

INTEGRITY

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.

Many years ago, my daily bus commute crossed the Mississippi River on the old Lake Street bridge. Then almost 100 years old, the quarter-mile bridge connecting St. Paul and Minneapolis was a wrought iron structure built well before the invention of the automobile. And one day, engineers inspecting the bridge's integrity, determined it could no longer safely bear the full load of our daily modern-day traffic.

Overnight, my commute changed. On one river bank, the route 21 bus pulled over and we debarked and boarded a large van that shuttled us across the bridge in smaller numbers. On the other side, we left the van and climbed aboard another 21 bus to continue our way down Lake Street.

Decades later, the Twin Cities would experience the tragedy of a different bridge's failure over the mighty Mississippi. We have learned to take the integrity of bridges seriously. But what do we know about the integrity of people, and systems, institutions and practices meant to carry us across the chasms stretched between our old familiar world to the far banks of a future we hope and pray will be better?

Here in our congregation, we say we are helping one another lead loving lives of integrity, service, and joy. Just what does a loving life of integrity look like now?

The dictionary offers two basic meanings of integrity – *the quality of being honest; having strong moral principles; and the state of being whole and undivided.* Other sources, thoughtfully unpacking its meanings in different times and places, have noted that in the dominant culture of the United States, integrity is often regarded as an individual virtue and one measured by consistency. In different cultures, here and elsewhere, it is shaped by community and practiced with adaptability.

Today, in this time of contagion, what does it mean to live with integrity? How do we measure the integrity of the metaphorical bridges needed to cross between you and me, and us and them, and here and there, and then and now and yet to come? Some bridges, made of the most basic habits, are no longer sound. Handshakes and hugs. Community sings and face to face worship and breaking bread together. Even strategic planning, because things are changing so rapidly. Just a week ago, when I typed the letters "c-o-v," my phone's autofill offered the option of covenant. Now, its first suggestion is COVID-19. Is my brain's autofill capable of keeping up in a more discerning way than that?

Integrity, as a matter of moral principle and one of wholeness, requires that we let go of rigid attachments to old ways and individualistic understandings, but not of our deepest values. We are asked to adapt. To go slowly. To step back and step up. To choose and take one step at a time in ways that leave no one behind.

I recently confessed to a wise teacher my difficulty focusing in this new reality. She empathized and shared her practice, more important now than ever. She ends her daily meditation each morning by asking: *what is the one thing I need to do well to be of service today?* She sits patiently until the answer is clear. Then, she does that one thing. Sometimes, she might repeat this 10 times in a day. Others, I imagine, it might take several days to complete a single demanding task. The key is pausing to ask the question and listening carefully for the answer.

The Canadian Buddhist teacher Pascal Auclair was once asked how he finds hope in a world with so much suffering. He paused. Then answered, *I don't*

think much about hope. What I do think about, nearly every day, is what is my next right action?

Integrity is about asking that question, and placing it in conversation with our own deepest values, with one another, and with the changing world we share.

The losses we have already experienced and the ones yet to come are and will be many. Our grief is real; we need to feel it and share it. But we will receive gifts in this, too. If we listen carefully, we may discover and perhaps recover what really holds us together — across the six-foot social distancing, across the chasms of our separate locations, identities and ideologies, across the wide gap between what is no longer and what is not yet.

Everything is connected. We know — scientifically, ecologically, emotionally and spiritually — this is how the world is made. Can we let the integrity of that truth hold and guide us now? Let's all practice. Align your next step with this truth. And the step after that. Leave no one behind. No one. Like this we will step into the unknown future. Like this we will help one another to live compassionately with integrity, service, and joy. Like this we will make a bridge as we go into a future made whole by this knowledge that we are all connected, always have been, always will be.

By Associate Minister Karen Hering on behalf of this month's theme team: Ahmed Anzaldúa, Drew Danielson, Janne Eller-Isaacs, Rob Eller-Isaacs, Lisa Friedman and KP Hong

Integrity Theme Resources
Resources for further reflection
are in this month's Chalice Circle
packet at [www.unityunitarian.org/
chalice-circles.html](http://www.unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html).

Just Words



An excerpt from my daily journal:

Most mornings now before I start my daily practice I make the mistake of checking the news that has come in overnight. And then in the hour before dawn the old hymn comes to me:

*Abide with me fast falls the eventide,
The darkness deepens, still with me abide,
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me.*

The news is dire. The predictions of those who know the ways of epidemics grow more terrifying day by day. I worry that faith in God and daily practice may not be enough to carry us through. I'm sure it is fear of death and of my inadequacy as I try to help those whose lives I touch to face it. So much seems so paltry now, retirement, the move, the money. The stories still have value though, as do the spiritual friendships through which we lend each other strength and imagine a new world together.

As I read Ta-Nehisi Coates' *The Water Dancer* the songs that keep coming back to me. "Abide with Me," yes, and "Steal Away."

*Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus.
Steal away, steal away home, I aint got long to stay here.*

In these days, some say may stretch on toward summer and beyond, it's slave songs that still sound my depth. Not the musings of the erudite but the longings of those buked and scorned and beaten down until their souls are hammered pure as gold.

I have no news to offer that will comfort or console or cast out fear. I do believe that only perfect love can do that. And what is perfect love? It is an unconditional faith "that looks on tempests and is never shaken." Some know it as the Love of God.

