

Freedom

The life of a congregation is a rich community tapestry of people, programs, ministries and worship. We lift up the patterns of this tapestry at Unity Church with the threads of monthly themes woven through our worship and programming. These themes deepen our understanding of our own faith and strengthen our bonds with one another in religious community. We explore each theme in worship and in our newsletter; in covenant groups, guided writing sessions and Wednesday evening programming; and in our community outreach ministries, our literary journal and programs, and many other opportunities. The April theme is Freedom.

It was a warm spring day when our chimney began to sing. Birdsong reverberated down, an unexpected gift tumbling into the ashes. But soon after, more distressingly, came the frantic beating of wings. We had forgotten to close the flue and a small bird had dropped through the narrow opening, becoming trapped behind the glass fireplace doors. So with a hastily hatched plan, we coaxed the bird into a large blue bed sheet, naively hoping it might look like sky. Then, drawing up the corners to make a sack, we transported it outside and, with two of us, stretched the sheet wide like a trampoline, watching as the ashy bird spread its wings and launched skyward, not once looking back.

Freedom conjures images of open space and the movement it allows – an open sky and birds that cross it; an open field and dogs and children bounding into it; or open water and the blade

of a boat's bow slicing through it. We know freedom in our bodies and with metaphors of movement, though it also applies, and profoundly so, to the inner realms of mind and heart and spirit.

Talking with a reporter last winter, a young Egyptian teacher protesting in Cairo before Mubarek's departure noted that Egyptians have had their minds "in chains" from their earliest school years. "Where is the space I need," Abd al-Rahman asked, pointing to his own chest, "to make a new thing?"

Since then, with the world eagerly watching, Egypt has begun opening and claiming that free space, the space for making a new thing. First, in Cairo's Tahrir Square, then throughout the nation, and significantly, in the inner landscape of Egyptians' hearts and minds, they are opening new space for freedom.

In religious teachings, the word liberation is often used to emphasize the process of becoming free, a process that is ongoing and compelled by an "overspill" of longing. In Judeo Christianity, liberation has been described as the "journey with others and for others toward God's future," or toward that holy horizon of justice and peace for all. In India's major religions, the Sanskrit word *mukti*, meaning "release" or "letting go," refers to the liberation of the soul, a process requiring many lifetimes of training and discipline and practice.

"There is no external means of taking freedom by the throat," Rabindranath Tagore wrote. "Bondage in all its forms has its stronghold in the inner self and not in the outside world; it is

in the dimming of our consciousness, in the narrowing of our perspective, in the wrong valuation of things." The liberated soul, he said, lightened and enlightened, is freed from "the isolation of self, from the isolation of things."

This is not to deny the crime and iniquity of tyrannies in the outside world. But it points to the inner bondage upon which oppression of all kinds depends. Here, in the "land of the free," it also invites us to consider how bondage can be made of our own insistent isolation in the name of individuality or independence. What liberating joy might we discover if we could let go of the illusion of separate destinies, if we acknowledged how interconnected we all are?

Terry Tempest Williams has speculated wishfully that one day we might write a "Declaration of Interdependence that will be read and honored alongside the Declaration of Independence: proof of our evolution, revolution of our own growth and understanding."

Recalling that spring day when we released the bird outside our house, I remember the way my heart opened like a mirror image of the sky above – wide, endless and full of light – as the bird's wings unfolded. Surely freedom must be shared if it is to be known at all.

"The first sky is inside you, friend, open at either end of day," wrote the poet Li Young Lee. "The work of wings was always freedom, fastening one heart to every falling thing."

~ Karen Hering,
Consulting Literary Minister

Worship Theme Resources

BOOKS

The Open Space of Democracy, by Terry Tempest Williams

Whose Freedom?, by George Lakoff

The American Creed, by Forrest Church

FILM

The Shawshank Redemption (1994)
Two imprisoned men bond over a number of years, finding solace and eventual freedom through acts of common decency.

JUST WORDS

Just Words

Only a person in their early twenties would go rafting down a river with a crew who didn't share a common language. Only a person traveling with complete naiveté would not think to check that once the rafting trip was concluded the company sponsoring the trip would return everyone to the original departure point. But that is exactly what happened to me years ago rafting down a river with friends outside of Kyoto, Japan.

The rafting trip was wonderful and it turned out that a common language wasn't necessary until we disembarked. It took quite a while for us to communicate our confusion that we were not being bused back like they did in the states. Once the crew understood, they laughed and left us standing on the dock as they went further down the river. We had no idea where we were and how to get back to central Kyoto where our youth hostel was situated. In the early seventies very few people spoke English in Japan. The only Japanese we knew was *please* and *thank you*. We had been left in a deserted area. It began to rain. We laughed because we trusted that somehow things would work out. We began to walk. It turned out that we had been deposited in a park. We walked and walked not seeing another living soul. Our optimism began to wane. Eventually we came upon one of the park's caretakers who lived in a small dwelling within the park. She graciously invited us in, gave us a cup of tea and tried to explain to us how to get back to town. Her hospitality was genuine, her concern for us real. We completely destroyed the moment by offering to pay her for the tea she had so graciously offered us. As we offered the money to her, she looked at us with a mixture of horror and pity. With her expressive face she communicated to us how little we understood about generosity, hospitality and human connection. We tried again, this time expressing our gratitude in other than monetary ways. It was better received. But it was now clear to our host that we were completely incompetent. She was right. She walked us to the edge of the park with a map and a note for the bus driver. Without any words in common, she was able to teach us significant lessons about our understanding of hospitality.

