

## Curiosity

*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.*

What does curiosity mean to you? I'm curious. Is it something you cherish and cultivate, or does it mark the beginning of a long slippery slope down which you'd rather not slide? Does it make a difference if it's *your* curiosity, or someone else's?

Curiosity, in fact, has had a checkered past with mixed opinions about whether it should be fostered or fenced. In contrasting creation stories of different people and faiths, one story says curiosity is the apple-eating downfall of the human race; while another suggests it is a desirable instinct that led to creativity, collaboration, and the birth of an interdependent world. Tracing the historical arc of attitudes within Western thinking alone, the ancient Greeks considered curiosity as a path for elevating the soul, while Augustine and the early Christian Church regarded it as a sinful diversion.

Today, the dictionary defines curiosity simply as a "a strong desire to learn or know something." But is there a distinction between curiosity and interrogation? Between a question that seeks to learn and one that strives to know? *Inside every question is a quest trying to get out*, observed Phil Cousineau. What is the quest at the core of curiosity when regarded as a spiritual practice?

The root of *curiosity* is related to the root of the words cure and care. Perhaps a spiritual practice of curiosity involves a quest for both healing and relationship. Curiosity also awakens

wonder with an openness to mystery — and an interest in what is unknown or unfamiliar. It asks us to be, as the poet John Keats put it, present to "uncertainties, mysteries, doubt, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." By which I understand "irritable" to mean premature. Not that fact and reason are bad, but that reaching for them too soon can precipitate an early closure of answers irritably latched down by facts.

Curiosity keeps the door open to mystery and relationship, even after an answer is given. It defies the small thinking that one perspective or understanding, or any single story, is ever enough to express the full truth of our interdependent web of life. We all learn a bigger truth when we share our own perspective or story while also asking others (and pausing to really listen), *How do you understand or experience this? And what might we learn by putting our distinct perspectives together, side by side?*

Google, of course, has dramatically impacted the 21st-century experience of curiosity, both feeding it and squashing it with answers so ready at hand, we don't even need to finish our question before Google or Siri completes it and suggests several answers. This quick reply removes what author Ian Leslie has called "creative friction," closing the "information gap" before our curiosity can even develop or mature. How might this impact our relationship with mystery? Or our willingness to live with the friction of paradox and

contradiction, to love the uncertainty of questions that defy quick and easy answers (as so many do in this time of upheaval and change)?

Writing to a young poet long ago, Rainer Marie Rilke said "... try to love the questions themselves like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. ... live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer."

Curiosity, then, is a matter of attention, patience, and longing. Of hunger. Of thirst. Raising the conundrum named by poet Kazim Ali, who wondered, "should I ask for my thirst to be quenched or for unquenchable thirst—" It is a question one could live with, unanswered, for a very long time.

*By Karen Hering on behalf of this month's theme team: Ahmed Anzaldúa, Drew Danielson, Janne Eller-Isaacs, Rob Eller-Isaacs, Ray Hommeyer, KP Hong, and Laura Park.*

### Curiosity Theme Resources

For further reflection on this theme, a variety of resources including books, poems, videos and audios, are listed in this month's Chalice Circle packet available online at [www.unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html](http://www.unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html) and by request from [karen@unityunitarian.org](mailto:karen@unityunitarian.org).

## Just Words



The word “curious” finds its origins in Latin and Old French. It is closely related to the word “cure.” It has been in use in English since the 14th century. Among its synonyms are: strange, odd, peculiar, eccentric, unexpected, funny, abnormal, and bizarre. Is it any wonder religious liberals hold the word in high regard? We equate curiosity with wonder, exploration, and discovery. A curious child is less an annoyance and more a questioning person in love with the world. Doctrinal, shame-based theologies counsel submission and discourage curiosity as a rejection of the supremacy of God. We view it as a path to understanding and wholeness.

Each week, as part of the introduction to the Embracing Meditation we say, “Our lives are blessed by those who face their final days with curiosity and courage.” It seems to me that there is a kind of curiosity that is an indication of spiritual maturity. One of our core strengths is our ability to live with ambiguity. To cultivate curiosity, to remain open to new possibilities, is to take part in *creative interchange* which is a very sensible way to think about the nature of God.

I am so glad we won’t settle for a single story. As novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie points out in her brilliant TED Talk on the subject, single stories can be dangerous. The stories we tell about the past can easily constrain imagination and place artificial limits on the future. We are especially aware of this danger as we enter into our final months of service at Unity Church. With as much humility as we can muster we have begun to ask a question inspired by The Rev. Theodore Parker’s definitive 1841 sermon, “A Discourse Upon the Transient and Permanent in Christianity.” In it he delineates between the ministry of Jesus and the orthodoxies Christendom has embraced. We are asking, what is transient and what is permanent in the life of Unity Church? We are not really looking for answers. We are instead hoping to inspire a constellation of stories that will help to inform the period of discernment and then of search upon which you are about to embark. May holy curiosity be at the very heart of these conversations. May we recognize and set aside our orthodoxies as we strengthen and renew the ministry we share.

As always,  
Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs

## The Wheel of Life

### In Celebration

**Jason-Aeric Huenecke of Oceans and Mathew Williams**

Married legally after 22 years together, December 21, 2020.

### In Memoriam

**Elizabeth Shippee**

September 20, 1920 – January 5, 2021

**Chauncey Griggs, III**

January 5, 1937–January 7, 2021

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## 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](http://www.unityunitarian.org/pastoral-care.html) or send an email to [janne@unityunitarian.org](mailto:janne@unityunitarian.org) and a minister will contact you.

## Working Toward Prayer • Save the dates!

**Wednesday, March 17 • 7:00 p.m.**

**Followed by five Tuesday nights: March 23 and 30, April 6, 13, 20**

Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs offers this class to help participants summon a quality of attention, a way of being, he calls prayer. This offering is free for pledging members and \$30 for non-pledging friends. Registration link to follow.



# FEBRUARY SERVICES

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## Sunday Worship and Coffee Hour

While our building remains closed, multigenerational Sunday Services are being live-streamed from the Sanctuary at 10:00 a.m. Details and links, including access to past services, are available online at [www.unityunitarian.org](http://www.unityunitarian.org).

Each Sunday, everyone is welcome to join a virtual Zoom coffee hour after the service. To participate in the coffee hour, please use this link: <https://bit.ly/unitycoffeehour>. If you would like to receive our congregational emails, please sign up here: <https://bit.ly/ucuemailsignup>.

### February 7: *Let Your Curiosity Be Greater than Your Fear*

Livestream: [https://youtu.be/ZZfptZLWE\\_8](https://youtu.be/ZZfptZLWE_8)

In an oft quoted passage, Pema Chödrön encourages us all to lean into our curiosity as a way to transform ourselves and the world. Ruth MacKenzie, Unity Church member and Minister Emerita of First Universalist Church, will explore what it might be like to live beyond our fears, practicing curiosity as a way to collaborate with liberation, adaptivity, and vision. Rev. Ruth will be joined by worship associate Jake Rueter.