When this all began, I only could think of myself. What will I have to give up? What satisfactions will it cost me? How will the growing crisis impact the ending of our ministry? However, in my better moments I recall the words of Dr. King on the night before he died. "But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop ... I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land..."

*Green trees a'bending, sinner stands a'trembling
The trumpet sounds with my soul; I ain't got long to stay here.*

To stand apart and focus solely on one's own welfare when the thunder sounds and the trees begin to bend is the very definition of sin. I have known it theoretically but now I see more clearly. The isolation of such sin just makes me want to weep. (End of excerpt.)

I am well aware we all need hope, clarity, and comfort now. In sharing how shaken I feel, in offering you a glimpse into my inner life in troubled times my goal is to ask you to do likewise. Share the songs that bring you comfort. Share the dreams that come. Share the doubts and yes, the fears that shake us all these days. And most of all do share what brings you hope and helps you work toward the perfect love that does cast out all fear.

With deep compassion and abiding admiration,

Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs

The Wheel of Life

In Memoriam

Bryan Janssens

A stalwart friend and member of Unity Church, who, for thirty years, served as bass section leader of the Unity Choir. Service plans are pending.

In Celebration

Wendy Harris

Unity Church member and teacher at Metro Deaf School in St. Paul, has been named a master teacher through a partnership between National History Day and the Library of Congress. The 10 recipients were chosen from 65 applicants, and Harris is the only Minnesota teacher among the 10 honored.

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APRIL SUNDAY SERVICES

Sunday Worship

As of the April *commUNITY* publication date, our building is closed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. We believe it likely we will need to maintain our ministry online during the month of April. We are monitoring the situation closely and will do our best to keep the congregation well informed.

Multigenerational Sunday Services are being live-streamed from the Ames Chapel at 10:00 a.m. Religious Education opportunities will be offered beginning at 11:00 a.m. Please join us. Services are being recorded and may be viewed at your convenience following the live stream. Details and links are online at www.unityunitarian.org. Past sermons will be available online at www.unityunitarian.org/sermon-archive--podcasts.html.

Watch for information about Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services.

April 5: *Walking Toward Jerusalem*

Even though Jesus had a sense of what waited for him from the powers that be, he still pressed on to Jerusalem. He knew he possessed a message of liberation of love and mercy. As we enter the holy days of Easter and Passover, Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs and worship associate Shelley Butler will explore themes of integrity and liberation in the days of Covid-19.

April 12: Easter Sunday • *Roll Away the Stone*

Mary Magdalene and the others went to the tomb to anoint their Master's body. But when the stone was rolled away, they saw he was not there. The Unity Church ministry team will grapple with this troubling, transcendent metaphor as we look for Easter joy together.

April 19: *Spiritual Friendship*

In his latest book *Conflagration: How the Transcendentalists Sparked the American Struggle for Racial, Gender and Social Justice* (Beacon Press 2020), former UUA President John Buehrens recounts the creative possibilities that grew out of the spiritual friendships among that small circle that helped reimagine the nation. Revs. Rob and Janne Eller-Isaacs and worship associate Erika Sanders will explore what can emerge out of years of shared reflection.

April 26: *Coming of Age Sunday • Passing through Gates*

There are certain gates and threshold moments that none can pass through without being initiated into a deeper intimacy with life. What is it to come of age at a time when we touch the very limits of our human condition, or find ourselves stuck in countless places with their aching possibilities? What signals our strongest aspiration than braving the impossible? Coming of Age Sunday celebrates the signature year-long journey of our 9th grade youth, transitioning from the inherited faith of childhood to the adult journey of faith, and marked by youth sharing their statement of faith or credo with mentors and families.

Offering Recipients

Each Sunday, thirty percent of the offering goes to support the Community Outreach Ministry at Unity Church and seventy percent is given to a chosen community non-profit recipient. Donations are gratefully accepted online at <https://bit.ly/sundayoffering>. Checks, payable to Unity Church, should be sent "Attn. Song Thao" with the name of the organization in the memo.

April: 5: [Minnesota Moms Demand Action](#)

Minnesota Moms Demand Action (MMDA) is part of Every Town for Gun Safety, the largest gun violence prevention organization in the country. The group lobbies for sensible gun legislation and work to reduce childhood gun deaths through their Be Smart campaign. MMDA strives to engage a more culturally and ethnically diverse network of volunteers. This collection will support outreach to underrepresented communities disproportionately impacted by gun violence. Unity Church members Patricia Eaves and Patricia Ohmans are strong supporters of MMDA.

April 12: [Mano a Mano International Partners](#)

Mano a Mano works to create partnerships with impoverished Bolivian communities to improve health and economic wellbeing by building medical clinics, schools, roads, and water reservoirs and providing medical and agricultural training. This collection will be used to support Mano a Mano's medical surplus program which collects medical supplies that would otherwise be thrown into Minnesota landfills, organizes these supplies, and ships them to Bolivia. Unity Church member Ray Wiedmeyer is the guiding light for this medical surplus mission.

April 19: [Walker West Music Academy](#)

Walker West Music Academy was founded in 1988 by Rev. Carl Walker and Grant West. The academy is the epicenter of a vibrant music learning community rooted in the African-America cultural experience where people of all ages and backgrounds gather to explore and grow through music. Walker West has become an oasis of personal and community renewal in the heart of the Selby-Dale neighborhood. This collection will support Walker West Academy's scholarship fund. Patricia Haff, former Unity Church outreach director, nominated Walker West Academy.