Wherever I traveled in Japan, I was treated with genuine hospitality and humble curiosity. People were always anxious to help and we needed that help because we were forever getting lost. I won't even begin to tell you about trying to get to Mt. Fuji.

As Japan slowly recovers from this latest disaster I think of all the people who came to our aid and I pray for them and for everyone there grieving for their losses. I remember the people I prayed with in Nagasaki, I remember the people who got off the train to help us get on the right one. I remember the people who shared such concern for us, who sheltered us. I pray that someone is sheltering them.

— Janne Eller-Isaacs



The Wheel of Life

In Celebration

Joachim Oliver Bricker West

Born one more redeemer

March 18, 2011

to parents

Michelle Bricker West and Ray West

commUNITY is the 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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APRIL WORSHIP CALENDAR / OFFERING RECIPIENTS

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 online at www.unityunitarian.org.

April 3: *Tuning God's Piano*

Jason Seymour

This Sunday is the first of a new worship theme: freedom. Is pure freedom possible? ... or even desirable? What is the relationship between freedom and structure? What does freedom offer us, and what does it demand? Join Hallman Ministerial Intern Jason Seymour and Worship Associate Bob Steller for an exploration of the tense, creative relationship between freedom and responsibility.

April 10: *Free to Gather for Holy*

Purposes — Janne Eller-Isaacs

One of our religious ancestors, Adin Cavanaugh, once wrote that our liturgy should reflect our best spiritual practices. As Janne and Worship Associate Carol LeBourveau explore how the liturgy here at Unity Church reflects our best spiritual practices, they will also lift up the importance of the core value of freedom of worship that is woven throughout our country's history.

April 17: *A New Beginning*

Rob Eller-Isaacs

There are some who say Jesus came to Jerusalem to declare the jubilee. "I was hungry," he said, "and you gave me food." How might religious people confront the disparities that continually drive people apart? Who can we count on to carry on the work of economic justice? Rob and Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministries Luke Stevens-Royer will wrestle with these age-old questions and we will welcome two Coming of Age participants who will share their credos. The Coming of Age procession and ritual will be held at the 4:30 p.m. service.

April 24: *Practice Resurrection*

We will gather to celebrate the many ways we practice resurrection in our individual lives and in the lives of our communities. Rob and Janne will be joined by Director of Religious Education Kerri Meyer as we offer an Easter service for the whole church family.

Each Sunday, thirty percent of the offering goes to support the Community Outreach Ministry at Unity Church and seventy percent is given to the chosen community non-profit recipients. **Please make checks payable to Unity Church.**

April 3: *Community Design Center (CDC)*

Since 1969, the mission of CDC has been to build vibrant and healthy communities through food, conservation and youth development. The CDC provides economic development assistance and organizational development training; institutes programming aimed at addressing weak links in community life; operates several children's and youth programs on the East Side of St. Paul including the year around "Youth Enterprise in Food and Ecology" that engages thousands of children, youth and families in the civic life of their community. Unity Church member Jane Prince is on the CDC Board of Directors.

April 10: *Hallman Ministerial Endowment*

Honor Unity's intern ministers by making a contribution to the Hallman Endowment. The permanent endowment, which provides funding ministerial interns at Unity Church, presently stands at \$185,000. Once the Fund reaches \$500,000 it will generate enough to support the internship. At present the internship, including stipend, health and dental benefits and professional development costs the church approximately \$22,000 a year. Hallman Interns since 2002 include: Jen Crow, Melissa Zeimer, Bill Neely, Katie Lawson, Teresa Schwartz, Justin Schroeder, Matt Alspaugh, Leon Dunkley, Lissa Gundlach, and Jason Seymour.

April 17: *Amicus*

When someone is in prison, true friendship can be scarce. For over 43 years, Amicus (latin for "friend") has been offering friendship to adults and juveniles in the justice system. Amicus recruits and supports volunteers who visit people in correctional facilities and helps connect people leaving correctional facilities with resources such as employment, housing, transit and clothing. Amicus also works with girls in the juvenile justice system through its Radius program and is the founding supporter of the Circle of Peace project which meets each Monday at Unity Church in an effort to restore neighborhood relationships and decrease youth violence in the Rondo neighborhood. Amicus is the Community Partner of Unity's Restorative Justice Ministry team and many Unity Church members have found deeply meaningful volunteer relationships through Amicus.

April 24: *Mano a Mano International Partners*

Co-founded in 1994 by longtime Unity Church members Segundo and Joan Velasquez, Mano a Mano International Partners is dedicated to improving health and economic well-being in rural Bolivia where subsistence farmers live on less than one dollar a day. Mano a Mano built its 100th community health clinic last summer thus making health care available to over 750,000 of Bolivia's rural poor. Mano a Mano International also constructs schools, roads and water reservoirs in partnership with residents of these areas. Its programs have led to dramatic reductions in maternal and infant mortality and to doubling the income of many subsistence farmers. Mano a Mano International Partners is the community partner of the Unity Church Mano a Mano Outreach Ministry Team.

