

## 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 faith and strengthen our bonds with one another in religious community.*

When you consider a person of integrity, what are the qualities that come to mind? Are they the Boy Scout law of “trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent?” Or, when you think about your own integrity, or that of others, would you agree with one of these two typical descriptions: “the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles and moral uprightness,” or “the state of being whole and undivided?” Or, given the partial ceiling collapse in Parish Hall, perhaps we consider “structural integrity,” meaning that you can count on all the parts of a system to work together, and, in our case, hold up the ceiling!

The typical ways we consider integrity in people is that there is no discrepancy between the self you present to the world and self that you know “inside.” That’s part of the reason why Unity’s mission statement involves living lives of “integrity, service and joy.” Living with integrity means the on-going spiritual practice of closing the gap between what we feel inside and the way things are.

When we dig deeper into what it means to live a life of integrity, we realize that it’s not a one-size-fits-all concept. For example, if we adopt the meaning stated above of “living as if our inside and outside selves are consistent,” that definition may not work for a person who is queer or trans. Why? Because to live into the fullness of ones being or becoming, it might not be possible or may not be safe to do so. Doesn’t that call forth a different kind of integrity — of

having to navigate the assumptions and expectations of a culture that so often demands conformity to certain norms?

Integrity becomes even more complicated when we consider acting on one’s personal integrity (i.e, morals, values, standards) as an individual or on behalf of the larger community. What if, for example, you are living in Nazi Germany and an SS officer comes to your door, demanding to know if you are hiding any Jews? Does your integrity require you to always tell the truth? By saying “yes,” can you call yourself a person of integrity knowing that your “yes” will likely result in the murder of those under your roof? Or, do you say “no,” thereby saving lives but compromising your own commitment to truth-telling?

Perhaps one way to frame this challenge is to understand that living a life of integrity is an on-going process that involves not only the individual self, but the self in relation to a larger community and commitment. We are all part of a larger “body” whether our own or in relation to community. As the Apostle Paul said, “Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say ‘because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less part of the body... and if the ear would say, ‘because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body...” (1 Corinthians 12:15-16)

As members of Unity Church, we strive to live into our mission of leading lives of integrity. Yet, living in community also means that we may come to

very different conclusions about how we do that. For example, when we question the integrity of our fellow church members, it stings because our personal integrity is deeply connected to our dearest held values. As we consider how to live a life of integrity, the quote attributed to Maya Angelou might be helpful to us. She wrote, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” How we live out those convictions while being in relationship with others, is an important part of a deepening spiritual practice, which leads us to live lives of integrity, service and joy. Our theme team hopes that this topic brings you into many rich and generative conversations this month.

Blessings on the month ahead,

*Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, with this month’s theme team: Rev. KP Hong, Rev. Karen Gustafson, Tom Duke, Ray Hommeyer, Drew Danielson, and Rev. Andrea Anastos*

### Theme Resources

For further reflection on this theme please see this month’s Spiritual Practice Packet which will be available online at [unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html](https://unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html).

# IN THE MEANTIME / WHEEL OF LIFE



## In the Meantime

### Reflections from Unity's Interim Senior Minister

I've been giving this month's theme of integrity a fair amount of thought. Earlier this month, a United States Representative to the House was discovered to have lied about his resume, education, heritage, finances, employment — and those are just the beginning of the web of deception this individual spun on his route to the House. One of the most egregious lies was that he was of Jewish ancestry, descending from immigrants who fled the Holocaust. This lie was particularly damaging for those whose ancestor's really did flee, fight, or fail to survive the Holocaust. Using such a horrific event to boost one's resume or to gain favor with some constituents should be cause enough to remove a person from political office — immediately.

Yet, he still remains, as do the lies. What is particularly distressing about this story is that while some of his colleagues are demanding his resignation, others are silent. What I want to hear is a deeper reflection about how lies, half-truths, and fabrications erode the public trust in institutions. What I'm talking about is called systemic integrity.

What then, makes for an institution's systemic integrity? Qualities like transparency and consistency between what an institution says it stands for and how it behaves comes to mind. Sadly, we've come to expect a certain amount of half-truths and outright lies from political spheres, but when it comes to institutions we cherish, like church, we expect better. One of the things that tear at the fabric of an institution is through either the inappropriate use of social media, gossip or unverified storytelling.

So far, in my ministerial career, I've served congregations who are generally healthy institutions. At the same time, no institution is immune to hearing stories about one another which are embellished by one's own perspective. In this month's Congregational Life Review process (see page 4) we are inviting you to tell the stories of your experience at Unity Church, understanding that your experience is just that — yours. I can't help but think about that well known tale about the group of blind men encountering an elephant. Each one feels a different part of the elephant and is sure that their perception is the correct one. They almost come to blows in asserting their truth. The moral of the story is, of course, that while each person's "truth" is real for them, they also cannot see the whole. This comment, attributed to the Buddha describes how difficult it is to embrace a larger reality, "O how they cling and wrangle, some who claim; For preacher and monk the honored name! For, quarreling, each to his view they cling; Such folk see only one side of a thing."