April 26: [YWCA St. Paul College Club](#)

The College Club's mission is to help at risk students from impoverished families change their lives by becoming successful college applicants through exploring and assessing postsecondary options, preparing for SAT and ACT exams, tackling financial aid applications, and meeting with admissions counselors. This collection will offset expenses to take students to college campuses, exposing them to higher education and a college setting. Unity Church member Beverly Heydinger is YWCA board member and advocate of the College Club.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Maintaining Our Integrity

Jennifer Tong, Trustee

We live in interesting times. As I write this column in mid-March 2020, events are moving quickly and I can hardly imagine what the world will be like by the time this is published. COVID-19 is lurking, insidiously, to a great extent invisibly, and yet it's there whether we acknowledge it through testing or not. As a community we have to take steps to mitigate. Unity Church has just closed its doors for the first time since 1918 when we had the last really big global pandemic. I attended my first board meeting virtually. We are changing processes to adapt to this new reality.

In times like this it's important to carefully consider how we can adapt to the massive changes all around us without losing our core values. Which processes still work, which ones do we have to change, which do we let go? Remaining true to our values is key to maintaining our integrity, our grounded sense of wholeness and completeness in the swirl of change.

As we wend our way through the ministerial search process, the board is continually checking back in with itself to ensure we are doing so with integrity. Some decisions are relatively easy, and the traditional ways still seem to work. In our budget we included funding for a full audit of our 2019 financial statements to let our congregation and the ministerial candidates know that what we are saying about our financial situation is reasonable and accurate and has been independently reviewed. That audit is underway now.

Other areas are trickier. How do we ensure our search processes align with our aspiration to create brave space to dismantle dominant culture and create a truly multicultural church? What is a "fair" process in a culture steeped in white supremacy and patriarchy? How do we mitigate against the most insidious aspects of it, to get to a healthy outcome that reflects our values?

For several weeks in February every voting member had the opportunity to put forward the names of up to two individuals they thought would do a good job serving on the search team. The transition sub-team sent to every one of those named a questionnaire which included the question of whether they were willing to serve.

A key goal of the process was to create a search team that is skilled and balanced, which can represent and serve the whole congregation. While our congregation includes a large number of white people over the age of 55 (myself included!) who certainly should be represented on the team, it would not be fair or balanced if that is the only type of congregant represented. This is important not only to the board, as we keep our Ends in mind, but it's also going to be important as the ministerial candidates look us over too. They, and we, will be expecting a search team that is congruent with our aspiration to create a multicultural spiritual home. The board is continually asking itself, are we living our values? We are particularly reflecting on this question in developing the search committee.

As I write this the board is still in the process of reviewing the responses and discerning how we can ensure the slate of candidates which is put forward both understands and reflects our values and aspirations, and has the skills to best implement this search process. By the time this is published the congregation will be about to see, or perhaps has already seen, that slate of twenty candidates for the Ministerial Search Team. Voting members will have the opportunity to vote at the congregational meeting on April 26 (watch for details). The top five vote-getters will be placed on the search team. The trustees will then determine the selection of the four other positions to ensure a well-balanced team with the skillsets needed for this important task.

I don't know what the world will be like by then, but I know that the candidate slate, and the resulting search team, will have been selected after careful consideration and will no doubt be well-suited to the work of selecting our next called minister.

Looking for ways to make a difference from home?

Census 2020 Online

Unity is a partner with the effort to complete as wide and inclusive a census as possible. The online census is now live: <https://my2020census.gov/>. The census provides critical data that lawmakers, business owners, teachers, and many others use to provide daily services, products, and support for you and your community. Every year, billions of dollars in federal funding go to hospitals, fire departments, schools, roads, and other resources based on census data. The results of the census also determine the number of seats each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives, and they are used to draw congressional and state legislative districts. Complete the census now, and encourage your family, friends, and neighbors to participate!

BELOVED COMMUNITY STAFF TEAM

This IDI Thing Is Really Important!

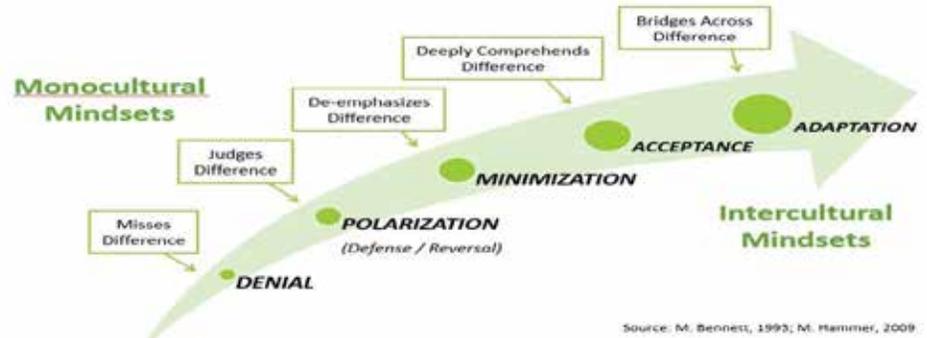
Pauline Eichten on behalf of the Beloved Community Staff Team

The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI, <https://idiinventory.com/>), developed by Mitchell R. Hammer, professor of international peace and conflict resolution at American University, assesses intercultural competence as the capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities. To help us grow our ability to be an anti-racist, multicultural spiritual community, a number of key ministry groups at Unity Church are being invited to take the IDI. The sessions are also available to individual congregants. In the [March issue of commUNITY](#), Peter Heege talked with Kelley Nelson, one of our three qualified IDI administrators, about the role of the administrators. This month we asked Unity Church member Nick Rath about his experience with the IDI.