Nominate an Offering Recipient

If you would like to nominate an organization to be the recipient of the Sunday offering, please fill contact Pat Haff in the Church Office for a nomination form.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES / HERITAGE SOCIETY

Board of Trustees

from Sue Babcock, Trustee

It is an amazing time for us all at Unity Church - Unitarian. As I write this article, the Board is preparing for the special congregational meeting on March 20*. As you read this, we will know if we are launching into a capital campaign with a minimum goal of \$4 million. It has been a bit of a struggle to write this without knowing the outcome, so it seemed appropriate to speak to this uncertainty. The Board's responsibilities are to: represent the congregation in shaping the vision and long-term goals of the church, ensure the church is externally effective and internally efficient, and create and maintain Church policy. While governing policies may not seem like an exciting topic, I'd like to point to one policy in particular to keep in mind at this time - Values. Stated in our documents is the following:

Policy C: Values

Unity Church-Unitarian honors the ambiguity and uncertainty that is ever present in the ongoing search for greater meaning in life. Unity Church-Unitarian strives to embody the following values in all its work:

- Authenticity
- Generosity of spirit
- Mutual respect
- Freedom of thought
- Open, broad embrace

It seems that all of the *Unity Tomorrow* work so far by the Executive Team, Unity Tomorrow Teams, and congregational participation in informational forums, has been based in these very values. When fund-raising consultant, Andrew Currie summarized his findings from the pre-capital campaign feasibility study he told the Board:

Confidence in Unity Church-Unitarian, in its staff and volunteer leadership, and in its ability to provide needed services to its members and the community is high. All of Unity's members who were interviewed expressed great enthusiasm for their church. There is a high degree of confidence in, and affection for, Unity's co-ministers. Several long-time members indicated that Unity seems to be stronger and healthier than at any period in the past twenty years. Furthermore, almost all of the interviewees gave high marks to the entire staff of Unity, indicating that they seem to work well together and that their low turnover rate is a positive sign for Unity. Over half of the interviewees believe that the Religious Education programs have been strengthened in recent years and that the church is attracting a healthy proportion of younger members. Many of the interviewees commented on the vitality of the church, the strength of its outreach efforts, and its commitment to increasing diversity within its membership.

So while there is ambiguity and uncertainty as we move forward to meet Unity's needs there is also great confidence in and love for the Church we know and the Church we are becoming. The Board hopes that the capital campaign will move ahead to revitalize our church for the future. But regardless of the outcome of the congregational vote on March 20 we remain committed to listening, to working with you, and striving to live into our values.

*Congregation Approves Board Recommendation

On Sunday, March 20, at a special meeting of the congregation, over 200 members unanimously approved the recommendation from the Board of Trustees. Visit www.unitytomorrow.org to read the recommendation and see the important information shared at the meeting.

Join the Heritage Society Leave a Legacy for Future Generations

Planned giving is an intentional act that leaves a lasting legacy in your name and sustains the powerful work of this church for generations to come.

A planned gift is a designation from your estate to a charitable organization. Your "estate" is the sum of your assets, including property you own, insurance policies, retirement accounts, cash on hand, etc.

There are many gift possibilities. These gifts allow flexibility, though some requirements apply, and you always retain the right to amend your estate:

- A charitable bequest in your last will and testament can be a specific amount or a percentage of what remains after providing for your heirs.
- A life insurance designation names Unity Church as owner or beneficiary of the policy.
- Retirement plan assets name the church as a beneficiary of an IRA, 401(k), 403(b), profit sharing or other retirement plan.
- Other types of planned gifts include gift annuities, life-estate agreements and charitable remainder trusts.

By making a planned gift to Unity Church, you would be joining almost 200 others who have committed to supporting our programs and outreach into the future. Our annual Heritage Society Dinner on Friday, May 13, is the church's way of thanking those individuals who have made planned gifts. Laurel Hallman, long-time member of Unity Church and Minister Emerita at First Unitarian Church of Dallas will be the guest speaker.

If you have already made a planned gift to Unity Church (but haven't told us!), if you are in the process of making a planned gift, or if you would like more information about planned giving, contact Barbara Hubbard at the Church Office.

From the Anti-Racism Leadership Team (ARLT)

A Safe Place to Grow

Alana Howey, ARLT member

I had the privilege to participate in the congregational book read of *Family* by J. California Cooper in February. The discussion session I attended was on a Wellspring Wednesday and was led by members of the Racial Justice Ministry Team (RJMT). The book is a story following a woman's children during and through the end of the slavery years. The experience of slavery told from the female perspective seemed new and intensely horrifying to me. I was also struck by the love and sense of family these women exhibited toward their children born from rape. The common family of humans is illustrated with the intermixing of Clora's children all across the world.

There is so much value in sharing a common read with people of shared values. I was especially gratified to hear the sharing of the insights gained by others from the reading. We are blessed at Unity Church to have so many individuals committed to the work of anti-racism. One member of the group voiced, and many others seconded, the feeling that they were grateful for the space to share their naiveté in a group of caring people. They felt safe stumbling along with in their journey of dismantling racism in themselves.

The RJMT took the time to bring the discussion back to how this book may impact the ministry of Unity Church. I don't think we came up with any solid answers. We did consider the idea of how we all can become slaves, or treat others as slaves, in how we live. The continued raising of the question is important. I applaud the work of the Library and RJM teams. Thank you for the opportunity!

Pathway to Membership

Welcome to Unity: Our Class for Newcomers

Wednesday, April 13 • 7:10–8:30 p.m.

Sunday, April 24 • 12:10–1:00 p.m.

This class is geared to newcomers, visitors, and those seeking to learn more about Unitarian Universalists and Unity Church.