### February 14: *Holy Curiosity*

Livestream: <https://youtu.be/rdjI9E-O2ZI>

What is the role of spiritual curiosity in a religion that promotes ambiguity and a complex view of the many layers of truth? Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs and worship associate Richard Lau will share ways to be ever curious about the sacred and the journey we walk through life.

### February 21: *Curating Wonder*

Livestream: <https://youtu.be/IF2ehchmKi4>

Curiosity has always been central to liberal religious education. "Miracles Abound" was a formative curriculum that introduced children to the wonders of science in ways that were closely aligned to Emerson's view that miracles are profoundly natural occurrences. We tend to reject the supernatural in favor exploring the mysterious. Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs and worship associate Bailey Webster will offer a service to celebrate the church's role in curating wonder.

### February 28: *The Quest Inside Our Questions*

Livestream: <https://youtu.be/Rhet-7dFT1g>

Heeding Rilke's advice to "live the questions," we pause to consider the quest nested in the questions of our times. How can our questions guide us into deeper relationship with ourselves and others, and with a future shaped by uncertainty and change? Rev. Karen Hering and worship associate Kara Younkin Viswanathan explore the gifts of not knowing in a service that includes the congregation's blessing of this year's Thresholds Group and all those currently living on the cusp of significant change.

## 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>. Offering checks, payable to Unity Church, should be sent "Attn. Song Thao."

### February 7: Family Tree Clinic

[Family Tree Clinic](#) has been a fixture in health care in St. Paul for nearly 50 years. It offers counseling and sexual health care for teens including the LGBTQ community. It also provides legal services for the trans community. Family Tree has partnered with Unity Church staff working with the Our Whole Lives program, facilitating sessions on contraception and sexual health. Family Tree turns no one away because of inability to pay for services. This collection will help support Family Tree's sliding scale payment program.

### February 14: Joseph's Coat

[Joseph's Coat](#), founded in 1989, is a St. Paul free store providing goods and services to people whose life challenges have left them in need of essential goods. Serving nearly 700 people weekly, it aims to foster a sense of community between its clients and its dedicated core of volunteers. This collection will be used to obtain winter clothing and PPE items needed to navigate these pandemic times. Unity's Sharon Hogenson, a retired social worker, submitted this nomination.

### February 21: Frontline Families Fund

[Frontline Families Fund](#), created by Dr. Michael Osterholm, provides financial support and educational scholarships to the families of healthcare workers who have lost their lives to COVID-19. The fund places special emphasis on the pandemic's disproportionate impact on BIPOC health care workers. Unity's Lisa Burke, recently retired from nursing, submitted this nomination.

### February 28: MNIBA

[Minnesota Indigenous Business Alliance](#) (MNIBA) works to connect indigenous tribal economies in an effort to expand their financial punch. MNIBA is a critical resource hub for emerging indigenous entrepreneurs providing equitable access to tools to start and grow their businesses. COVID-19 has ravaged indigenous communities both physically and economically. This collection will help rescue severely strapped indigenous businesses.

#### *Flowers for Worship*

If you would like to provide flowers for Sunday worship, email Martha Tilton at [martha@unityunitarian.org](mailto:martha@unityunitarian.org).



## Leading in Liminal Times

Jackie Smith, Trustee

As I write this, the world waits. A few more hours, and we'll have a new President and Vice President. I wait, as I have for months, with many questions that have no answers. I also feel a

sliver of hope that the incoming administration, with their humanity and capacity (both in contrast to the outgoing one) will bring us to a better place together.

Another part of me must remember that I will be among the first to be "relieved." I'll get access to the things I need; my basic needs, my spiritual needs, and safety and security. I've had this all along, but still feel the gnawing sense of moving toward the unknown. As I feel this hope, relief, and promise (maybe even by the time this reaches your hands), I am also aware that this liminal space continues for others in a real way. Friends who will take years to recover financially. Families in our community who have lost loved ones to the multiple epidemics afflicting our country. Students who suffer isolation, frustration, and delayed opportunity to experience joyful, communal learning. As we come into ourselves again, I hope we bring everyone along.

Your board met with the executive team last weekend in retreat (via Zoom, of course). From the corners of the Metro area, we connected with one another, shared our vision for the future, and dug deep into who we are and what we want to become. Commitment to partnerships with moral owners — all who see Unity Church as part of the path to Beloved Community — led to deep conversations and more questions. Clear in that conversation was a commitment to powerful connections with one another and beyond our doors. We agreed to use a book on leading in liminal times, and I promise a full book report in the coming months. The basic idea I have, one chapter in, "We don't need to know what the end will look like, and we don't have to act like we know." As we continue to move in unknown times, I am here to be with my church family and my community. Your board is here to be an "unanxious presence" as we navigate. Along the way, we must pay attention to the bigger picture, to areas that might have been overlooked in the past, and make sure that the new "we" is who we say we want to be. My deepest hope is when we move, we grow in ways we say we want to grow, we share in ways we want to share, and we receive in ways that make us whole.



SAVE THE DATE

*we're in this*  
**TOGETHER**

UNITY CHURCH ANNUAL FUNDRAISER  
SATURDAY EVENING, MARCH 20, 2021

WE WILL BE ASKING YOU TO SUPPORT YOUR MOST VALUED AND BELOVED LOCAL BUSINESSES AND RESTAURANTS BY PURCHASING GIFT CARDS TO BE INCLUDED IN THIS YEAR'S VIRTUAL AUCTION EVENT.

BY PARTICIPATING, YOU WILL BE SUPPORTING BOTH UNITY CHURCH AND OUR BROADER COMMUNITY.

STAY TUNED FOR DETAILS!





# WELCOME NEWCOMERS



## Welcome Words

**Laura Park, Acting Director of Membership and Hospitality**

What curious question led you to seek out Unity Church? Did you wonder if there was a religious community that could welcome all of who you are? Were you curious about the intersection of spiritual growth and social justice? Were you seeking a way to better find and keep your balance? Whatever curious question led you here, we are glad you came. We're interested in the questions you're asking and eager to join with you to explore them together. If you'd like help finding pathways into deeper connection with our religious community for that exploration, my virtual door is always open for conversation, information, and consideration of the possibilities. The best way to contact me right now is email, if possible, [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org). Or call the church office and leave a message: 651-228-1456 x110. I look forward to getting to know you!

## Mentoring at Unity

Would you welcome having a guide to congregational life at Unity Church? Request a mentor! Your mentor will meet with you at least once a month face-to-face and be available for ongoing questions and advice. You can decide together what connection would be most helpful. You might attend Sunday services together or meet to discuss Unitarian Universalism and your spiritual journeys, or attend a church event together, or find another way to connect. Each pair makes a commitment to work together for at least six months. If you have questions, or would like to request a mentor, please email Laura Park, Acting Director of Membership and Hospitality, [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org).