When he walked into the Welcome Team group profile feedback session, Unity Church member Nick Rath didn't know anything about the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). When he left, he thought "this IDI thing is really important!"



Betsy Hearn, one of our qualified IDI administrators, talked with me about the Welcome Team session. The group started with a discussion about culture: what do we mean by it, and what do we know about our own culture. The facilitators used the iceberg metaphor (www.languageandculture.com/assets/images/Cultural-Iceberg-2015-English.jpg), which says the majority of what makes up culture is "hidden," to explore what cultural differences might look like. Then they reviewed the IDI continuum and the different stages of



development. It was the first time Nick had seen the IDI continuum. "It made sense," he said. "I could see myself at different times in my life."

The group profile was then explained. This profile shows a distribution of where each individual locates on the continuum, but not any individual result. Those are only shared with a qualified IDI administrator. According to Betsy, this Welcome Team group had a typical profile. Sixty-four percent of the group ended up in the center, in minimization, similar to results of groups around the world. Minimization highlights the commonalities in basic human needs and values and de-emphasizes the differences. This can impede recognition or appreciation of deeper cultural differences.

Members of the Welcome Team group had what she described as a "healthy conversation" about the practice of welcoming. How have we learned to do it, and is that how someone else might want to be welcomed? What is the role of the Welcome Team? Betsy commented on how multi-layered the role can be, from greeting people at the door, to managing the flow in and out of the sanctuary, to helping people find their way around the building.

As Nick and I talked, he shared his realization that he needs to be more conscious of his own lens, to reflect more in the moment: What am I thinking? How is that affecting my behavior? I asked him how he thought

the IDI might affect his ministry. "I never thought of being on a Welcome Team as a ministry," he said, but he sees how Welcome Teams can set the tone for how people experience Unity Church.

Unity Church has a culture that some might take for granted and find quite comfortable, but may not feel welcoming to some others. The IDI offers an opportunity to become more aware of how each of us experiences cultural difference. The one-on-one feedback session provides the greatest potential value. It can offer a roadmap to help a person further develop their self-awareness and ability to facilitate learning across cultures. Nick is looking forward to his one-on-one feedback and is eager to learn more about what he can do to grow.

Betsy emphasized that there is no right or wrong with the IDI; it is simply a benchmark to grow from.

The individual IDI profile and the one-on-one feedback sessions will help each of us grow in self-awareness and intercultural competence. And that will help us fulfill Unity Church's stated Ends of building an anti-racist, multicultural Beloved Community.

There's no charge for the IDI and the individual sessions, although donations to cover the cost are accepted. Anyone interested is encouraged to get on the schedule by contacting Drew Danielson at drew@unityunitarian.org to sign-up.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE



Welcome Words

Rev. Lisa Friedman
Minister of Congregational and Community Engagement

In these uncertain, unsettling times, I want you to know that you and your families are each in my heart and in my prayers. Whether you first visited Unity Church just a couple of Sundays ago, or you have considered this congregation a spiritual home for years, or you are a neighbor or partner in ministry, my Universalist faith teaches me that we are all connected to our shared humanity. Even as we practice physical distance in these days of COVID-19, we are committed to staying in touch in every other way available to us. Just as my door is always open to you in our building, it remains so now in our church beyond all walls. I am glad to connect with you via phone, or email, or zoom to talk about your faith journey and the joys and challenges that are moving in your heart. I'm also ready to help connect you into the ministry of this congregation — can we help in any way? Are you available to be of service to others, as the needs of this moment arise? This is a time to live out our faith and our values in new ways in a new world. You are not alone - we are with you on this journey, always. See you in online church!

Pathway to Membership Classes

Sign up for Pathway to Membership classes at the Welcome Table on Sundays or contact Rev. Lisa Friedman, Minister of Congregational and Community Engagement, at lisa@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x 107. Lisa is also happy to meet with you personally to answer questions and to welcome you into the congregation.

Finding Yourself at Unity: A Deeper Inquiry

Finding Yourself at Unity will move to a weekly online one-hour class in the coming weeks. These sessions can be attended in the order that works for you. Topics will include: UU History, Religious Education for Children, Youth, and Adults, Pastoral Care, Q & A with a Minister, Worship & the Liturgical Year, Social Justice & Community Outreach, Membership 101 & Congregational Life, and perhaps even an online Building Tour! Check the website, online calendar, and weekly emails for the class schedule and zoom link.

Committing to Unity: Joining Unity Church

Have you been considering membership at Unity Church? This class explores the deeper meanings and expectations of membership and shared ministry. It offers time to reflect on the meaning of generosity and how you can discover the places in your life where the world's needs meets the gifts and joy you have to offer. The class concludes with a ceremony as participants sign the membership book and officially join the church! RSVP by email to Rev. Lisa Friedman at lisa@unityunitarian.org and she will be in touch about the new class schedule.

Mentoring at Unity: A deeper path to connection.