Finding Yourself at Unity: A Deeper Exploration

Saturday, May 14 • 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. • Potluck lunch

Finding Yourself at Unity includes in depth Unitarian Universalist and Unity Church history (including a tour of the church), opportunities to share your religious journey, and discussion of the expectations and benefits of membership.

Committing to Unity: Joining Unity Church

Saturday, May 21 • 9:30–11:30 a.m.

This class explores the deeper meanings and expectations of membership and shared ministry. Rob and Janne Eller-Isaacs will join the class for a celebration ceremony as participants sign the membership book and officially join the church!

Jason Seymour

2010-11 Hallman Ministerial Intern

“Human freedom is a complex, difficult – and private – thing. If we can liken life, for a moment, to a furnace, then freedom is the fire which burns away illusion.” — James Baldwin

I was asked recently about the relationship between grief and freedom...

Let us first invite the many forms of grief into our consideration. There is surely that kind of grief that surrounds a familiar loss or a death; this is perhaps the most identifiable, and most painful, form of grief. But grief also arises out of other major life transitions: a job loss, a move, a changed relationship. Sometimes we even grieve changes that we would label generally as “positive.” For example, in marriage, whether we realize it or not, we always (to varying extent) mourn the loss of our single self. We grieve even while rejoicing in the newfound joys of partnered life. In my experience counseling couples, it is only when newlyweds embrace a sense of personal loss that they then become open to the new and vast freedom to be found in their mutual commitment. This same pattern holds true when children arrive... and when we first leave home... and when we get our first job, or a new job. There is always something beloved that gets left behind.

Whenever I experience a change - that is, whenever I become aware of the constant change around me and within me - a piece of me, at least for a while, wants to remember things the way they were. This is grief.

This is my experience of grief anyway. Those of you who know me well might detect a distinctly Buddhist flavor to my perspective. The first of the Buddhist Four Noble Truths states quite simply that all life is suffering; all life is grief. To live means to suffer... because our perception of our selves, and of the world, is imperfect. This is not nearly as dire as it sounds, and the Second Noble Truth sharpens this point by stating that we suffer because we are prone to attach permanence to impermanent things. We crave and we cling; we develop orthodoxies; we tend to see the world a certain way as if our very lives depended on it being so.

Reading Baldwin then through Buddhist eyes, I come to know grief as a common, always available agent of human freedom... a red-hot furnace of life (and death) in which burns a liberating and illusion-burning fire. Put another way, we value a thing more fully when we know it may not last; we value life more fully when we have seen death. Knowing the stakes, we are free to commit our life's energies with greater resolve, with greater compassion. Humans are a forever grieving species, but our grief does serve a purpose.

Pray with me then... that we grieve fully.... and in doing so, in whatever way loss is affecting us today, that we may come to know more fully and openly the commonness of our longing. To choose life in view of death, to choose love in the face of certain loss... that is the truest freedom I know. May we be a people so bold.

FELLOWSHIP / SPIRITUAL PRACTICE / WELLSRING WEDNESDAY

Fellowship Groups

Men's Retirement Group: Monday, April 11 and 25, from 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact: Phil Morton at 952-934-3578

Unity Singles: Contact: Bonnie Reiland at bonniereiland@aol.com

A New Look at the Bible: Second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. Contact: Paul Gade at 651-771-7528

Afterthoughts: Sundays after the 9:00 a.m. service. Contact: Paul Gade at 651-771-7528

Unity Men's Group: Third Monday of every month at 7:00 p.m. Contact: Nels Otto at 651-484-4590

Unitots!: A playgroup for families with kids through preschool age. Fridays at 9:30 a.m. Contact: Michelle Hill at 651-264-0884

Grandparent Unitots!: A playgroup for grandparents and their grandkids. Mondays at 9:30 a.m. Contact: Ona Lentz at 651-222-8117

Unity Bridge Club: First Friday of the month at 7:00 p.m. Contact: Mary Barrett at 651-225-9708

Evergreen Quilters: Second Tuesday of the month from 7:00-9:00 p.m. and fourth Saturday of the month from 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Contact: Peggy Wright at 651-698-2760

Unity Book Club: Tuesday, April 12, at 7:00 p.m. *The Book of Night Women* by Marlon James

Job Transition/Networking: Mondays at 9:30 a.m. Contact Rachel Holtzer, Facilitator, at erholtzer@gmail.com

U-knitarians: Wednesday, April 20, at 7:00 p.m.

Weekly Meditation: Tuesdays from 5:30-6:30 p.m. in the Ames Chapel

Elders' Circle

Tuesday, April 26 • 1:00-2:30 p.m.

A group for church elders (self-identified!) who convene monthly for worship, fellowship and fun. For more information, contact Jason Seymour at the Church Office.

Wellspring Wednesday

6:00 p.m. Dinner: \$7/adult, \$4/child ages 5 to 12, \$2/child ages 2 to 4, and \$18/family, and can be paid by cash or check.

6:45 p.m. Worship service in the Ames Chapel.

7:10 p.m. Programs follow worship. Childcare is available.

April 6: Race and Freedom Part 1

A Meditation on Race and Human Freedom

Jason Seymour and Leon Dunkley lead the most critical and most powerful conversation about race and social difference in the history of the world. Although this might seem hyperbolic, with your participation, it will be true. In this two-part meditation on race and difference, Jason and Leon will challenge themselves and one another in an effort to define, create and strengthen the spiritual tools that are required to do this work in the world.