## Church Calendar

All church programming can be found on our calendar at [www.unityunitarian.org/calendar1.html](http://www.unityunitarian.org/calendar1.html).

## Sunday Coffee Hour

After the service you are invited to participate in a virtual Zoom coffee hour, where we share a bit of our lives with each other and get to know one another more deeply. Join on Sundays after the 10:00 a.m. service here: <https://bit.ly/unitycoffeehour>.

## Pathway to Membership Classes

The offerings below invite you to explore a deeper connection to Unity Church and the commitments and opportunities of membership. If you have questions or would like one-on-one conversation about getting connected or about membership, please contact Laura Park, Acting Director of Membership and Hospitality, [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org) or 651-228-1456 x110.

### Finding Yourself at Unity

**Sundays Online • 1:00-2:00 p.m.**

Finding Yourself at Unity includes eight classes that you can attend in any order to better understand how Unity Church supports our faith journeys, our work to build Beloved Community, and our efforts to bless the world. Topics include: UU History; Religious Education for Children, Youth, and Adults; Pastoral Care; Q&A with a Minister; Worship and the Liturgical Year; Social Justice & Community Outreach; Membership 101 and Congregational Life, and even an online Building Tour! Sunday morning emails include the class topic and a Zoom link to get connected.

February 7: Building Tour

February 14: Religious Education for Children, Youth, and Adults

February 21: Pastoral Care

February 28: Q&A with the Ministers

### Committing to Unity

**Thursday, April 29**

- *Develop a personal practice to help you find and keep your balance.*
- *Develop the skills of small-group intimacy that allow you to go deep quickly with strangers.*
- *Take the compassion that rises from doing the first two and use it to bless the world.*

This is how Unity Church talks about its expectations of membership. Does the invitation into this ongoing work resonate with you? Are you ready to make the membership commitment? 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 need meets the gifts and joy you have to offer. The class concludes with a ceremony as participants sign the membership book (virtually if necessary) and officially join the church! RSVP by email to Laura Park at [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org).

# STAYING CONNECTED

## Congregational Database Sign in today!

Members are invited to log in to ShelbyNext, the online congregational database that includes the ability to update and review your own membership and giving account, access the membership directory, and view the calendar.

### To access from your PC:

- Open a browser (Chrome works best) and navigate to this URL: <https://unityunitarian.shelbynextchms.com/>
- Choose "Forgot Password?"
- Enter the email address you use to communicate with Unity Church
- You should receive an email with your username and password
- Log in, **upload a photo to your account**, and explore!

### To download the App:

- Go to your App store: Google Play for Droid and App Store for iPhone/iPad (iPad users make sure to choose iPhone app)
- Download ShelbyNext Membership
- Enter the domain: unityunitarian (full domain: unityunitarian.shelbynextchms.com)
- Choose "Forgot Password?" if it is your first time accessing ShelbyNext Membership (or just log in if you have already accessed it on your PC)
- Enter the email address you use to communicate with Unity Church
- You should receive an email with your username and password
- Log in and explore!

Questions? Contact Martha Tilton at [martha@unityunitarian.org](mailto:martha@unityunitarian.org) or 651-228-1456 x105.

## Online Group Meetings

The following groups have committed to meeting online while our building remains closed.

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

**Caregivers Group:** An informal support group for caregivers. Meets on the third Thursday of the month. Contact: Janne Eller-Isaacs, [janne@unityunitarian.org](mailto:janne@unityunitarian.org)

**Connecting with Ourselves and Others: Relationships and Sexuality:** Meets Thursday, February 25, 7:00-8:30 p.m., on the topic Expanding Our Desires. Register: <http://bit.ly/connectingselfandother>. A monthly series offering a candid look at gender identity, sexuality and relationships. Contact Mike Huber, [mikehuberece@gmail.com](mailto:mikehuberece@gmail.com)

**Evergreen Quilters:** The group meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-9:00 p.m. and fourth Saturday of the month. 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](mailto:janne@unityunitarian.org)

**Kung Fu:** This 60 minute practice strengthens the body, calms the mind, and lifts the spirit. Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. Contact Barney Kujawski, [barney.kujawski@gmail.com](mailto:barney.kujawski@gmail.com)

**Living With Grief Group:** A group for people living with grief and loss. Meets on the third Tuesday of the month. Contact: Janne Eller-Isaacs, [janne@unityunitarian.org](mailto:janne@unityunitarian.org)

**Men's Breakfast Group** meets on Saturday mornings at 8:30 a.m. Contact Tom Zell, [tomzell@me.com](mailto:tomzell@me.com)

**Men's Coffee Group** meets every Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. for light-hearted conversation. Contact Tom Zell, [tomzell@me.com](mailto:tomzell@me.com)

**Men's Conversation Group** meets Monday, February 8 and 22, from 7:00-9:00 p.m., to discuss a wide range of topics. Contact Terry McDanel, [tmcdanel@gmail.com](mailto:tmcdanel@gmail.com)

**Men's Retirement Circle:** Monday, February 1 and 15, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact Tom Zell, [tomzell@me.com](mailto:tomzell@me.com)

**Music Ministry:** Children's Choir, Unity Choir, Unity Singers, Women's Ensemble, and Thresholds Choir are all meeting and singing virtually. Contact Ahmed Anzaldúa, [ahmed@unityunitarian.org](mailto:ahmed@unityunitarian.org).

**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. Contact Dayna Kennedy, [daynamelissa@icloud.com](mailto:daynamelissa@icloud.com)

**Single Parenthood Support Group:** A single parents group building community together. Meets every other Wednesday, February 3 and 17, from 7:00-8:00 p.m. Contact Laura Park, [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org)

**Textile Arts Group** meets every other Wednesday, February 3 and 17, from 7:15-8:30 p.m. Bring your knitting, embroidery, etc. Contact Johanna Stammeier-Toole, [johanna2le@gmail.com](mailto:johanna2le@gmail.com)

**Unity Book Club:** Second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m. Contact Jack Hawthorne, [jack.hawthorne@centurylink.net](mailto:jack.hawthorne@centurylink.net)  
February 9: *Sailing Alone Around the World* by Captain Joshua Slocum  
March 9: *Swede Hollow* by Ola Larsmo

**Women In Retirement:** Meets the second and fourth Thursday of the month, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact Laura Park, [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org)

**Young Adult Group (ages 18-35):** To join the YA email list, email [kp@unityunitarian.org](mailto:kp@unityunitarian.org).

# WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

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## Wellspring Wednesday

Unity Church's Wellspring Wednesday has long been a multi-generational opportunity to gather midweek at church for food, fellowship, and fun. While the church building remains closed due to the pandemic, we continue to gather online for programming. Multi-generational chapel services are prerecorded and posted on the church's YouTube channel each Wednesday and one or two live online programs are offered each week at 7:00 p.m. as opportunities for enrichment, spiritual practice, and fellowship. If you haven't yet participated in an online program using Zoom, church staff can help you get started. Unless otherwise noted, you can use the registration link right up until the program starts to participate.