Unity Church has a mentor program available to all visitors and new members. A mentor serves as a guide and a resource in the congregation. They pledge to meet at least once a month face to face (online if necessary), and be available for ongoing questions and advice for at least six months. Each mentor/mentee team can decide what is most helpful — to have a buddy with whom to attend services and events, or a partner with whom to discuss Unitarian Universalism and each other's spiritual journeys, and more. If you have questions or would like to request a mentor, please email Rev. Lisa Friedman at lisa@unityunitarian.org.

Wellspring Wednesday

What is a Wednesday night without a delicious meal, a fabulous chapel service, and engaging programs? Our Wellspring Wednesday team is actively working to bring Unity Church to you on Wednesday nights in creative ways — from recipes from our talented cooks, to singing happy birthday, to online chapel, to webinar programs and conversations. Stay tuned! More information will be available on the website and in the Wellspring Wednesday emails.

Call for Parish Hall Artists

Application deadline: May 1

Art is a medium through which human beings experience gifts of the spirit. Response to a work of art may be felt on intense, profound levels. As with poetry or literature, theatre, dance or music, the visual arts provide meditative and emotional opportunities and appreciation of life's process, cultures, and society.

Unity Church has the Parish Hall gallery available for the showing of works of visual art. It is anticipated that these exhibitions provide spiritual enrichment and liveliness for those attending the church and its functions. At the same time the gallery provides an opportunity for artists to show, share and sell their work.

Are you an artist? Please submit your work for consideration by May 1.

The Unity Church Art Team accepts applications each year during the months prior to May 1 of each year. The Art Team will consider these applications in May and select artists for monthly exhibits that will start in October.

If you would like to submit work for consideration, please visit www.unityunitarian.org/parish-hall-artists or contact the Unity Art Team at artteam@unityunitarian.org.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Pastoral Care

If you have a joy or sorrow, life-cycle event, or concern you would like to share with the ministers and Pastoral Care Team, or have shared in the embracing meditation during Sunday service, please complete the online form at www.unityunitarian.org/pastoral-care.html or send an email to janne@unityunitarian.org and a minister or team member will contact you.

Thresholds Group

If you are in the midst of or on the brink of a major life change, the Thresholds Series is an excellent opportunity to find community support, spiritual practices, explorations in poetry and art that can uplift your soul. I recommend it to anyone encountering fear, sadness, loss or even joy upon embracing a 'threshold' to be crossed in their lives.

— Paul Gade, 2018 Thresholder

The 2020 Thresholds series, facilitated by Karen Hering, still has a few openings for the group starting late April. If you are crossing a threshold in your life — a change in relationship, work, home, roles, identity or abilities that feels like a turning point, chosen or not, consider participating in the 2020 program.

The facilitated small group meets four Saturdays, April 24-June 6, with two more optional sessions focused on creative projects. Group size is limited and pre-registration is required. Participants must commit to attending all four core sessions and should have access to a computer with internet connection or a mobile device to participate by online connection if pandemic meeting restrictions are still in effect. For additional information, specific dates, and to register online visit www.unityunitarian.org/adult-learning-spiritual-practice.html.

The Thresholds group provides a safe space in which to explore the emotional impact of significant life transitions of many different kinds. I found in it a spirit of kindness and empathy. It was a chance for my soul to catch up with me before making decisions about what's next.

— Clover Earl, 2018 Thresholder

Chalice Camp 2020

Chalice Camp Week 1: July 6-10

Chalice Camp Week 2: July 13-17

Chalice Camp Week 3: July 20-24

For children and youth entering grades 1-8. Camp runs from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., daily. Details, including staff application and camper registration, are online at www.unityunitarian.org/chalice-camp.html. Questions? Contact Claire Newhouse, Camp Director at chalicecamp@unityunitarian.org.

Fellowship Groups

Please visit www.unityunitarian.org for updated information about these group meetings, and if there will be an opportunity to connect online.

Afterthoughts offers time to discuss the service. Contact Paul Gade, 651-253-1493

Caregivers Group: An informal support group for caregivers. Third Thursday of the month, noon–2:00 p.m. Contact Janne Eller-Isaacs, janne@unityunitarian.org

Evergreen Quilters: The group meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-9:00 p.m. (at Unity Church), and fourth Saturday of the month, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. (offsite). Contact Peggy Wright, 651-698-2760

Families Living with Mental Health Challenges: A support group for families living with mental health challenges. Meets the first Saturday of each month, 9:30-11:30 a.m. Contact Janne Eller-Isaacs, janne@unityunitarian.org

Living With Grief Group: For people living with grief and loss. Third Tuesday of the month, 7:00-9:00 p.m. Contact Janne Eller-Isaacs, janne@unityunitarian.org

Men's Conversation Group meets April 13 and 27, from 7:00-9:00 p.m., to discuss a wide range of topics. Contact Terry McDanel, tmcdanel@gmail.com

Men's Retirement Group: Monday, April 6 and 20, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact Tom Zell, tomzell@me.com

New Look at the Bible: Meets the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. Contact: Paul Gade, 651-253-1493

Recovery from White Conditioning: Wednesdays, 6:00-7:00 p.m., Gannett Room. Contact Dayna Kennedy, daynamelissa@icloud.com

Textile Arts Group meets the first and third Wednesdays of each month from 7:15-8:30 p.m. Bring your knitting, embroidery, needlepoint, etc. Contact Johanna Stammeier-Toole, johanna21e@gmail.com.

Unity Book Club: Second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m. Contact Jack Hawthorne, jack.hawthorne@centurylink.net.