Religious Education New Family Orientation

April 13: Race and Freedom Part 2

The Free and Responsible Search for Truth and Meaning

Another world is not only possible, she's on her way. Maybe many of us won't be here to greet her, but on a quiet day, if I listen very carefully, I can hear her breathing. — Arundhati Roy

How shall we dare Unitarian Universalism into its best expression of itself with respect to the issues of race and social difference? Through readings, poetry, music and film, a graceful way will be found through some of the most challenging issues of our time. (The second part of the series is designed to build on the first but one does not need to have attended Part 1 to attend the Part 2)

Welcome to Unity: Our Class for Newcomers

Dinner: chicken pot pie, green salad, lemon bars

April 20: Freedom and the Literary Art

Join Karen Herring in personal journey along the pathways of the poetic muse. What inspires a poet to write? What desires, yearnings and aspirations are at the core of the creative act? Some measure of the poetic muse resides in all of us. Tapping it can become the most rewarding of experiences.

U-knitarians: A group for those who love to stitch. Open to all.

April 27: Human Freedom and the Enneagram with Katy Taylor

According to the Enneagram Institute, "The Enneagram Institute is dedicated to the Work of human liberation and transformation. For thousands of years, spiritual teachers from many different traditions have reminded us of the richness of the human soul and its spiritual gifts. But without real self-knowledge, it is not possible to awaken to the deeper truths of the soul or to sustain whatever degree of realization we have attained. One of the most powerful tools for understanding ourselves is the Enneagram, an ancient symbol of unity and diversity, change and transformation." Join Unity's own Katy Taylor for a thorough exploration of this fascinating tool. Katy Taylor's art is currently/has recently been on display in the Parish Hall.

Wellspring Wednesday Weekly Offerings

Yoga with Jen Seymour • \$10 per class

OWL Parents Group

Junior High Youth Group

LITERARY MINISTRY / BOOK CLUB / UNITY LIBRARIES

OPEN PAGE: reflecting with pens in hand

These guided writing sessions, led by Consulting Literary Minister Karen Hering, are invitations to the creative spirit, opportunities to correspond with "the still, small voice within." No writing experience necessary; only an empty page and an open heart and mind. Check individual listings for location and registration requirements and fees.

Sunday, April 17 • 2:00-4:00 p.m. • Unity Church

Reflection Topic: Freedom

Free; RSVP karen@unityunitarian.org

"Freedom is not something that anybody can be given," said James Baldwin. "Freedom is something that people take and people are as free as they want to be." How do we find and claim the freedom we each want and need? And what responsibilities accompany our freedom? How does true freedom ironically bind us to others? Registration not required, but an e-mail to karen@unityunitarian.org is requested to help in planning space and handouts.

Thursday, April 28 (second of three monthly sessions) • 6:30-9:00 p.m.

Wisdom Ways, Carondelet Center, 1890 Randolph Ave., St. Paul

Reflection Topic: Transformation

Registration and fee information at: www.wisdomwayscenter.org

As winter slowly gives way to spring, Wendell Berry pays homage to the transformation occurring in the natural world when he writes: "bud opening to flower / opening to fruit opening / to the sweet marrow / of the seed." How might we too witness and pay homage to the transformative forces moving within our hearts and our world, and the dying and birthing that is part of transformation?

Other Programming and Resources

For more information about the *Faithful Words* literary ministry and additional writing programs offered in other locations, visit www.unityunitarian.org/WritingMinistry.htm. To receive periodic e-mail notifications of upcoming literary programs and invitations for member writings, contact Consulting Literary Minister Karen Hering at karen@unityunitarian.org. These programs are supported by a grant from the Fund for Unitarian Universalism and contributions from individual donors.



What's New
in the
Library and Bookstall
from Shelley Butler, Library Team

Nothin' ain't worth nothin', honey, but it's free. — from "Me and Bobby McGee" by Kris Kristofferson

I take freedoms for granted, even the ones that I may not actually have. For example, I completely took it for granted that I had the right to serve margarine in a public eating place in Wisconsin, but as it turns out, I don't. More seriously, six states still require belief in some form of God for public office, though an atheist was granted the right to become a notary by the Supreme Court. In Arizona, I am not free to walk down the street without my citizenship being challenged, and my freedom could be taken away for giving a ride to someone who nods at me, if an officer construes this as hiring an undocumented worker.

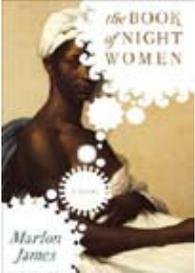
Mary Oliver writes in "Empty Branch in the Orchard":

To have loved
is everything.
I loved, once,
a hummingbird
who came every afternoon—
the freedom-loving male
who flew by himself
to sample
the sweets of the garden...

Find out more about freedom in the Anderson Library and the Whitman Children's Library and at The Bookstall, open every Sunday. There you will find *Unitarian Universalism: A Narrative History* by David Bumbaugh and other books on our faith, stories of immigration, Mary Oliver's poetry, great books for freedom-seeking preschoolers, and recommended books on the monthly worship themes.

Unity Church Book Club

The Unity Church Book Club will meet from 7:00-8:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 12. The book they will be discussing is *The Book of Night Women* by Marlon James.



Everyone is welcome — even if you haven't read the book!

On Tuesday, May, 10, the Book Club will be discussing *One River, Many Wells* by Matthew Fox.

the library & bookstall team presents

Cafe Unity

Poetry and Music Salon

Friday, May 6, 2011

7:00 p.m.