February 3 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

### **Antiracism Literacy Partners: A Next Right Action**

Register: <http://bit.ly/Feb3ALP>

What does it take to be racially literate and engaged in antiracism in a day-to-day way? Where do we find resources and support in our ongoing learning about systemic racism and the work of dismantling it? Whether you attended in the fall or are just checking it out now, this program is an easy entry into finding antiracism books, podcasts, and videos, as well as discussion partners for talking about them. Come to choose a resource, sign up for a buddy or small group, and receive discussion guidelines. This program is part of Unity's Finding Our Next Right Action efforts (see page 8).

February 10 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

### **Can we change farming to save rural communities and the environment?**

Register: <http://bit.ly/sltwwfebten>

A conversation with farmers, a rancher, and a community organizer about their dreams and challenges offers an insightful follow-up to this month's Sustainable Living Team film selection, *Kiss the Ground* (see page 11). How does regenerative agriculture look when boots and hooves hit the ground? How do we help farmers and ranchers transition to more sustainable models? How can we help emerging farmers, including people of color, get established?

*Speakers include: Barb Sogn-Frank, Soil Health Program Organizer, MN Land Stewardship Project; Nancy Labbe, Northern Great Plains Rangeland Director, The Nature Conservancy- MN, ND, SD; Kerri Meyer, Episcopal priest and Unity Church's former Religious Education Director; and Jennifer Blecha, Associate Professor of Human Geography at San Francisco State University. Kerri Meyer and Jennifer Blecha operate Good Courage Farm in Hutchinson, MN, an organic fruit farm and agrarian ministry.*

### **Open Page Writing: Cultivating Curiosity**

Register: <http://bit.ly/openpagecuriosity>

The scientist Erwin Chargraff dubbed uncertainty "the salt of life." What are the piquant possibilities of living in a time of dramatic uncertainty, personally and globally? How can our writing help us to cultivate curiosity both on and off the page, even and perhaps especially when uncertainty is in the air? Join Karen Hering for a guided writing session for writers and nonwriters alike, a chance to be in correspondence with your own heart and your own life.

February 17 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

### **Toward a Culture of Accountability and Care in Saint Paul**

Register: <http://bit.ly/accountabilitycare>

The COVID-19 pandemic and George Floyd's murder last summer have underscored the need to move from our current culture of fear and punishment toward a culture of accountability and care. This program, developed from the work of Unity's Racial and Restorative Justice Team, invites participants to learn from two local groups working on divestment from policing, investment in alternatives, and justice and healing for victims of police violence.

Come hear from Toshira Garraway and others from Families Supporting Families Against Police Violence ([www.fsfapv.org](http://www.fsfapv.org)) about how police violence has impacted their lives and how they are working for change on the city and state level. Meet representatives from Root and Restore Saint Paul ([www.facebook.com/RootAndRestoreSTP](http://www.facebook.com/RootAndRestoreSTP)), a multiracial, citywide coalition dedicated to community based solutions creating public safety and wellness. Both groups will share how to get involved in supporting their efforts and where to learn more about the issues they are working on. More details on page 9.

### **Love and Death**

Register: <http://bit.ly/uculoveanddeath>

Our now deceased colleague Rev. Dr. Forrest Church wrote in his book *Love and Death*, "Religion is the human response to the dual reality of being alive and having to die." Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs will lead this introductory session to a four part series on love and death. This session is open to all; those who are interested can then register for the remainder of the series that will meet Thursday evenings, February 25, March 4 and 18.

February 24 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

### **Congregation Book Read Discussion of Imani Perry's *Breathe***

Register: <http://bit.ly/bookreadbreathe>

Join us for a discussion of this year's Congregation Book Read, Imani Perry's *Breathe: A Letter to My Sons* (Beacon Press, 2019). Perry's thoughtful meditation on race, gender, and the meaning of life explores the terror, grace, and beauty of coming of age as a Black person in contemporary America and what it means to parent our children in a perpetually unjust world. This online discussion will be facilitated by Karen Hering and members of the Racial and Restorative Justice Team. Reading guide: [bit.ly/breathereadguide](http://bit.ly/breathereadguide).

# ARTIST IN RESIDENCE TEAM / NEXT RIGHT ACTIONS

## When I Leave My House

Reflection on How Curiosity Connects Us

Lia Rivamonte, Artist-in-Residence Team

Tonight  
in the dark kitchen  
only the stainless steel  
holds the moon

On the sidewalk in front of my house I am invited to see the moon on the stainless steel surfaces in the dark of my kitchen. I do not have a stainless steel sink; the moon does not enter my kitchen through the window above it. No matter, I am grateful to have this invitation impressed into the concrete that evokes such delight. I hope that all who pass my house will look down and notice, read the words, and experience the wonder of the conjured image.

There is much to admire in these four simple lines by the writer, @grumbles\_mccoey, and credit must be given to Marcus Young, Unity's current artist-in-residence, who initiated the project, "Everyday Poems for City Sidewalks." It is Marcus who envisioned the sidewalks of St. Paul as pages in a book of wildly diverse poems and who worked with the city's sidewalk maintenance program to make it happen.



What crosses your mind as you glimpse a pleasant looking man dressed in flowing robes walking calmly in silence through the galleries of the large museum you are visiting? Or, perhaps you're in a hurry, making your way to the bus stop. In the corner of your eye you catch a person dancing in an open space on the other side of the street. You stop to watch. Neither person asks you for anything yet you are drawn in. Each appears to be fully absorbed, moving through the space with intention. Each encounter throws you off, disrupts your routine in a subtle, but insistent way.

"Marcus Young brings an openness, curiosity and deep listening to his approach working within government agencies," says Jessica Oh, Highway Sponsorship Director with MnDOT's Office of Land Management where Marcus is serving as the Community Vitality Fellow. "He is interested in how art can create a more equitable world, both representational and lived, and his artistic practice considers those that are not at the table..."

Marcus's work is rooted in curiosity. It is playful and nonthreatening, and invites questions. Marcus was gently queried by patrons at MiA, during his 10-day live-in residency titled, "With Nothing To Give I Give Myself." He meditated, cleaned the chrome framework at the museum's entrance, and walked through the corridors in flowing robes. *Who are you? What are you doing? Why are you doing it?* People asked.

One of the truly wonderful things about Marcus' art practice is how it seems to exist in the world with no agenda other than to spark curiosity. Those who are open to receiving it will experience whatever they are ripe for at that moment of encounter.

His work challenges us, if we are willing, to imagine the possibilities, to begin honing a practice of seeing one another with no agenda, without prejudice. Can we let curiosity point the way?

## Next Right Actions

Unity's [Beloved Community Staff Team](#) strengthens and coordinates Unity's antiracism and multicultural work. These offerings are opportunities for taking the next right action in antiracism and multicultural work.