So it is with us — and with our own storytelling. It is our hope that the Congregational Life Review will reveal many stories — many truths — and that together, we'll be able to piece together a new narrative that helps prepare Unity for its future. On Sunday, March 5, I'll reflect back to you what we learned from this exercise.

I continue to be grateful for this opportunity to serve as your interim senior minister. See you in church!

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz

## The Wheel of Life

### In Memoriam

Sylvia Elrod

December 28, 2022

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# FEBRUARY SUNDAY SERVICES

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## Worship Services

Unity Church offers two in-person services each Sunday at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. (except where noted). The 9:00 a.m. service is offered via livestream.

### February 5: *The New Fundamentalists*

**Rev. Kathleen Rolenz // Worship Associate Jim Mulvey**

Livestream: [youtu.be/UeTo\\_ja7W40](https://youtu.be/UeTo_ja7W40)

Unitarian Universalism has positioned itself against rigid dogmas, creeds, and fundamentalism of all kinds. Yet, fundamentalism is less about a system of beliefs than it is an attitude of heart which, in turn, leads to those beliefs. No religion is immune to fundamentalism, including ours. This sermon will explore the movements of heart and spirit which contribute to the creation of “the new fundamentalists.”

### February 12: *Listening Deeply*

**Rev. Justin Schroeder // Worship Associate Ray Wiedmeyer**

Livestream: [youtu.be/52JotP4ZEQk](https://youtu.be/52JotP4ZEQk)

In the spring of 2021, after more than a year of discernment and listening deeply to where love was calling next, Justin Schroeder resigned his position as co-senior minister of First Universalist Church of Minneapolis. He had served the congregation for more than a decade, but knew it was time to leave, that there was a new chapter of life waiting to unfold. Transitioning with integrity was at the heart of this journey, but it started with deep listening to his own spirit and what life was calling out of him. This service will explore the practices that can help us all live lives of deep joy and integrity.

### February 19: *Wholeness: The Heart of Integrity*

**Rev. Karen Gustafson // Worship Associate Jessica Goff**

Livestream: [youtu.be/gPRp5OVKfSQ](https://youtu.be/gPRp5OVKfSQ)

The last verse of Rev. Karen's favorite hymn says, “Come, spirit, come our hearts control, our spirits long to be made whole. Let inward love guide every deed, by this we worship, and are freed.” This is, it seems, is a prayer for spiritual integrity, a longing to know wholeness as a seamless flow of love. How do we understand this integration of the love we offer ourselves, the love we offer others, and the love we receive as thanks as well as grace?

### February 26: *Things Most Commonly Believed*

**Rev. Kathleen Rolenz // Worship Associate Sara Ford**

Livestream: [youtu.be/-pnnGtc5WIM](https://youtu.be/-pnnGtc5WIM)

In 1887, Rev. William Channing Gannett composed “Things Most Commonly Believed Today Among Us” for the Western Unitarian Conference in Chicago. In 1985, the UU Principles were adopted. Today, the Article II Study Commission is considering replacing the UU Principles and Sources with a radically different focus. What might these changes mean for the integrity of our faith and how we practice it? Note: Rev. Rolenz will host a conversation about Article II and the changes proposed at Wellspring Wednesday, February 8.

## Offering Recipients

Each week, seventy percent of our Sunday offering is given to a community non-profit and thirty percent supports the Community Outreach Ministry at Unity Church.

### February 5: Minnesota Moms Demand Action

Minnesota Moms Demand Action (MMDA) lobbies for sensible gun legislation and works to reduce childhood gun deaths through its Be Smart campaign. MMDA is an all volunteer organization working with St. Paul's Office of Neighborhood Safety on deterring gun violence in our community through prevention, environmental design, accountability, community action, and enforcement.

[facebook.com/MomsDemandActionMN](https://facebook.com/MomsDemandActionMN)

### February 12: Small Sums

Small Sums aims to outfit individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability, who have found employment, with the essentials they need to return to the workplace. To that end, Small Sums helps remove hurdles that block job reentry by assisting individuals in obtaining job-specific work clothes, trade tools, professional licenses, union dues, and bus passes. This collection will support Small Sums in providing work reentry essentials.