Featuring the literary and musical talent of Unity Church.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

Putting Out the Welcome Mat for Project Home

This May, we will once again open our doors to homeless families in our community through our longstanding partnership with the St. Paul Council of Churches and the Family Place day shelter. With their assistance, we transform the lower level of our building into a safe and welcoming place for families to spend the night. Religious Education rooms become private sleeping accommodations for individual families and the Coming of Age space functions as a communal family room. Over 100 volunteer hosts need to be recruited before our guests begin to arrive.

Unity's Project Home team is asking singles, couples, and families to stop by their table in the Parish Hall after any service in April to sign up for an evening or overnight host slot.

Once families are settled in their rooms and drinks and snacks are made available, evening volunteers engage in everything from art projects and story time with busy children to card games and conversation with tired moms and dads. Things begin to settle down by the time the overnight hosts arrive, as it's an early lights out for guests and hosts alike. Overnight hosts put out a quick breakfast for our guests before they head back to the Family Place, school or work for the day.

Project Home provides us with a wonderful opportunity to engage in a tangible and meaningful way with families who are temporarily without homes.

For more information about volunteer shifts or to sign up via e-mail, contact Erika Dinkel-Smith, 2011 Project Home Volunteer Coordinator at unityprojecthome@gmail.com.

Project Home training sessions are scheduled for Tuesday, April 26, from 7:00-8:30 p.m. and Sunday, May 15, from 12:15-1:45 p.m.

New Opportunities for Making a Difference

from the Restorative Justice Team

Rob's sermon and Amicus Recruiter Lionel Buchanan's testimony about the Amicus One-to-One program was met with great support from our congregation. Over fifteen Unity Church members are now waiting for One-to-One matches. The demand for women and men to do this work continues. One-to-One training sessions are held every month, please see below for the April meeting date. This month the Restorative Justice Team and Amicus roll out a new way to become involved. Too busy to make monthly prison visits? Become involved in the Unity Unitarian Penfriends opportunity below and make a difference with the written word.

Unity Unitarian Penfriends Opportunity

Monday April 18 • 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. • Unity Church

Amicus and Unity Church begin a new program this month to help meet the demand for outside world contact for incarcerated men and women in our prisons. Commit to writing one letter a month to an Amicus client for one year and make a real difference in someone's life. The Unity Church address will be used for all correspondence. Women will be matched with women and men with men. Careful training and matching by Amicus staff and the support of the Unity's Restorative Justice Outreach team will help ensure a safe and meaningful experience. Light dinner will be provided. Contact Pat Haff at the Church Office to participate or call Unity Church member Ray Wiedmeyer at 651-699-5590 with any questions or concerns.

One-to-One Volunteer Information/Training Session

Monday April 11 • 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. • Unity Church

Amicus volunteers visit individuals in correctional facilities where they provide friendship and a much needed connection to someone in the outside world. You too can make a difference. Training and careful matching by Amicus staff will help ensure a safe and meaningful experience. Contact Chris at 612-348-8570 or chris@amicususa.org for more information or to sign up for this training session.

Paradise Team: A Possibility?

As spring began to seem like a possibility after a long winter, a small group of Unity Church members assembled to talk about the possible creation of a community outreach ministry team focusing on the spiritual aspects of gardening and farming. We thought about an organizing metaphor of "paradise" for our potential team, given all the ways it is possible to make a paradise in one's own home, church, or neighborhood. Our discussion touched on several spiritual themes related to gardening, including:

- communion through growing, preparing and serving food
- a connection to loved ones who passed on a devotion to gardening
- gardens as a sanctuary for respite and connecting with the natural world
- cycles of human birth, growth, death, decay and rebirth that are replicated in the garden, and
- gardening as a thrilling and—sometimes even ecstatic—way to pray, practice and praise

We also spoke of gardening/farming projects that we are pursuing. Patricia Ohmans is coordinating efforts to create an urban farming demonstration site within a proposed new park in her neighborhood (www.frogstowngardens.org); Audrey Matson and Bob Lies opened Egg/Plant store, an urban farming supply shop, less than a year ago (www.eggplantstore.com); and Milan Mockovak is looking to create a summer gardening program for youth that teaches life and job skills. For more information please contact Pat Haff at the Church Office.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

UUSC: Responding to Crises

from David Byfield and Marty Rossmann, UUSC Ministry Team

How does UUSC decide whether or not to respond to a disaster?* UUSC takes into account a wide range of criteria in making this decision, including:

- The existence of current or former partners** or a history of work in the region
- The level of interest and support shown by UUSC'S members
- The level of human suffering as a result of the crisis
- The evidence of violations of human rights
- The indication that groups of people are being intentionally or inadvertently overlooked in the response
- The existence of viable partner organizations
- The effectiveness of the existing response

Generally, the likelihood of UUSC's response increases to the degree that these factors grow in magnitude, with the exception of the last criterion listed.

Why are donations needed for disaster relief and recovery? Funding enables UUSC's partners to move quickly, buy and distribute the necessary supplies, move goods and people around and communicate. Funds are also needed for long-term recovery after a disaster – especially once many international organizations have concluded their response and moved on.

How is UUSC different from other disaster response agencies? UUSC's disaster response focuses on those groups of people who are at risk of being overlooked by mainstream disaster responses. In major disasters, large agencies roll out a large amount of aid to a large number of people in a one-size-fits-all approach. UUSC, by contrast, works from the knowledge that in a disaster, people are in very different situations, determined by race, class and gender.