## A Next Right Action

### Antiracism Literacy Partners

Wednesday, February 3

7:00-8:30 p.m.

Register: <http://bit.ly/Feb3ALP>

What does it take to be racially literate and engaged in antiracism in a day-to-day way? Where do we find resources and support in our ongoing learning about systemic racism and the work of dismantling it? This program is an easy entry into finding antiracism books, podcasts, and videos, as well as discussion partners for talking about them. Come to choose a resource, sign up for a buddy or small group, and receive discussion guidelines.

## A Next Right Action

### Congregation Book Read Discussion of Imani Perry's *Breathe*

Wednesday, February 24

7:00-8:30 p.m.

Register: <http://bit.ly/bookreadbreathe>



Join us for an online discussion of this year's Congregation Book Read, Imani Perry's *Breathe: A Letter to My Sons* (Beacon Press, 2019). The discussion will be facilitated by Rev. Karen Hering and members of the Racial and Restorative Justice Team. Reading guide: [bit.ly/breathereadguide](http://bit.ly/breathereadguide).



# NEXT RIGHT ACTIONS

## A Next Right Action

### Black Films Matter

*Black Film Canon series explores Black perspective behind and in front of the camera.*

**Friday Evenings • February 19–May 21 • 7:00 p.m.**

Register: <http://bit.ly/ucublackfilmcanon>

A new online film series invites you to view and discuss films written, produced, and created by Black people. Black Film Canon 101 (BFC 101) will meet on Zoom, beginning Friday, February 19, and continuing bi-weekly (mostly) through May (February 19 and 26; March 5 and 19; April 2, 16, 30; May 7 and 21).

The eight films will cover almost a full century, beginning with Oscar Micheaux's silent film *Within Our Gates*, including Spike Lee's 1979 film *Do the Right Thing*, and Gina Prince-Blythewood's *Love and Basketball*, and ending with Ryan Cooglar's *Fruitvale Station*. It does not include recently released films from the last five years.

Participants are asked to commit to the full series to build a deepening understanding and rapport with one another. The series begins with an introductory session and each session thereafter discusses one of eight films selected from the a list of 50 that [Slate magazine](#) has dubbed the "Black Film Canon." The movies to be discussed bring to life not only Black suffering, slavery, and trauma, but also joy, love, and humor.

Rev. Jack Gaede, from White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church and developer of BFC 101, notes: "...this isn't just a film study group, but also a chance to dig deeper into [ourselves] in the context of antiracism work. We are watching these movies ... to explore and examine the concepts of race, of whiteness, of racism. We are asking people to look at the films through certain lenses, to notice whiteness and blackness and the way that those concepts are portrayed on screen. And we are especially curious about the way those portrayals have changed through time, which is why we are utilizing a chronological approach to the films that we are watching."

Becky Gonzalez-Campoy, member of Unity Church and student of social transformation at United Theological Seminary, will lead the series at Unity.

Participants will view each movie on their own prior to the Zoom meeting. Class materials will include information about where to find these films (online) for viewing before each session as well as discussion questions and related resources. Films chosen in the series are available online for free or a minimal cost. If financial assistance is needed, please email [karen@unityunitarian.org](mailto:karen@unityunitarian.org).

BFC 101 is a great learning opportunity for anyone just starting their antiracism journey as well as for those who are already seasoned in this work. For those who have completed the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), this series can be a useful tool to help meet your personal growth goals.

For more information please contact Becky Gonzalez-Campoy at [beckygc83@gmail.com](mailto:beckygc83@gmail.com).



Photo illustration by  
Lisa Larson-Walker

## A Next Right Action

### Toward a Culture of Accountability and Care

**Wednesday, February 17**

**7:00-8:30 p.m.**

Register: <http://bit.ly/accountabilitycare>

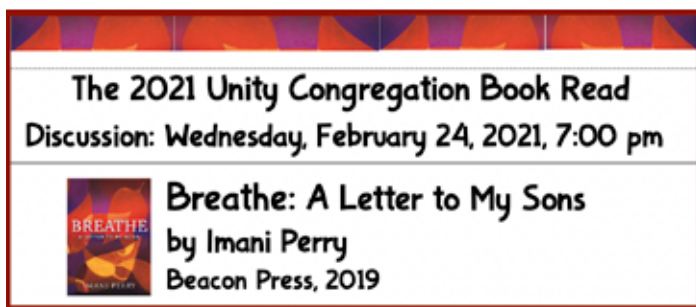
Working to create communities where everyone can thrive involves many pressing concerns. The Covid pandemic and George Floyd's murder last summer brought new clarity to the importance of transitioning away from our current culture of fear and punishment toward a culture of accountability and care.

At this program, developed from the work of Unity's Racial and Restorative Justice Team, you will meet representatives of Families Supporting Families Against Police Violence and Root and Restore Saint Paul, two local groups working on divestment from policing, investment in alternatives, and justice and healing for victims of police violence. You will learn why these groups do what they do, have an opportunity to ask questions, and discover how you can join the work.

Founded in 2019 by Toshira Garraway, [Families Supporting Families Against Police Violence](#) is a group of families directly impacted by police violence in Minnesota. It supports those experiencing the same trauma and builds relationships with political and community leaders to advance community healing and systemic change.

[Root and Restore Saint Paul](#) is a multiracial, citywide coalition dedicated to community-based public safety and wellness solutions. Since 2018, it has advocated at the city level for divestment from failed models of policing and punishment and investment in community and transformative justice.

# CONGREGATION BOOK READ / WOMEN IN RETIREMENT



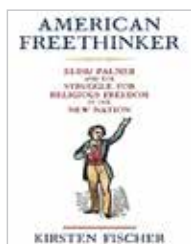
*Breathe* is full of stories, lessons, prayers, hopes, dreams, poetry, warnings, guidance, the terrible truth of racism in America, and above all, love. Beacon Press describes the book as “an unflinching challenge to society to see Black children as deserving of humanity.” Written as a letter to her two sons, the book is organized into three sections:

1. Fear. The recognition that she cannot guarantee the safety of her sons; that along with the everyday business of life, there is “the daily work of beating back the ugliness. And reconciliation with the irreconcilable.”
2. Fly. In a “world bent on you not being and becoming,” there are ways to use your wings. She is not advocating for “making it,” but “what I hope for you is nothing as small as prestige. I hope for a living passion, profound human intimacy, and connection, beauty and excellence.” And freedom to fly.
3. Fortune. The basic elements of a good life, of building yourself, is “a stripping down to fundamental lessons for one’s life. And it is a meditation between the lives and love that have gone and the ones right here with us...and give meaning to our lives today.”

You will find that *Breathe* has received many accolades, prize nominations, and good reviews, and deservedly so. **Stacey Abrams describes it as “a lyrical meditation that connects a painful, proud history of African American struggle with a clarion call for present-day action.”**

There is much to talk about here. **Please join the online book discussion on February 24, at 7:00 p.m..** Registration is available here: <http://bit.ly/bookreadbreathe>.