Women In Retirement: Meets the second and fourth Thursday of the month, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact Lisa Friedman, lisa@unityunitarian.org

Young Adult Group (ages 18-35) meets two Sundays per month, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact KP Hong, kp@unityunitarian.org

Zen Meditation: Find renewal and grounding. Tuesdays, 5:00-6:00 p.m. Contact KP Hong, kp@unityunitarian.org.

Open Page Writing Sessions



We are currently preparing to offer the monthly guided writing sessions online, if the COVID-19 meeting restrictions are still in effect on April 15. To receive instructions and an invitation to participate online or by phone, please sign up online at www.unityunitarian.org/literary-ministry.html.

Led by Consulting Literary Minister Karen Hering, Open Page writing sessions are invitations to correspond with the "still, small voice within." Using stories, poetry, images and objects as well as wisdom from religious teachings, science and history, and provided prompts, participants reflect on the month's theme in their own words and on their own pages. No writing experience is necessary. Bring something to write with and on; the rest will be provided!

Integrity: remembering who we are

Wednesday, April 15 • 7:15-8:30 p.m. • Online

Poet Charles Bukowski asks, "Can you remember who you were, before the world told you who you should be?" In this guided writing session, you are invited to consider what it might mean to experience the integrity of remembering and living out the truth about who we are and what we believe in the sanctuary of our heart.

Living on the Threshold

Wednesday, May 27 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

A threshold, whether physical or emotional, personal or shared, is a place of great vitality and exchange, where new greets old, where outside meets inside, where stranger crosses over to become friend. This session invites you to explore the thresholds in your own life as places of heightened awareness and possibility. (Note: this one time writing session is related but distinct from the annual Thresholds series running April - June 2020, for which advance registration and commitment are required.)

To Bless and Be Blessed

Wednesday, June 3 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

A blessing, according to John O'Donohue, "is a circle of light drawn around a person to protect, heal, and strengthen. . . . A blessing awakens future wholeness." Join in a session of writing and reflection exploring the healing and wholeness invited by blessing.

National Poetry Month — One Way or Another

Shelley Butler, Library and Bookstall Team



This column was supposed to be easy to write — it's National Poetry Month after all, and we have two poetry readings scheduled, we have upwards of 100 books of poetry between the Anderson Library and the Whitman Children's Library, and the Bookstall has a regular stock of favorites and fabulous new titles. But Unity Church is closed as I write this. Will it be open by the time you read this? I don't know. Either way, let's celebrate National Poetry Month.

If the building is open, please do join us for live poetry:

Wednesday April 1 • 7:15 p.m.

Some of Them Made Up; Each One True:

An Evening of Poetry

with Don Brunquell, Kathy Oakley, Lia Rivamonte, and Marg Walker

Wednesday April 29 • 7:15 p.m.

In Celebration of Mothers

Poets Reading from *Rocked by the Waters:*

Poems of Motherhood

with 15 poets including Minnesota's Poet Laureate Joyce Sutphen, co-editor Margaret Hasse, and Kao Kalia Yang. What an honor and rare opportunity to hear all these great poets at Unity Church!

And whether or not Unity is open in April, poetry itself need not be deferred. In honor of National Poetry Month, we have created a free e-book for you, ***A Month of Poems Randomly Chosen from 10 Years of Cairns, 2009-2018***. Download the collection directly at www.librarycat.org/lib/UnityChurch/item/179858775.

The Unity Library Catalog is online (www.librarycat.org/lib/UnityChurch) of course, but did you know that the catalog contains links to selected online resources on anti-racism, social justice, immigration, and more? For poetry, find a link in the catalog to "Joy Harjo's Inaugural Reading as U.S. Poet Laureate." To see more, click the "Online Resources" link on the catalog home page or search "online." All of these resources can be found on the [Unity Library & Bookstall Team](http://www.librarycat.org/lib/UnityChurch) page on the Unity Church website.

However you celebrate, Happy National Poetry Month!

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Gun Sense Talks

Gun Sense Ministry Team

A series of interviews with Unity Church members.

Gun Sense: We understand that in your family, as you grew up, guns were a part of your family's life. How were guns used in your family?

Church member: Our dad loved nature, being outside in the elements, and feeling connection with the earth. He had learned about hunting and fishing as a youth and passed on to us his knowledge and appreciation, including gun safety. To him hunting was natural, basic, and led to camaraderie that he enjoyed. We appreciated eating venison, quail, and rabbit after successful hunts. He accumulated a gun collection which he kept in a locked cabinet. Sometimes we helped him fill shotgun shells before going to the skeet range to practice shooting.

Gun Sense: We also understand that at one point, after the family had grown, there was a tragedy involving a gun.

Church member: Years later, my sibling's spouse had mental health issues aggravated by threats from a former spouse. Threats and acts of violence lead my sibling to keep a handgun in the house for their safety. However, in a moment of anger, my sibling's spouse used the handgun to commit suicide.

Gun Sense: Could you say something about the impact of that event on the family?

Church member: I believe the horror of that suicide was a major contributing factor in my sibling's later self-destructive behavior.

Gun Sense: Thank you for sharing your story with the congregation. This sort of tragedy is one that is so very hard for people to share. As we work to try to change the relationship of our society with guns, we think it important to know what people have experienced in their real lives.