How much of my donation would directly support relief and recovery? UUSC sends \$0.92 of every dollar donated to support relief and recovery efforts on the ground. The remaining \$.08 covers expenses such as sending funds, calls to our partners and temporary employment to support rapid response.

So... what's happening to help in Japan? The UUSC has partnered with the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and their five religious partners in Japan. The UUA Japan Relief Fund was established (<http://www.uua.org>). Support received will be channeled through the five organizations the UUA has been in close partnership with for decades. For more information please contact David Byfield at 612-374-4786 or DBYF@aol.com or Marty Rossmann at 651-690-4370 or rossm001@umn.edu.

* Information for this article is taken from the UUSC web page. Check it out for more information. ** A complete explanation of UUSC partnerships will be in the May issue of *commUNITY*.

ZINDABAD!

AN EVENING OF INDIAN DELIGHTS

Saturday, May 7 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.

Unity Church Parish Hall

This evening is a celebration of solidarity with Vidayak Sansad, an organization that works to promote human rights and education among the most exploited and oppressed of peoples in the state of Maharashtra, India. "Zindabad!" means "long live" in Marathi.

The issues are serious, but our evening will be joyous, colorful and festive. Enjoy selections from a sumptuous buffet of central Indian dishes and desserts, while listening to classical Indian music. Indigenous art, traditional dress, and multi-media displays will add to the ambiance and entertainment.

The event, while not a fundraiser, will support the work of Vidayak Sansad, which Unity Church has informally supported for years. In March 2012, Unity Church members will be traveling to Mumbai, India, to learn more about the organization and especially its school for tribal girls. For more information contact Laney Ohmans by e-mail at dolores.ohmans@gmail.com or Wendy Harris at worldsigner@gmail.com.

Warm-up Drive Thank You

Thanks to everyone who contributed to the Winter Warm-up Clothing and Hygiene Item Drive. Unity's Restorative Justice Team helped Amicus collect 1,013 items, almost three times the initial goal! Unity Church congregants donated over 500 items! These items are now being used by men and women struggling to find employment and housing after serving time in a correctional facility. Your generosity has added a touch of dignity to the lives of those seeking a second chance.

Evergreen Foodshelf

The third Sunday of every month is Evergreen Food Drive Sunday. Donations can be brought anytime and should be placed in the barrels located at both the Holly and Portland Avenue entrances.

April 17 suggested items: canned soup.



Whole Farm Coop



Buy meat, cheese, produce and more from local, sustainable farms and pick it up at Unity Church! Order from www.wholefarmcoop.com or call 320-732-3023 by Wednesday, April 13. Orders will be delivered to Unity Church on Wednesday, April 20.

PARISH HALL ARTIST / MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

April Parish Hall Artist

Jane Thomson

Since I was a city kid scribbling my impressions of just about everything, I have always been involved with art. I was born in Minneapolis and graduated from the University of Minnesota in Fine Arts. As a young mom, I painted from photos in seed catalogues, and sometimes still do. I was a theatrical costume designer and stitcher for about 10 years. Urged by my daughter-in-law Ellen Marie Thomson and my friend Shelley Rohlf, both artists, I returned to painting in 2000. I have been influenced by Minneapolis artist and teacher Jon Neuse.

I have exhibited my work at the Robin Gallery, Gallery Dar La Luz, ArTrujillo, the May Day coffee shop, Fleur de Lis flower and gift shop, Nina's Coffee Cafe and, when I had a studio in Lowertown, at the St. Paul Art Crawl.

I paint different kinds of subjects, from photos (preferably taken by me) and from my imagination. When using a photo, at a certain point I put it away and depart from it, freeing my expression. I have painted with oil and am now using acrylic paint. I have also painted with gouache paints.

I am not a great believer in artist's statements interpreting the art for the viewer. My work is for you as well as for myself — it is whatever you think it is.

Artist Reception

Friday, April 15 • 5:00-7:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall

Chalice Camp

Exploring Our Neighborhood!

Summer 2011

July 11-15 or July 18-22

Registration forms are online at
www.unityunitarian.org

Best Unity Church Book Sale EVER!

Saturday, April 2 • 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, April 3 • 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. (\$5 Fill-a-Bag starts at 3:00 p.m.!)

Friends, the 2011 inventory of used books is quite possibly the best ever! Support the High School Tower Club by shopping for new-to-you fiction, non-fiction and kids' literature.

Secret Pal "Big Reveal Breakfast!" April 2

If you've been participating in the Secret Pal project at Unity, please join us for the "Big Reveal" breakfast at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 2. Meet your pals and hear stories from all participants over a plate of pancakes and sausage! Thanks to all who joined in this fun fellowship activity. We look forward to doing it again in 2012.

Religious Education Orientation Sessions

Families planning to enroll children and youth in next year's Sunday School program MUST attend ONE of the four in-person registration sessions. Please mark these dates on your family's calendar and choose ONE to attend. Childcare will be provided at all sessions.

- Saturday, April 9 • 10:00 a.m.
- Wednesday, April 13 • 7:00 p.m.
- Sunday, April 17 • 1:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, April 19 • 7:00 p.m.

Note that at all sessions, parents will sign up for their volunteer role in our shared ministry. At all sessions, pledging families will have priority registration, followed by returning teachers, followed by open enrollment. Classes are filled on a first-come, first-serve basis. Contact Kerri with questions.