[smallsums.org](https://smallsums.org)

### February 19: Literacy Minnesota

Literacy Minnesota believes that literacy has the power to advance equity and justice, and they envision a world where life-changing learning is within everyone's reach. This collection will support English Unlocked an accessible, student-centered, English language literacy curriculum designed for adult learners that is aligned with college and career readiness standards. [literacymn.org](https://literacymn.org)

### February 26: Children's Law Center of Minnesota

Children's Law Center of Minnesota (CLC) promotes the legal rights and well-being of children and youth. CLC's staff and volunteers provide direct representation of children and youth, primarily in the child welfare system, and advocate for changes in the systems that affect their lives. CLC represented over 700 foster children in 2022. This collection will underwrite the legal costs for representation of its clients. [clcmn.org](https://clcmn.org)

*Interested in serving as a worship associate?  
Details about the application process can be found  
on page 11.*



## Board Work and Relationship

**Jess Landgraf, Trustee**

Each year, as trustee terms end and new trustees are confirmed by the congregation at our annual meeting, the board takes January to retreat. This year we had the pleasure of one and half days together with Unity's Executive Team (ET). With the 2021 and 2022 retreats either fully online or hybrid, I really felt the privilege of sharing meals together, learning facets of my fellow trustees that generally remain hidden when discussing governance and church polity. Because your third-year trustees (Kevin Harris, Mary Hernandez, and I) joined the board in a year when all board business was held online, our lived experience taught us that relationships are integral to board work. This year, I have faith that the deeper foundation of trust and relational understanding your board shares will serve us as we explore the heterogeneous dreams, priorities, and conceptions of Unity Church-Unitarian.

Our retreat serves as time to coalesce as a new board, begin to discern our covenant as a board and between the board and ET, and deepen our commitment to antiracism, multiculturalism, and complexity. For this last point, we spent time in personal reflection and group conversation about the layers of practices identified within the double-helix model binding spiritual and antiracist multicultural practices. (For a primer on this model, please visit [unityunitarian.org/adult-faith-formation.html](http://unityunitarian.org/adult-faith-formation.html).) As this retreat was specifically regarding board work, we focused on our *among* layer. In discussion, we found existing practices that further both antiracist multicultural and spiritual journeys, and we found practices that we engage that might need some adjustment. For example, multiple folks lifted up their listening practice, including restricting their thoughts from building a response while someone else is speaking. Moving further into our growing edge, engaging while in conflict does double duty as going deeper from a place of curiosity ("Why do you think X? What can we learn in your perspective on Y?") and as an active antidote to the fear of open conflict, a characteristic of white dominant culture. If we are to have integrity with antiracist multiculturalism as a microcosm of the congregation, the board has work ahead to further practice our growing edge from minimization toward acceptance.

As mentioned, the board takes January for retreat, and we resume normal meetings in February. We've got some big decisions ahead of us, and the discussions are going to be rich. Our board meetings are open to the congregation, scheduled from 9:00 a.m. to noon on the second Saturday of each month.

## Congregational Life Review



On February 3 and 4, Unity Church members are invited to engage in a conversation we're calling a "Congregational Life Review." This is typically done during the first year of the interim time, and it provides an opportunity for the congregation to reflect on its past through storytelling about milestone events in the life of the congregation. The weekend's events will be led by Rev. Karen Gustafson and Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, along with support from the Board of Trustees and the Interim Monitoring Team.

The stories and history of a person or an institution are often most compelling when they are fed by change or upheaval. This is when stories surface to justify or expose past wrongs that point to causes, or to glorify past successes that point toward hope for the future. This is a way of trying to ensure that what has been treasured will be retained and what is harmful will not be repeated. This storytelling is most useful to these ends when they are placed in a larger context than the heat of the moment, when they are experienced in the context of other stories and the largeness of time.

Unity is in a time when such stories are especially present. The interim process is designed to capture the stories that are emerging so that they may temper but not impede the pace of healthy change. This asks for a broader base of stories than those that we are most likely to hear.

To this end, we are creating a timeline of the life of the congregation that includes world events overlaid with milestones in Unity Church history. We anticipate having this timeline up in the building the week prior to February 4 for your perusal.

### **Friday, February 3 • 7:00-9:00 p.m. • In-person only**

Rev. Karen Gustafson will introduce a life review process, an opportunity to review your own history at Unity Church. This event is a prelude to the Saturday session and attendance is optional (although we think you and the congregation would benefit from attending both sessions!).

### **Saturday, February 4 • 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. • In-person only**

We will gather (delicious refreshments included) for opening words and an explanation of the morning. A review of the timeline and life review process will lead us into storytelling and conversation in small groups, engagement with the timeline which includes adding *your* milestone events, large group conversation, and exploration of what the stories tell us. The gathering will conclude with a closing ritual. Please note! Due to repairs in the Parish Hall and problems with our sound system, we are unable to provide participants with a quality online experience. So, unfortunately, this session will *not* be offered online.

