own sakes?

Try this with young teens:

Sin is missing the mark.

The Greek word for 'sin' as used in the New Testament is *hamartia*, which translates as 'missing the target'. Kids understand how it feels to miss a basket or make an error on a test: expand this concept to the art of being human. In any situation, could your child have done a better job of being kind, honest or generous? As a parent, what targets are you setting for your child?

Try these definitions of sin with adolescents:

1. Wealth without work
2. Pleasure without conscience
3. Science without humanity
4. Knowledge without character
5. Politics without principle
6. Commerce without morality
7. Worship without sacrifice - Ghandi

These sins are social in nature and far more subtle than "Thou shalt not kill." What is a sin of omission? Does Ghandi's list imply that wealth *with* work is not sinful? How will we know these sins when we see them? What reason do we have to avoid committing these sins ourselves?

Of course, given a working definition of sin, any child (or adult!) will be quicker to point out the speck in another's eye sooner than the log in our own. Still, we can encourage our children to discern between acts that turn us toward love and acts that turn us away from love, recognizing them first in our world and then in ourselves.

Books for kids:

Seven Lonely Places, Seven Warm Places: The Vices and Virtues for Children by April Bolton (Author), Brent Beck (Illustrator). A new approach to the deadly sins, one that illuminates both the consequences of sin and a more cheerful alternate path.

Maybe Right, Maybe Wrong: A Guide for Young Thinkers by Dan Barker (Author), Brian Strassburg (Illustrator) A humanist approach to morality for kids. A UU staple on parents' bookshelves.

Cain and Abel: Finding the Fruits of Peace by Sandra Eisenberg Sasso. A retelling of the Old Testament story of the first act of violence and its consequences.

Unity Chalice Camp 2009

A 5-day summer
day camp for
Unity Church
children in
grades 1-6

Explore Unitarian Universalist
identity and history through games,
stories, plays, songs and crafts!
Ample indoor and outdoor activities!
New friendships! Great memories!



- 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., daily
- Staffed by Unity High School Senior Counselors and Unity Junior Counselors
- \$200 early-bird tuition for entire week, some scholarship aid available
- Registration forms online at www.unityunitarian.org

Monday - Friday, August 10-14, 2009

Registration and deposit due by May 17, 2009 to receive early-bird discount.
Tuition is \$250 after May 17.

Hannah Eller-Isaacs, Director, Kerri Meyer, Staff Liaison

High School Youth! — apply for paid counselor positions online!

Junior High Youth! — apply for junior counselor positions online!



MUSIC MINISTRY

In the Language of Beauty

An Exploration of Theology, Spirituality, and the Arts

Through this five-week series, we open ourselves to the creative arts — painting, music, writing, story-making, dance, theater — and meet beauty. Ruth MacKenzie will guide participants through an exploration of art forms, meditation, and the experience of creating an art piece within that discipline to reveal the holy within it.

Presenter:

Ruth MacKenzie is an accomplished artist, writer, performer, and producer. She has been featured on Garrison Keillor's *Prairie Home Companion*, with Peter Ostroushko's *Heartland Band* and at numerous productions locally and nationally. Ruth has taught extensively in the Arts, and is now completing her Master of Arts in Religious Leadership and is Artist-in-Residence at Unity Church.

When:

Tuesdays, March 3, 10, 17, 24 • 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. (final session scheduled around class-selected performance)

Where:

Wisdom Ways Center for Spirituality, Carondelet Center, 1890 Randolph Avenue, St. Paul

Cost:

\$125 / \$35 single session

Wisdom Ways is a ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet-St. Paul Province

Register in advance at 651-696-2788 or www.wisdomwayscenter.org.

From Ruth Palmer, Director of Music Ministry

Beauty alone confers happiness on all, and under its influence every being forgets that he is limited. — Friedrich von Schiller

In his book, *My Quest for Beauty*, Rollo May states that many people, including him, believe that the greatest and richest discourse on beauty in our Western culture was written by Friedrich von Schiller, just before 1800. In that discourse, *Letters Upon the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Schiller offers many penetrating insights into the meaning of beauty and the struggles it inspires. That struggle of having the maturity of spirit that both recognizes the finite and yet seeks to reach beyond it into expressions of the infinite.

In studying these ideas, Rollo May offers the following in answer to the question, "What Is Beauty?":

"Beauty is the experience that gives us a sense of joy and a sense of peace simultaneously. Other happenings give us joy and afterwards a peace, but in beauty these are the same experience. Beauty is serene and at the same time exhilarating; it increases one's sense of being alive. Beauty gives us not only a feeling of wonder; it imparts to us at the same moment a timelessness, a repose - which is why we speak of beauty as being eternal."