The book is available in the Unity Online Bookstall at [unitybookstall.square.site](http://unitybookstall.square.site) and at your favorite local bookstore. Or contact the Library & Bookstall Team for mail order library service — a limited number of copies are available.



**Also, featured in the Unity Online Bookstall:**

*American Freethinker: Elihu Palmer and the Struggle for Religious Freedom in the New Nation* by Kirsten Fischer, 2020.

Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs “highly commends this to you.”

## Unity's Women in Retirement Group

Belonging and acceptance. Insight and meaning. Respectful communication. Deep listening. These are the hallmarks of Women in Retirement meetings, where you’ll find an embodiment of our second membership commitment, to develop the skills of small group intimacy.

With a refreshed covenant that’s read aloud each meeting, a process to balance check-ins with discussion, and a fascinating list of topics to help the chooser select an appropriate and meaningful discussion direction, the Women in Retirement group welcomes everyone with warmth and connection.

Women in Retirement meets on the second and fourth Thursday of each month, from 1:00–3:00 p.m., currently on Zoom. Email Laura Park at [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org) to get connected with the group.



Nancy Heck



Janet Oliver



Carol Mahnke



Carol Angell

*I've cherished my time spent with the WIR group. From my first visit a few years ago, people have been open, welcoming, and forthcoming.*

*As a relative newcomer at [the] time, I was impressed at the level of dedication that went into creating the [new] process and a long (yet not exhaustive) list of possible topics. In like manner, members have embraced the process, giving thoughtful consideration to their respective topic choices. It's been delightful and fruitful to reflect on the topics.*

*... check-ins serve to keep us connected personally and to find kindred spirits*

*We accept each other, people listen to each other, and there is a sense of caring beyond what I have ever experienced.*

*This group is a friendly and effortless way to connect with people whether you are an introvert or an extrovert.*

*Women in Retirement has grown and with growth has gone through changes, but it remains a warm and very welcoming group. I am so glad I found these women shortly after moving to St. Paul. It has literally made it possible for me to find myself after suffering loss and to keep on going!!*

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH

## Sustainable Living Team News

*Out of sight, out of mind?*

**Anna Newton, Sustainable Living Team**

Plants are curious beings. Trees grow so slowly, we might be fooled into thinking they are passive. Yet, while our backs are turned, they bud out. Weeds spring up seemingly out of nowhere and overwhelm our gardens. A curious observer, however, might notice seeds and buds developing in August, long before they emerge in spring. There is much we will not see, if we lack curiosity.

Curiosity opens us to questions. Why does a plant thrive in one location, but not in others? How do our actions affect natural systems? The answer often lies hidden deep in the soil, among plant roots, in connections between the plant we see and microbes that are invisible to us. Soil plays a key role in the carbon cycle and in maintaining biodiversity. It is a world we are just beginning to explore, and we have much to learn!

Agriculture constitutes 20% of Minnesota's economy. As members of the Sustainable Living Team (SLT) **act for the earth** on issues of **climate change, extinction, and justice**, we are called to learn more about agriculture practices to guide our food choices. With this month's program offerings, we begin our journey and invite you to come with open curiosity, and learn alongside us!

### To join an Action Team, contact:

Stop Climate Change: Priscilla Morton at [prismorton@comcast.net](mailto:prismorton@comcast.net)

Stop Extinction: Anna Newton at [asnewton3@gmail.com](mailto:asnewton3@gmail.com)

Ensure Justice: Jean Hammink at [jhammink@earthlink.net](mailto:jhammink@earthlink.net)

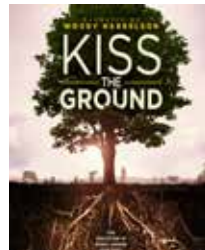
### Sustainable Living Team Film Series: *Kiss the Ground*

**Discussion: Friday, February 5 • 8:00 p.m.**

Film is available from Netflix for individual viewing (87 minutes).

Join the discussion here: <http://bit.ly/sltkisstheground>

Members of the SLT have found this to be one of the most hopeful films of 2020! Regenerative agriculture is happening. While technological fixes are changing how much CO2 we add to the atmosphere, only green plants can capture CO2 already in the atmosphere and put it back in the ground where it belongs. The film reveals that healthy soil, which in turn requires intimate connections between plants, animals and microbes, is key.



### Sustainable Living Team-sponsored Wellspring Wednesday

***Can we change farming to save rural communities and the environment?***

**Wednesday, February 10 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.**

Join the conversation here: <http://bit.ly/sltwwfebten>

As a follow up to our film, we host a conversation with farmers, a rancher and a community organizer about their dreams and challenges. How does regenerative agriculture look when boots and hooves hit the ground? How do we help farmers and ranchers transition to more sustainable models? How can we help emerging farmers, including people of color, get established?

Guest speakers:

Barb Sogn-Frank, Soil Health Program Organizer, MN Land Stewardship Project  
Nancy Labbe, Northern Great Plains Rangeland Director, The Nature Conservancy  
Kerri Meyer, Episcopal priest and former Unity R.E. Director  
Jennifer Blecha, Associate Professor of Human Geography at San Francisco State University

Kerri Meyer and Jennifer Blecha operate Good Courage Farm in Hutchinson, MN, an organic fruit farm and agrarian ministry.

## News from the Obama School Ministry Team

**Nancy Heege, Obama School Ministry Team**

The team continues to check in regularly with the administrative staff at Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School to ask how we might be of assistance. We're hearing that the preK – grade 2 scholars will be back in the school around the first of February. No adults except for school employees will be able to enter the building.

The Minnesota Tool Library operates as a library that lends out tools to people who have home projects, gardening, or other projects that require a tool that they do not have. When students started needing to study from home due to the COVID-19 virus, volunteers through the MN Tool Library embarked on a mission to provide 500+ desks for local K-6 students. Unity Church members Karen Abraham, Ray Wiedmeyer, Collin Rust, Dick Buggs, and Xiaoyu Sun got involved and, with the help of a van and trailer donated by Mano a Mano, transported and delivered more than 100 of the desks. Families were very appreciative when the desks were delivered to their doors. Thanks to these Unity Church volunteers and to Mano a Mano for lending their equipment!

### A Next Right Action

## Toward a Culture of Accountability and Care

**Wednesday, February 17**

**7:00-8:30 p.m.**

A program of Unity's Racial and Restorative Justice Team. Details on page 9.



# SPIRITUAL DEEPENING

## Movement & Meditation

Monthly Qigong supports grounding and wellbeing

**Third Tuesday • 10:30-11:30 a.m.**

February 16, March 16, April 20 and May 18

Register: <http://bit.ly/qigongbodysoul>

An online program with Qigong and Tai Ji teacher Lisa Schlingerman guiding participants in movements and meditations to increase resistance to illness and enhance the circulation of chi (energy) in the body. No experience in Tai Ji or Qigong required. Movements can be done standing or sitting. For information, contact [karen@unityunitarian.org](mailto:karen@unityunitarian.org).