Please register for the weekend events, including child care needs, by Wednesday, February 1: [bit.ly/ucucrlr23](http://bit.ly/ucucrlr23)

# ANNUAL FUNDRAISER / PASTORAL CARE



## March Forth into the Future

### At Unity's Annual Fundraiser on March Fourth!

In 2020, Unity Church was all set to have a *fundraiser*, but the pandemic shut it down. We are thrilled to announce that finally — at last — we are going to have an all-church, multi-generational fundraiser on Saturday, March Fourth! *Thank you* to those who made donations earlier. There are plenty of opportunities to submit something for this year's service auction!

"March Fourth" is an annual, unofficial holiday to encourage everyone to "March Forth" toward achieving their dreams. The Unity Church congregation is also working toward our dreams. We are marching forth together in a celebratory parade, honoring our forward movement of the past 150 years — ready to salute our past and support our future by coming to *the* party of 2023.

Participate in the March Forth on March Fourth fundraiser in the following ways:

- **Donate an item (or two) to the auction!** Donations that build and sustain connection and fellowship are encouraged — time at a vacation home, tours, theme parties, dinners, tickets to concerts and sporting events. Watch for a link to a donation form or visit Unity's website. Complete the form, attach a photo or graphic, and it will go into the catalogue!
- **Bid on items!** The bidding will begin the week before the fundraiser. Peruse the donations and help to get the bidding started!
- **Come to the event on March Fourth!** Doors open at 6:00 p.m. for hors d'oeuvres and the silent auction. The live auction is at 8:00 p.m., followed by check out. If you can't attend in person, you can still bid online, or simply make a donation to the fundraiser.
- **Volunteer to help!** We need more volunteers for the planning team. If you have creative, detail-oriented, artistic, or tech skills, join us! We also need volunteers on March 3 and 4 to set up and support the auction. Contact Barbara Hubbard at [barbara@unityunitarian.org](mailto:barbara@unityunitarian.org).

The approved operating budget for 2023 includes \$40,000 from a fundraiser. Help us achieve our goal; support the mission and programs of Unity Church!



## Pastoral Ponderings

**Rev Karen Gustafson**  
**Interim Minister of Pastoral Care**

When I introduce myself as "Interim Minister of Pastoral Care" I am occasionally asked, "What is pastoral care?"

In general, pastoral care involves emotional, spiritual and social support for individuals and families dealing with the questions and complexities of life's changes. At best, it is available in the context of community where a variety of structures and practices, values and traditions undergird human relationship. Unity Church is one such community. At Unity this is referred to as "Congregational Care." Here is what it says on our website:

"Congregational Care comes in many forms at Unity Church. It might be a comfort shawl knitted by a church member to wrap around your shoulders when you are ill or reeling from life's troubles. Or maybe it's a caring call or visit, a meal, a ride or a thoughtful card that comes your way when you were hurting, recovering or grieving. Or maybe it's a support group where you can share with others who are also on a journey of grief or caregiving or living with a loved one with mental health challenges.

All these, and more, are examples of congregational care offered by Unity's ministers and lay members on the Care Associates Team. We accompany church members and friends living through difficult times and, in our congregational life, we nurture the loving and healthy interdependence on which true justice and right relationship depend."

What I would add is that pastoral care also occurs as the result of friendships and associations made in classes and small groups, in making of music and caring for children, on ministry teams and sometimes in coffee hour where members and visitors share their names and stories.

The unique aspect of this context is the seamless connection between those caring and those who are cared for. In any moment, every single member and friend, long-timers and newcomers alike are vulnerable to the shifts of circumstances that benefit from pastoral care.

Our commitment is to encourage each member and friend of Unity Church to enter into the sacred space of relationship where the flow of caring energy follows the paths of mutual support. I am here to enter those spaces with you as they present themselves, to support you as you find your way into the relationships that will sustain you over time, to encourage you to deepen your connection to spiritual practice and resources, and to develop the skills and capacities that will allow you to care for one another. I encourage you to make your needs for support known through the online form, by e-mail or by phone.

I am grateful to be sharing this sacred time and space with you.

## Reparations: Repairing Generational Wounds

Rebecca Gonzalez-Campoy, Beloved Community Communications Team

Reparations. This word elicits many responses, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual: fear, anticipation, lament, joy, confusion, clarity of purpose, resistance, courage. Reparations means different things to many people. Reparations to the descendants of slavery might be monetary. Reparations to Native American nations would more likely be through returning land, enforcing tribal rights, and honoring treaties. This month, Unity Church delves deeper into conversation about reparations within and among congregants in various spaces, defining what it is and is not, exploring the difference between individual and organizational reparations.