Amazing Grace

Dale Howey, on behalf of the Sustainable Living Team

I love our church. You all have made me a better person, a more considerate parent, more thoughtful as a husband, and a better listener. I still have much to do, but we are all works in progress. As we contemplate another approaching Earth Day, I have pondered a deeper meaning to the "save the planet" message that is permeating the air waves. The planet will be fine without us, and my cynical side would say it would be better off. We have made a real mess of things.

The song, "Amazing Grace," was written by John Newton in 1779. I was fascinated by his story of being a slave ship captain, known for his wild behavior and antics. After surviving a severe storm in his slave ship, he had a revelation and began to reshape his life. His testimony and leadership helped abolish slavery in England. It didn't happen overnight, but he began the process. We should too, with urgency. We are treating the Earth, a living breathing entity, no better than the slaves on that ship, whipping her to our will, and taking whatever we want, with no thought of the anguish we inflict on her, ourselves, and all creation.

I used to be a truck driving gas guzzling fossil fool, thinking that was normal, that there were no choices, a lucrative business, no money for alternatives. My storm was the presidential election in 2000, and then Gore vs. Bush supreme court decision. I researched the issues and saw the trajectory for the planet. My awakening came and I began to change, keeping my eye on how I was treating the Earth. I began to follow the six "R's" — reduce, reuse, refuse, repurpose, repair, recycle.

Let us right this ship, our "Blue Boat Home." Let us look at our children and see a bright future for them. I am hopeful we can turn things around. We have to. I commit acts of exploitation of the earth every day, however I believe I am on the humble journey of recovery to a right relationship with the world around me. Seeing and admitting we have a problem is a start. We are not separate from the natural world; we cannot fill our voids with stuff. With purpose, vision, love, and much joyful hard work, we can join the world and our Mother Earth on our journey together. We do this together. Amen.

Please watch for information about upcoming Sustainable Living Team meetings, events, and opportunities to engage online.

Invitation to Serve at Obama Elementary

Obama School Ministry Team

Members and friends of Unity Church have a unique opportunity to make a positive difference in our community. The students and staff of Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School (across the street) need our help and support. As a classroom volunteer you can make a difference in two ways: creating a positive relationship with a child helps build the child's confidence and feelings of self-worth, and tutoring helps build the child's academic achievement. In addition, there are other ways to be involved. The teachers and children are enthusiastic about our volunteers and we'd like you to consider joining us.

Get started in April, for beginning your service in September! Email Nancy Heege at nancyheege@cs.com to request a volunteer preference form and a Saint Paul schools background investigation form. Forms that are returned by April 30 will be processed by the school district this spring; forms returned after April 30 will be delayed. Note: each volunteer will be asked to pay \$12 for the background check this year.

Obama Elementary also has a receipt box at Kowalski's on Grand Avenue. If you happen to shop there, please put your grocery receipts in the donation box at the checkout area. Each receipt adds up to money for Obama Elementary!

MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH



The Importance of Being

Drew Danielson, Coordinator of Youth and Campus Ministries

My dad was never not earnest. I simply cannot visualize him being conflicted or half-hearted about what he was doing. Speaking into a bullhorn on the picket line, teaching Sunday school, showing

me how to put my fingertips on the football's laces in order to put spin on my passes. I have unbound respect for the integrity he showed in his highly political labor union work, for his leadership at church, for how he approached being a husband and father. For the care he took of the house, the yard, our cars. For how he taught me to do and to be.

His integrity was not always easy to live with. His certainty when I was young was inspiring and comforting; less so when I felt unequal to his judgement as I entered adulthood and made my own way. I began to see him as rigid, simple, plodding. I would live my life more considerate of complexity and the unknown and what was possible if I was just a bit more open to anything. He had wasted too much of his life always trying to do the narrowly defined right thing.

And then I had kids, and started to understand why it all mattered so much. I have felt the pressure to curate my legacy, and been absolutely convinced I will never be thought of in the same way — I will not measure up as possessing that type of integrity. My kids will, I am mostly confident of this, think well of me and appreciate my efforts. They won't see me as a bastion of certainty in anything beyond my insistence that it's always worthwhile to try to be funny.

As I write this, I'm in a reality that is changing every 12 hours at least, and I cannot imagine what will be happening with the COVID pandemic when this newsletter gets to you. I am shook — I'm not at a point of dread or doom, I'm just completely uncertain. I wish I knew what to say to my kids, what exactly I and they should be doing. I struggle to balance my ideals for hope, community, and justice with fear and defensiveness and a need to protect my own. My kids are going to be learning some very real lessons right now, they are going to know some things about me whether I like it or not. They will see very quickly whether my spiritual sermonizing and moral preaching is real or not.

Yesterday I took a chance with my skeptical, way too cool and contained for me son, and told him I was absolutely clear that I knew I had unavoidable responsibility to my family. That the family started with the four of us, but that I was also aware of how many other people were important to me, and how my actions needed to be in support of them all. That there was no time for my self-absorption. He nodded his head — not like "yeah right" but like "yes, I get that." It makes breathing easier feeling our kids don't need us to be unquestionably certain with unshakeable integrity. They do need to know we're aware of what is "integral" in how we move forward.

Religious Education: Staying Connected

Please stay connected as we adapt to unfolding circumstances, migrating programs online and exploring best practices for our children and families. For now, some notes to orient and guide our next steps:

The worship team continues to shape best practices to live stream Sunday worship, and attention to children and families remains a formative part of that process. Similarly so for Wellspring Wednesday programming. Please stay connected here: www.unityunitarian.org.