## Chalice Circles

A shorter three-month Chalice Circle experience for those who wish to try it!

Chalice circles are small groups of 5-8 people, led by trained facilitators. Each month, participants receive a packet on that month's theme with readings, podcasts, short videos, and other resources related to the theme. Each person chooses one spiritual exercise and a deep question from the packet to spend time with over several weeks. Near the end of the month, the group gathers online to share their experiences.

The three-month circles will meet February–April, on the themes of curiosity, suffering, and transcendence. Space is limited in the two scheduling options: 4th Sunday each month, 3:30-5:00 p.m., and 4th Thursday, 1:00-2:30 p.m. Register online here: [www.unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html](http://www.unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html). Additionally, several ongoing chalice circles currently have openings. To join a circle that will meet monthly now through at least June, please complete the online form and we will contact you about availability.

## UU Family Covenant Workshop

Jane Baer, UU Families Initiative

*At the core of our faith formation work with children is family life, with parents who have always been the first and root spiritual directors of their children. Over the years, we have dedicated several R.E. Sundays to strengthen the sacred work that takes place at home, and our current situation has only begged ways we can deepen this work. The UU Families Initiative offered a virtual Family Covenant Workshop to families in January 2021. During the two-session workshop, each family created a living family covenant that reflects beliefs and values of the family and what family members will do in the coming year to live out their values. The workshop is structured with each family developing their own covenant, then sharing them with other participating families. These workshops have proven to be powerful and formative for families participating in person and virtually.*

– Rev. K.P Hong, Minister of Faith Formation

I was so excited for us to be a pilot family for the family covenant workshop being developed by the UU Families Initiative. My kids, specifically my teens, not so much! It was June of 2017 and our oldest had just graduated from high school and would be leaving in nine weeks for a year abroad in Ecuador. It was now or never. As the first session of the workshop progressed, the attitudes of “just do this for Mom” shifted, and by the end of that session all four of our kids had voluntarily represented our family during the larger group sharing time. The hours in between, and the hours during the second session weeks later, were sometimes difficult. We remembered good times as a family, but as befits a family with teens, there were also heated discussions. Developing a family covenant that we could all agree on was hard! What are our values as a family? How will we live out these values? Nothing goes in the covenant unless it is unanimous, which sounds easier than it actually is.

We made it through the pilot covenant workshop and our oldest left home. Over the following months, we referred to the family covenant occasionally, most often in moments of tension as a “Remember our family covenant?” prompt to help arguing siblings remember that they actually cared about each other. But there was something deeper at work. The questions we asked in those sessions — *What do we believe in? Why? How do we live these out? What are other ways we can live our values?* — were seeds sown into the foundation of our family life. Despite our best intentions, we were never able to have regular, ongoing family meetings to revisit our covenant. But still, there was enough nourishment for the seeds to take root.

About a year later, we piloted another family ritual developed in the UU Families Initiative, the Fresh Start Ritual. The announcement of the ritual (never ask!) elicited eye rolls from our teens but they participated fully, and afterward our seventeen-year-old said “That was a good ritual, Mom.” High praise from a teen. We repeated the Fresh Start Ritual again a year later (no eye rolls, just some teasing). This past August, after six months of quarantine together, we piloted a UU Families Transition Ritual as our oldest two children prepared to return to college (no eye rolls, no teasing, full participation). Emotions were high, with laughs and tears as we shared a beautiful and powerful ritual together as a family.

As I reflect on it now, I am reminded of the book *Growing A Revolution* by David R. Montgomery and about rebuilding the soil of our planet. The rhizosphere that connects plants underground is the network plants use to communicate and share resources, so everything growing from the soil can be strong. Similarly, these family rituals help us build an underground network from which we can draw strength as individuals and as a family. Life can be messy, family life especially, and we don't always undertake efforts to enrich our soil the way we would like. But the deep and strengthening connections that family rituals have brought to our lives have been far reaching. And it all began with our family covenant.



# MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH



## Curiouser and Curiouser

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

As a kid, I flat out *loved* Curious George, the little monkey boy who played out every fantasy I had as a child by reacting to every impulse, doing just what I would do if I could — grab hold of every single balloon, jump on the speeding fire truck, look behind the curtain, open the door to the lion's cage.

What fun. Adventure in every box! Of course, by following every curious impulse, George always got in more trouble than he bargained for, something got wrecked, someone would have to pay. What was the lesson in Curious George anyway? I guess he let us indulge in the fun of it for a while, but we also learned curiosity was dangerous, irresponsible, something to rein in.

We've always had a mixed attitude about curiosity. We champion it in our young people and we claim it as one the most distinguishing and positive of human traits. But we also know and tell lots of cautionary stories about its danger. Adam and Eve, Pandora, all kinds of campfire tales — "Do *not* open that door!" Curiosity killed the cat, after all. As a parent I have been thrilled by my children's desire to learn how things work and to figure it all out either together or on their own. I've also been scared to death by their impulses to try things out to learn what happens. Is it for the best that we all eventually grow out of being super curious?

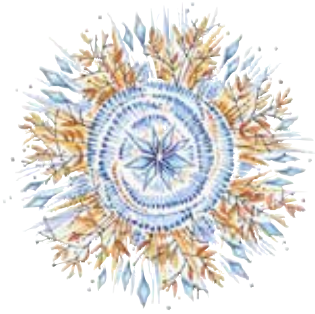
As a high school teacher in an alternative school I saw a lot of kids that I read as aggressively non-curious. It made teaching hard because I was fighting not just a lack of desire to learn something new, but a resistance to trying. "Just tell us!" they said, not because they were dying to know, but because they didn't want to care — or risk being wrong. It seemed tragic and unnatural that by age 12 or so they didn't seem to be curious anymore. It didn't just happen — something profoundly bad has gone on to make curiosity a dangerous thing. You could think this is really a problem for the alternative school population, often students from low income and marginalized demographics, and that certainly is true. But it rears its head across class, in kids who know they need high ACT scores but aren't energized by their studies. They want the grades but are less enthused by the learning.

There are myriad reasons kids become adults who are not curious, and this is not a new phenomenon. But we are dangerously polarized right now, and at the root of it is an unwillingness to be openly curious about what is true, and what the facts are. I have no simple solution for what we do about a population that grabs on to the loudest proclamations about what is going on, what is important, what is real, or who is at fault, while refusing to be curious about how we can see things so differently. Admitting we don't know everything feels dangerous, so we prefer to assume we know over admitting our ignorance and then relishing the chance to find out. To be gleefully curious, OK with being surprised, or dumfounded, or proven wrong, requires some security.

I do think the principles of our faith are our best hope in finding that security. We gather together as people of open curiosity — we say "go for it George," we can all learn something!