I am participating in the Reparations Learning Table, a four-part series about the basics of reparations, offered by Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light ([mnipl.org](http://mnipl.org)). Led by Jessica Intermill and Liz Loeb, we began with this working definition of reparations:

*“Reparations is imperfect work to compensate for a history of stolen land, stolen labor, and the attempted genocide of African and Indigenous people, and the redistribution of resources (not just wealth) that will structurally repair generational wounds.”*

With this definition in mind, Intermill and Loeb explained what reparations is *not*:

- **Charity** — charity is philanthropic giving with strings attached. At the root of reparations is returning wealth that wasn't ours to begin with;
- **An apology** — although that's necessary. Reparations recognize that we benefit here today even if we didn't "cause" the original harm;

- **Purchasing** — while support of Buy Black or Native businesses is crucial, doing so is not returning what was taken;
- **Forgiveness** — our work is our responsibility.

Perhaps the easiest way to visualize the concept of reparations is to refer to a graphic that Intermill calls the Reparatory Eco Map.



*Credit: MARCH (multifaith anti-racism, change, and healing) Rev. Terri Burnor; Rev. Ashley Horan; Jessica Intermill, Esq.; Liz Loeb, Esq.; Rev. Dana Neuhauser; Rev. Jim Bear Jacobs (Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican Nation, Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voekel*

Reparations is the intersection of the five sectors — Truth Telling, Spiritual Practice, Political Solidarity, Relationships, and Wealth Return. All are essential, and yet none is sufficient on its own. Each component leads to another with no starting point and no stopping point, meaning that regardless of what portal you enter, the act of reparations is lifelong, generational work. This is about shifting how we live in connection with others and with history.

Learning the language of reparations is essential to making this work accessible, allowing anyone to take those first steps. We may enter the Eco Map at different portals. I began at Truth Telling. My white parents could not conceive any more children after me so they turned to adoption.

My father had a strong interest in the Ojibwe community and so in 1966 my parents adopted a baby from the White Earth Reservation. In spite of their efforts to connect my brother to his heritage, white society on the North Shore of Lake Superior wasn't having it, and my brother experienced racism such that he ultimately became estranged from us. In addition, thanks to diligent family history work by one of my sons, I now know that one of my ancestors dealt in land theft from an Indigenous nation in Massachusetts.

We may have identifiable personal reasons to get involved with reparations, or we may simply know that we are responsible for the continuation of today's disparities. Whatever the reason, our work must disrupt systems, not merely apply band-aids and call it good.

For those who want to learn more about reparations, be sure to register for the Truth and Healing Indigenous and Climate Justice Series sponsored by Unity's Indigenous Justice and Act of the Earth Community Outreach Ministry Teams. Session Five will be held Wednesday, March 1, at 7:10 p.m., in Robbins Parlor. The topic is land and reparations and the guest speaker will be Jessica Intermill from Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light.

You may also register for the remaining Reparations Learning Table sessions ([bit.ly/mniplreparations](http://bit.ly/mniplreparations)). Previous meetings were recorded and are available to view upon registration.

### Resources

NDN Collective Land Back: [landback.org/](http://landback.org/)

Indian Land Tenure Foundation: [iltf.org/](http://iltf.org/)

St. Paul City Council Reparations Commission: [bit.ly/stprep](http://bit.ly/stprep)

Native Governance Center - Beyond Land Acknowledgment: [bit.ly/nativegov](http://bit.ly/nativegov)

# ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE TEAM

## Meet Geno Okok, Artist in Residence

Lia Rivamonte, Artist in Residence Team

I just got off a Zoom call with Geno Okok and I'm smiling. One of Unity's three artists in residence selected in 2022, he'll begin meeting Unity Church members in late January and start his work in earnest in the following weeks. He will be guiding the youth in painting two murals in the education area of the church aka the basement. He is well suited to that task — aside from proven artistic skills he is brimming with positivity, unabashedly passionate about connecting with people through his art. Sitting across from me on the screen, he nearly bursts with good cheer, as he tells me how his life as a visual artist has evolved, pleased that he is to be able to make others feel good by using his innate gifts.

As a child, Geno was fixated on drawing — sketching everything in sight. But it was only when he saw what was possible through the expansive world of social media that he realized he could make a life of that thing he loved so much to do. Geno came with his parents to the U.S. from Nigeria as a very small child. The need to “succeed,” to make a better life for themselves and their children is often the driving force for people who come here from other countries and it was no different for Geno's parents. They settled in Brooklyn Park and raised a child who represents the kind of success story that any parent would be proud of even if their son has not taken a path they would have thought possible — that of an artist.

After high school, Geno, recognizing his competence at drawing thought maybe architecture, or interior design would satisfy his need to draw as well as make a good living. “But,” he said, “drawing lines for blueprints was not exactly exciting to me.” Then he began posting sketches on Facebook and receiving a positive response. He was asked to do a few commissions — portraits, mostly — and realized he could actually make a little money. Drawing and painting could be a viable side hustle to supplement a “real” job, he thought. He attended the Art Institute of Minnesota, received an A.D. in Fine Art and with the skills he honed along with his strong social media presence, [@Geno4Art](#) has taken off.