Important: If your family is relatively new to Unity Church and has not yet attended a New Family Orientation, please plan on attending the April 6 Orientation session, which begins at 7:00 p.m. Childcare is provided.

Easter is a Family Sunday

On April 24, children of all ages will worship with our family of families at all three services. Nursery care open for little ones ages 6 months to 4 years.

Teachers Needed at All Three Services!

Our shared ministry with children requires many hands and hearts! Several Workshop Leaders are needed for our upcoming R.E. Unit on Endings. Teach the same lesson several Sundays to different groups of kids: April 10 and 17, May 1, 8 and 15. Lesson plans and materials provided. Our central idea is that everything in the known universe is impermanent. How does this bless and challenge us as human beings?

9:00 a.m.

Music: Sing "Turn, Turn, Turn" and listen to Vivaldi's Four Seasons!

11:00 a.m.

Music: Sing "Turn, Turn, Turn" and listen to Vivaldi's Four Seasons!

Science: Explore compost as an example of nature's cycles!

Drama: Use improvisation and a puppet show to explore impermanence!

Story: Share in stories about nature's cycles and write haiku about changes!

4:30 p.m.

Music: Sing "Turn, Turn, Turn" and listen to Vivaldi's Four Seasons!

Story: Share in stories about nature's cycles and write haiku about changes!

MUSIC MINISTRY

Music Notes

from Ruth Palmer, Director of Music Ministry

... and smile grateful into light. From *Light to Light: Wind* — Susan Palo Cherwien

As I write this article I am filled with the huge emotional range of grief to gratitude. Grief for all that is happening in our world, the travail within so many countries, the immediate grief for all that is happening in Japan simultaneously coupled with huge gratitude for all the opportunity in my own life and what we share together in community here at Unity Church.

Much of the present gratitude speaks to our constant joy and investment in the deep value of music within our services. I wanted to take this opportunity to share with you the joy of music and musicians that we will have on May 1, for our annual Arthur Foote Music Sunday, at all three services.

We will welcome the Artaria String Quartet as our guest musicians. Unity Church member Laura Sewell is the celebrated cellist of this wonderful and acclaimed group of chamber players. With over two decades of compelling chamber music performances to their credit, the Artaria String Quartet's refined and thoughtful playing has brought them critical acclaim in celebrated venues in Europe, Canada, and throughout the United States. Originally formed in Boston, and mentored by members of the legendary Budapest, La Salle, Kolisch, and Juilliard quartets, the Artaria String Quartet now resides in St. Paul and Minneapolis where they are firmly rooted in the tradition of chamber music performances and education.

Unity Choir and Unity Singers will be present to share the singing of "From Light to Light" and to combine as one choir in "Ring Out Wild Bells." These texts are offered in celebration of our long-awaited spring, the transition of earth and our selves into hopeful growth and our entrance into the theme of *Peace* during the month of May.

Please plan to come and share the joy of our community in music that provides mystical contemplation to outright clamorous celebration.

From Light to Light

Text: Susan Palo Cherwien

Music: J. Aaron McDermid

Earth

The heartbeat of God

Whispers to dark earth

Be.

Here.

Now.

Fire

O blessed earth, O blessed heat

O stomp, O snap, O soft!

Fire and flame the sinews of my flesh

Dance into the wonder of the earth

O flash, O feet, O form!

Spark! Spring! Song!

Water

My veins the sea

Your tears the sea

If we but knew

Here together apart

To water the earth

To shape, to wear away stone,

To meet, to carry, to be changed

If we but knew

Here to seek the low place

Here to run to the sea

Wind

Thin this silver cord like wisp of smoke

Mere brush of breath against the face

Ah!

I know I do not know...

and smile grateful into light

(Mid clouds of myrrh the eagle soars

and hymns the heart of God)

and smile grateful

into

light.

Ring Out Wild Bells

(from "The Passing of the Year")

Text: Alfred Lord Tennyson

Music: Jonathan Dove

O Earth, O Earth, return!

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,

The flying cloud, the frosty light:

The year is dying in the night;

Ring out, wild bells, and let it die!

Ring out the old, ring in the new,

Ring, happy bells, across the snow:

The year is going, let him go;

Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,

For those that here we see no more;

Ring out the feud of rich and poor,

Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,

The faithless coldness of the time;

Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,

But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;

Ring out the narrowing lust of god;

Ring out the thousand wars of old,

Ring in the thousand years of peace.

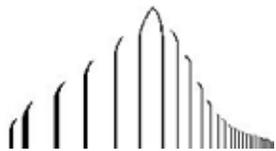
O Earth, O Earth, return!

• • • • •
Arthur Foote Music Sunday!

Sunday, May 1, 2011

9:00 a.m. • 11:00 a.m. • 4:30 p.m.

• • • • •



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Poetry and Music Salon

Friday, May 6, 2011

7:00 p.m.



Featuring the
literary and
musical talent
of Unity Church.

You Are Invited

Coming of Age 2011!

The entire congregation is warmly invited to witness the Coming of Age of this year's ninth grade class on Saturday, April 16, at 7:00 p.m., in the Sanctuary.

Come and listen in amazement as our young people share their personal credos, bravely laying the beliefs of their hearts and minds out for all to hear. Families of junior high youth find it particularly meaningful to attend with their children.

Partner Church Team Easter Plant Sale!

Orders for blooming Easter plants will be gratefully accepted in the Parish Hall on Sunday, April 3 and 10. Plants can be picked up on Sunday, April 17.