## Religious Education at Unity Church

If you would like to enroll your child(ren) in religious education classes, email Michelle Mecey at [michelle@unityunitarian.org](mailto:michelle@unityunitarian.org).



## Unitarian Universalist Association Middle School Winter Con 2021

Middle school UU youth (11-14 years old, in grades 6-8 or equivalent) from across the U.S. will come together virtually to play, worship, and explore their UU faith. This day long event will give middle school youth opportunities to play games and connect in small groups, and to learn more about themselves and Unitarian Universalism in large ones.

**Saturday, February 27**  
**1:00-9:00 p.m., Central Time**  
Register: <http://bit.ly/mdcon2021>

This con will be held online via Zoom and is designed for youth ages 11-14 — they will not be sitting for eight hours.

Deadline to register: February 19

Cost: \$40 per person. Sliding scale based on your assessment of your ability to pay.

Supervision: There will be a 1:10 adult to youth ratio. Please provide information about any youth with special needs including best modifications and interventions.

Questions? Contact Ray Hommeyer at [ray@unityunitarian.org](mailto:ray@unityunitarian.org).

The  
first-ever  
**VIRTUAL**  
children's  
musical!

**The 32nd Annual Unity Church Children's Musical**

# ***Planetdemic!***

**Mission Control the Spread**

**MARCH 2021**

**Book by Mary Blouin Auffert**

**Music and Lyrics by Sandy Waterman**

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

**The Unity Church children's musical returns – virtually this year –  
with a new story, new songs, and new dance moves!**

**Gather your family around the computer for an evening of fun!**

**Watch for the link to the world premiere!**

# MUSIC MINISTRY



## Music Notes

Ahmed Anzaldúa, Director of Music Ministries

Canadian author Yann Martel followed up his massive bestseller *Life of Pi* with *Beatrice and Virgil*. While it was nowhere as successful as his breakout book and received some harsh reviews, I found it a powerful, chilling story that haunted me long after I put it down. This is, however, not meant to be a book review. I reference Martel's novel because there is a

sentence in it that has stayed with me since I first read it eleven years ago:

"Words are cold, muddy toads trying to understand sprites dancing in a field — but they're all we have."

I can't think of a better description of what it feels like to be a musician. People throughout history, in every culture have regarded music as a link to the cosmos, to the inner and outer eternal. Plato describes music as "giving soul to the universe," Terry Pratchett describes the Big Bang as the ultimate power chord: the "Big Chord." Faced with these sorts of expectations, is it surprising that musicians feel so inadequate most of the time? Nothing a composer will ever write will come close to replicating what that music sounds like in their imagination. How are the musical notes we create ever supposed to express something indescribable? Those notes are "cold, muddy toads trying to understand sprites dancing in a field." (It doesn't help that the act of producing those musical notes is so unglamorous; the act of making music involves making stuff vibrate by blowing, hammering, scratching; we see beauty and grace on stage, but behind the curtain most of it is sweat, spit, calluses, spreadsheets, emails, and frustration.)

So, what drives us to try to understand those dancing sprites? Curiosity...

Wonder... Awe... take your pick. Those woefully inadequate notes are all we have. And once in a while, those cold, muddy toads manage to croak out something that gives us peek of the indescribable eternal. And when that happens, it's glorious. It's why we're here.

## Sing with a Unity Choir

Unity's choirs (adult and children) are meeting online every week! In addition to learning new music, we are also meeting to sing familiar songs and maintain our connection to each other and to the church. All newcomers are welcome and encouraged to take part! If you are interested, contact Ahmed at [ahmed@unityunitarian.org](mailto:ahmed@unityunitarian.org).

## A Call for Music

Given the depth of musical talent in this congregation, Ahmed is extending and invitation to individuals and families to share their music making. Please send a video of your singing, playing a musical instrument, or doing anything else that's musical! The only request is that this is a video of you or your family making music — please do not send prerecorded music made by someone else. So, turn on your phone camera, record yourself singing a song or playing something, and send it to Ahmed at [ahmed@unityunitarian.org](mailto:ahmed@unityunitarian.org).



## Watch One Voice Concerts — FREE

Watch full concert broadcasts of some of One Voice Mixed Chorus's most memorable performances, featuring interviews with singers and guest artists. Concerts available include *Pirates of Penzance*, *Quiet No More*, *Bayard Rustin: The Man Behind the Dream*, *Sanctuary*, and more! Visit One Voice's YouTube page for all the offerings: <http://bit.ly/onevoiceconcerts>.

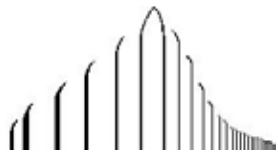
## Border CrosSing Heritage Choir



Heritage Choir emerged out of a desire to celebrate community, accessibility, and cultural heritage, with a focus on the Latinx cultural heritage of the West Side of St. Paul.

The fall 2020 series includes interviews and discussions between Border CrosSing musicians and community members to learn about the stories that bind us, and how music shapes our journey.

To watch the interviews, and get more information about Heritage Choir, please visit <https://bordercrossingmn.org/community>.



# UNITY CHURCH-UNITARIAN

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

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BARBARA HUBBARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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**TIME SENSITIVE  
MATERIAL**

## Cook Along with Soup Supper

**Sunday, February 14 • 4:00-5:30 p.m.**

Register: <http://bit.ly/cookalongsoup>

We'd like to cordially invite you to a soup supper, cooked by you in your own home. This will be a live interactive cooking class with Heidi Birkholz over Zoom.

This class will feature Farm Girl Fresh Navy Bean Soup. Your recipe packet will be sent by email one week before the event. There will be a few items to add to your weekly grocery shopping. Gluten-free, vegan, and dairy-free options will be available. Don't want to cook? You are welcome to tune in to watch, learn, and hang out with other soup enthusiasts.



## Save the date! Cook Along at Home with Richard Lau and Family

**Tuesday, March 23 • 7:00 p.m.**

Register: <http://bit.ly/laucookalong>

Join Richard Lau to explore soup tips and fellowship with other soup enthusiasts

## Unity Church 2021 Book Read

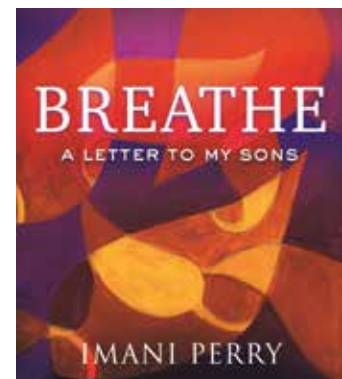
**Breathe:  
A Letter to My Sons  
By Imani Perry**

Read now!

Discuss on February 24, at 7:00 p.m.

To order a copy with delivery email [library@unityunitarian.org](mailto:library@unityunitarian.org).

Find the reading guide online at <https://bit.ly/breathereadguide>.



*we're in this* **TOGETHER**

UNITY CHURCH VIRTUAL FUNDRAISER • SAVE THE DATE! SATURDAY, MARCH 20