But for this young artist who has received numerous grants and public art commissions it is the emotional response to his work that has kept him buoyed and eager to continue to deepen and expand his work. His art, which tends towards naturalism with a powerful graphic sensibility features instantly recognizable people and animals and is accessible, offering messages of thriving multiculturalism, and unity in diversity.

The ability to transform a space from dull and uninspired to vibrant — alive with color and movement — is gratifying not just for him but also for the people who interact in that space on a daily basis. One example, he mentioned, is the work on the walls of the Twin Cities Academy High School cafeteria in St. Paul completed in August 2021 ([twincitiesacademy.org/tca-mural-progress/](https://twincitiesacademy.org/tca-mural-progress/)). Geno, assisted by student artists, created a space with his murals that buzzes with energy and light. The artist was recently invited to revisit the school to check out how different the vibe is from when it was just plain white walls — so much warmer and friendlier, a place meant for gathering.

The artist has been interviewed on local TV, and has been the subject of local newspaper and magazines but these days, Geno is particularly proud of the fact that his artwork is featured on this year's Saint Paul Winter Carnival Medallion. He is the first and only artist of color to receive this honor in 137 years of the carnival's existence.

We are looking forward to watching Geno with his young crew of Unity youth transform church spaces and invite all congregants to give the artist a hearty welcome in the coming weeks.

## WANTED

### Artist in Residence Team Members

Unity's Artist in Residence program was established to support the church's vision of an antiracist multicultural community. For team members, there are monthly meetings, as well as other tasks related to identifying diverse artists from multiple artistic disciplines whose work and artistic goals align with those of Unity Church. Team members work with the artist(s) and church staff to ensure activities and events are accessible and provide meaningful congregational engagement.

Work includes:

- Running receptions and front of house for artist presentations and events
- Coordinating with staff to arrange Wellspring Wednesday programs and other events
- Coordinating with artists including scheduling, budget questions, etc.
- Helping to find collaborators and supplies
- Handling outreach and announcement for events
- Writing articles for the *commUNITY* newsletter related to artists and programs
- Designing the call for submissions
- Helping with outreach, spreading the word about the program, fielding questions, contacting press and other organizations
- Processing and evaluating submissions, interviewing candidates, selecting artists

If you are interested in joining the team, please complete the online interest form at [bit.ly/airinterest](https://bit.ly/airinterest).

# WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

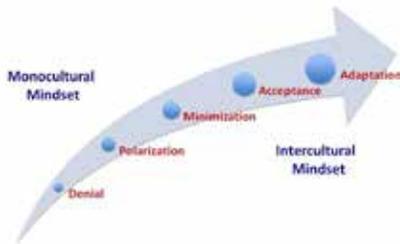
Wellspring Wednesday gathers a multigenerational church community to nourish right and holy relationship among us and deepen our life of faith, grounded in spiritual practice and antiracist multicultural work. Dinner begins at 5:45 p.m. in the Parish Hall, a short chapel service begins at 6:40 p.m. in Ames Chapel, and programs begin at 7:10 p.m. Details at [unityunitarian.org](http://unityunitarian.org)

## February 1

No dinner on February 1 due to ongoing repair work on the Parish Hall ceiling. Dinner and chapel service will resume February 8.

### **Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) 101**

In-person, Robbins Parlor



This session explores how Unity Church uses the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to support its antiracist multicultural work. IDI Qualified Administrators Laura Park and Tim Wendt will explain the Intercultural Development Continuum on which the IDI is based, where Unity Church as a congregation shows up on this continuum, and what that means for our individual and collective work. After the session, participants can sign up to take the IDI survey, have a one-on-one session with a qualified administrator to discuss results, and participate in follow-up workshops on February 21 and March 9 to create their Intercultural Development Plan.

### **Beginner Violin with Mayra Mendoza**

In-person, Choir Room

Join Mayra for beginning violin lessons appropriate for all ages. Learn basic violin posture, note reading, and more! Questions? Email [mayraquitzia@hotmail.com](mailto:mayraquitzia@hotmail.com).

### **Religious Education New Family Orientation**

Interested in learning more about Unity's religious education programs? Join us for our new family orientation. Questions? Email [ray@unityunitarian.org](mailto:ray@unityunitarian.org).

## February 8

Dinner: lasagna, Caesar salad and stone fruit bars

### **Our Seven Principles: Change is in the Air**

In-person, Robbins Parlor

Did you know that our Unitarian Universalist Seven Principles come from Article II of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) bylaws? One of our most uniting covenants, and an important part of our living faith tradition, our UUA bylaws require we revisit Article II at least every 15 years to consider revisions that would keep the covenant between congregations meaningful and alive. In this session, Rev. Kathleen Rolenz will tell us about the significant work of the Article II Study Commission and the changes it envisions for Article II.