As we all appreciate unique ideas of beauty in many forms of art, it seems that it is that very ability to 'see and experience' that offers a bond between all various forms, cultures and artistic expressions. Rollo May offers the following words which seem to encapsulate these thoughts so perfectly:

"The great contribution of art is that, in our years on this planet, we are enabled to share, to give to each other, to communicate, to love the world and, in the broad sense, to love each other. This will sound strange to those who think the work is a cold mass of whirling star dust, but not to those who can form their world in communication by whatever beauty they can see and experience."

Arthur Foote Music Sunday ~ May 3, 2009

9:00 and 11:00 a.m. Services

Featuring the voices of all the Unity Church choirs and resident choirs:
Beauty in Every Voice • Unity Children's Choir • Youth Music Ensemble
Unity Choir • Unity Singers • One Voice Mixed Chorus • Mila

4:30 p.m. Service

Lullabies Live — featuring the Unity Singers

PARISH HALL ART / FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

March Parish Hall Artist



Gloria Adrian

Women Working With Their Hands

Most important in good hands are the bones. The bones should be as smooth as water polished stone and as pliant as a willow twig.

Women Working With Their Hands is a series about women who create using traditional high level skills. It is an exploration about women who continue to work with their hands in a culture that rewards intellectualism over creativity — technology over craftsmanship — culture over nature — thrift over quality.

I depict women engaged in work using their hands to create and connect with their souls. My challenge as an artist is to capture the woman's likeness, her life force, her joy and her love.

As I worked it became more and more important for me to learn the women's stories. Most of these women have made major life changes to do and be what they love. Although these paintings are portraits of women working, they are evidence of what gives my life meaning.

A woman's life journey takes her many places, some wonderful and some unwanted. When she finds the place that brings her inner yearning closest to the divine it is to be celebrated.

This is a series of 16 large oil paintings portraying women who have made life-altering changes to do what gives their lives meaning. Most of these women have done one or more of the following: left traditional careers, redefined careers, taken pay cuts, and/or moved from large cities to the countryside.

The exhibition includes the portraits along with each woman's story printed and framed next to the painting.

I have spent three years on this project: meeting women, spending time getting to know them, and learning their stories. I am now in the process of writing the stories and plan to produce a book that would include the portraits with the stories.

To learn more visit: www.gloriaadrian.com.

March Fellowship Group Meetings

All are invited to attend the following groups. For more information, contact the Church Office or the persons listed with each group.

Men's Retirement Group

Monday, March 9 and 23 • 1:00-3:00 p.m.
Contact: Phil Morton, 952-934-3578

Unity Divorce/Transitions Group

Meets every Saturday • 10:00-11:30 a.m.
Contact: Justin Schroeder at the Church Office

Unity Singles Group

Watch *This Week at Unity* for scheduled events.
Contact: Justin Schroeder at the Church Office

A New Look at the Bible

March 12 • 7:00 p.m.
Contact: Joan Lovrien, 651-739-6958

Afterthoughts

Every Sunday following the 9:00 a.m. service
Contact: Paul Gade, 651-771-7528

Mother-Daughter Middle School Book Club

Meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of the Month
Contact: Millie Adelsheim, millie@peapods.com

Unitots!

A group for families with kids through preschool age.
Every Friday • 9:30 a.m.
Contact: Michelle Hill

Grandparent Unitots!

A group for grandparents and their grandkids.
Every Monday • 9:30 a.m.
Contact: Sue Conner, 651-646-6667

Unity Bridge Club

First Friday of each month at members' homes • 7:00 p.m.
Contact: Mary Barrett, 651-225-9708

Evergreen Quilt Group

Contact: Michelle Hill at 651-264-0884

Unity Book Club

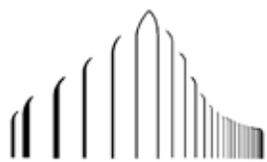
Second Tuesday of the month • 7:00 p.m.
Contact: Justin Schroeder at the Church Office

Networking Group

Every Monday • 9:30 a.m.
Contact: Wendy Frieze, wendyfrieze@mac.com

Help Unity Church Become a Zero Carbon Congregation!

Take the Minnesota Energy Challenge at www.mnenergychallenge.org



UNITY CHURCH—UNITARIAN

732 HOLLY AVENUE • SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA 55104
651-228-1456 • FAX: 651-228-0927 • WWW.UNITYUNITARIAN.ORG

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JUSTIN SCHROEDER, DIRECTOR OF CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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