We have always held to our core conviction that parents are the primary spiritual directors of their children, shaping our overarching aspiration in Religious Education to more closely connect church and home. We ask the vast majority of our teachers and volunteers who are parents to practice living into their role as spiritual directors at home, with much of our curricula already available online at www.unityunitarian.org/teacher-resources.html

- **Spirit Play (ages 3-6):** We hope to have video storytelling available for upcoming Sundays, for parents to view and wonder together with your children. We have also uploaded Mealtime and Bedtime Rituals for the home (developed by the UU Families Initiative), as wonderful resources to embed UU rituals into family life.
- **Rotations (grades 1-6):** Curriculum is online, with many lessons that can be adapted for the home. We are hoping to schedule Sunday Zoom gatherings, for children and teachers in each class to connect and share. Watch for email invitations to join.
- **Junior High (grades 6-8):** Curriculum is online (and link for video series will be sent for youth enrolled in Intro to Islam class). We are hoping to schedule Sunday Zoom gatherings, for youth and teachers in each class to connect and share. Watch for email invitations to join.
- **Our Whole Lives, Coming of Age, and Tower Club** gatherings are signature programs for older youth with more complex elements and schedules. Please stay tuned as teachers and staff coordinate next steps.

The Religious Education Ministry Team and R.E. staff will continue to discern next steps and update. We know that the coming weeks are woven with spring break (already for some) and that April is threaded with Easter and several culminating events in R.E. Please don't hesitate to contact R.E. staff with questions/concerns. We will make our way, as we have always done, present to/for/with one another.

MUSIC MINISTRY



Music Notes

Ahmed Anzaldúa
Director of Music Ministries

The practice of social distancing to protect our most vulnerable has really served to highlight the singularity of choir as a communal experience. Musicians everywhere are shifting their music lessons to Zoom and other online platforms, performances to online streaming, and using the time at home to compose and practice. However, many in the choral music community — myself included — now find ourselves aimless, unmotivated, and unfulfilled... there is a big hole in our lives. It has never been clearer that choral rehearsals and performances quite literally cannot be done apart from others.

Every culture throughout history has practiced some form of communal singing; this is not true of any other form of musical expression. We sing together to share our joy or grief, we sing together to give each other comfort or strength, we sing together to keep our stories alive from generation to generation. The impulse to sing together is ingrained in us, it is an archaic, powerful instinct that all humans share — in fact, research in cognitive science suggests that singing predates language! Communal singing both brings us together and allows us to practice how to be together, it is a microcosm of society. Online singalongs are a poor substitute for this fundamental element of choir.

As we emerge from this period of social distancing in the coming months, I encourage you to take part in communal singing. While I fully endorse joining a choir, communal singing can be as simple as singing together with friends and family around a campfire, around the house, or in a bar. When it's time for a song in worship, sing loudly and enthusiastically! If you're not accustomed to singing with others, it can be quite awkward at first. However, once you get past this initial self-consciousness, I suspect that you will find that communal singing fills a void in the soul left there after our current period of isolation from each other.

Currently, Unity Church offers the following options for those interested in communal singing:

- **Children's Choir** (grades 1 - 5) Rehearsals are Sundays from 10:15–11:00 a.m., in the Foote Room. Kathleen Radspinner, director. Children's choir rehearsal activities are focused on hands-on music making. In addition to singing the children experience music through movement, games, playing instruments and learning about the elements of music.
- **Unity Choir** (adult, high school and beyond; non-auditioned ensemble of 60 to 75 voices) Rehearsal are Thursdays from 7:30– 9:15 p.m., in the Parish Hall. Unity Choir is a strong component on which our music program is built and is a vital and energetic presence in our community.
- **Unity Singers** (an auditioned a cappella chamber choir) Rehearsals are Tuesdays from 7:30-9:30 p.m., in the Parish Hall.
- **Women's Ensemble** is a continually growing and evolving group. These singers meet for only a half-hour each Sunday morning and into to this short rehearsal time they bring tremendous creative energy, commitment, and joy! Rehearsals are Sundays from 10:15-10:45 a.m.
- **Threshold Choir:** Unity Church houses the Twin Cities chapter of Threshold Choir, an ensemble that sings for those at the thresholds of life. Small groups of threshold singers bring music to people's bedsides as they die or are enduring illness or other suffering.

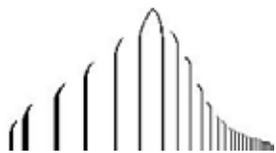
Unity's Artist in Residence Ina Yukka in Concert

Saturday, April 18
More details to follow!



Music Ministry Online

Unity Church has many recorded music pieces online! Check under the "Worship" tab of the website for past Arthur Foote Music Sunday recordings. There are also a several recordings that can be found here: www.unityunitarian.org/music-collection.html.



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- Sunday Worship
- Wednesday Chapel Service
- Weekday Minister's Message
- Pastoral Care Connections
- Religious Education Offerings
- Small Group Meetings
- Congregational Business
- Church Calendar of Online Meetings

Connect via social media:

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- Twitter
<https://twitter.com/unityunitarian>

Online membership database:

Unity Church members are invited to follow the easy directions to log-in and download the app to access the congregational database.
www.unityunitarian.org/membership-directory.html

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