### **Winter Sowing with Native Plants**

In-person, Art Room

Join Kathy Sidles from Unity's Act for the Earth Team to create low cost outdoor greenhouses for native plants. Milk jugs, yogurt tubs, potting soil, and pollinator garden seeds will be provided. Children are welcome with an adult helper. Make your greenhouse right there or pick up your materials on the way to another class. Plant and water your native seeds now and have plants ready for May planting in your garden.

### **Lectio Divina**

Online via Zoom: [bit.ly/lectio22-23](http://bit.ly/lectio22-23)

Following a centuries-old Benedictine spiritual practice of contemplative reading, a chosen poem is read aloud, as attendees are encouraged to lift up what they heard and how the poem spoke to them. A different poem at each session. A rich way to receive poetry's gifts in a small group setting. Led by Lisa Wersal or Shelley Butler.

### **Beginner Violin with Mayra Mendoza**

In-person, Choir Room

## February 15

Dinner: chili, smashed baby potatoes, berry-oat bars

### **Sen John Marty and Legislative Efforts to Address Gun Violence**

In-person, Parish Hall

Unity's Gun Sense Ministry Team welcomes State Senator John Marty to speak about legislative efforts to end gun violence in Minnesota. Senator Marty will share about his proposed legislation and will offer tips-of-the-trade as to how we can help further these efforts.

### **Congregation Book Read Discussion**

In-person, Robbins Parlor

Online via Zoom: [bit.ly/2023bookread](http://bit.ly/2023bookread)

Come discuss the remarkable, award-winning book, *We Have Always Been Here: A Queer Muslim Memoir* by Samra Habib. The author asks, "How do you find yourself when the world tells you that you don't exist?" As an Ahmadi Muslim growing up in Pakistan to Canada as a refugee, Samra embarks on an exploration of faith, art, love, and queer identity to create a triumphant memoir of forgiveness and family. There is much to talk about — we'll look forward to seeing you at a book discussion.



### **Board Game Night**

In-person, Center Room

Open to everyone; kids are welcome with their adult(s)! We'll have a variety of board games available that are easy to learn, or bring a favorite board game that you would like to play.

### **Beginner Violin with Mayra Mendoza**

In-person, Choir Room

# WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

February 22

*Dinner: chicken mulligatawny over rice, salad, dessert*

## Intersectionality 101

In-person, Parish Hall

In 1989, Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the concept of “intersectionality,” a term she coined to describe the double bind of simultaneous racial and gender prejudice experienced by African American women. To paraphrase her 2016 TED Talk, “The Urgency of Intersectionality” — “Our social justice problems like racism and sexism are often overlapping creating multiple levels of social injustice... The way we perceive race or gender discrimination is partial. Intersectionality offers us a frame or a prism that allows us to see the cracks in social change solutions. Intersectionality allows us to address the multiple layers of discrimination a person might be considering. Intersectionality offers a frame that allows us a way to bear witness to the realities we are often too uncomfortable to confront.”

During this first conversation, we will move beyond discussing intersectionality (as it is too commonly deployed) as simply the reality that each of us has multiple identities and begin practicing using intersectionality as a frame for how we engage in and understand the full complexity of justice work.

There will be three Tuesday evening follow-up sessions to this program:

- February 28, 6:30-8:30 p.m.: LGBTQ+ Justice  
Our current social construction of gender comes from rigid, European settler notions of the masculine and feminine. Our relationship to femininity, masculinity, and sexuality are limited when we subscribe to binary thinking, stark gender roles, and desexualized ways of knowing ourselves and one another. Together, we'll reflect on how LGBTQ+ justice creates more freedom and allows more self-determination for all of us while we also interrogate how whiteness has us held in a binary relationship to how we do gender.
- March 7, 6:30-8:30 p.m.: Black-white Binary  
While chattel slavery and its ever-present legacy shape the urgency of American anti-Blackness and the presence of white supremacy culture, Tema Okun reminds us of the fallacy of either/or thinking, as this work includes the attempted genocide of Indigenous peoples and the stealing of land. This broader project, beyond the Black-white binary, presents us with injustices occurring simultaneously. We will explore how we can engage the multiple forms racism, colorism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and more as experienced by multiple groups including Asian American Pacific Islanders, Arab, Middle Eastern and North African communities, Indigenous peoples, Latine/Latinx communities, women, non-binary and trans folks, queer people and more.
- March 14, 6:30-8:30 p.m.: Class and Race  
Race, gender, class, and religion are inextricably linked in a U.S. American context. Any attempt to discuss socio-economic experience or caste in an American context without layering in race is an incomplete and inaccurate frame. The social construction of race in our context was developed for economic reasons. The notion of an American economy is predicated on the violent set of beliefs that white Christian men are the closest to the divine and therefore the worthiest of owning land, controlling labor, and building wealth. We'll close the series by practicing resistance to oversimplifying the complex.

## Antiracism Literacy Partners

Online via Zoom: [bit.ly/alp223](https://bit.ly/alp223)

This program, offered each quarter, will highlight useful books, podcasts, and videos in our ongoing practice of learning about systemic racism and the work of dismantling it. Come to choose a resource, sign up for a buddy or small group and make plans for your discussions. Resource/discussion guides provided.

## Beginner Violin with Mayra Mendoza

In-person, Choir Room

Coming March 1

## Truth Telling and Healing: Indigenous And Environmental Justice Series

### Part 5: Land and Reparations

In-person and online via Zoom



This session will delve deeper into the homeland on which Unity Church stands and explore what it means to engage in reparations. Jessica Intermill of Intermill Land History Consulting and Strategic Policy Consultant for Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light (MNIPL) will introduce us to the Reparatory Eco Mind Map and the use of treaties to determine the early stewards of “this place.”

Previous Truth-Telling and Healing presentations have invited participants into the act of repairing through several of these portals already. This program will take us beyond the abstract land acknowledgment and connect us in a real way to the place we visit each week to engage in worship and other forms of spiritual practice.

As a Strategic Policy Consultant for MNIPL, Intermill works to engage congregations in the work of reparations and reparatory action, and to advocate for legislation advancing the Land Back and reparations movements. She brings 15 years of experience as a treaty-rights and tribal law attorney to her work in building inclusive pathways that serve all our neighbors.

## Queer Theology Discussion Group

facilitated by Mike Huber and open to adults of all genders and sexual orientations, with follow-up sessions on Tuesday, March 7, and 14.

# WELCOME NEWCOMERS & NEW MEMBERS



## Welcome Words

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

The longing for community is often what entices people to visit Unity Church for the first time. Life is too complicated to navigate alone, and we want a place where we can, in the words of the poet

Marge Piercy “weave real connections, create real nodes.” Unity Church is absolutely a place where that can happen and at the same time, “connections are made slowly, sometimes they grow underground.” How does one, with integrity, become part of a community’s work to build those connections with one another? When those connections grow slowly or even out of sight, how do we develop the patience to bring them to fruitfulness?

You may find some answers in the opportunities available at the church this month. To help you understand and create real connections across difference, consider attending the February 22 Wellspring Wednesday session with Team Dynamics on Intersectionality 101 (see page 8). Or participate in the congregational read of *We Have Always Been Here: A Queer Muslim Memoir* (see page 14). Or come to worship on Sundays to find the balance that lets you engage with deeper questions.

Let me know what questions I can answer about congregational life and the pathways you might explore to know the church better and deepen your life of faith and antiracist multicultural practice. Contact me at [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org) or 651-228-1456 x110.

## 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.

### Finding Yourself at Unity

**For visitors and inquirers; held Sundays at 10:15 a.m., in the Gannett Room and online via Zoom at [bit.ly/fyuonline](https://bit.ly/fyuonline).** Drop-ins welcome; childcare in the nursery.

Join the repeating eight-session cycle at any time, and attend the sessions in any order. This month’s offerings:

February 5: Unitarian Universalist History

February 12: Membership 101

February 19: Religious Education for Children, Youth, and Adults

February 26: Q & A with the Minister

### Committing to Unity: Joining Unity Church

**Tuesday, April 11 • 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.**

This session, for people ready to become members, explores the meanings and expectations of membership and shared ministry. The class concludes with a ceremony as participants sign the membership book and officially join the church.

## Welcome New Members

### Jackie Duffus Boyd

Jackie (they/she) has lived with Mike Boyd (he/him) in the neighborhood for ten years. They have two kids, Gus (he/him) who is eight and Esme (they/she) who is six. The Boyds have two dogs (Scooter and Phil), love camping, entertaining, and hanging out on their front porch.



### Mike Boyd

Mike was born in Minnesota, raised in Texas, and moved here in 2006 for law school. He's married to Jackie Boyd and father to Gus and Esme. He recently started a new job at Esri and is excited to meet and connect with folks at the church.



### Ann Burns

Within a month of moving to Saint Paul, after three decades in rural Minnesota, Ann began attending Unity Church, where she continues to find delight in this love-expanding, mission-driven community and spiritual home. Ann is especially passionate about things that spark wonder and amazement in her life. She watches birds, gardens, loves natural history, acts on climate change, has joined Unity’s Indigenous Justice Team, participates in our Antiracism Literacy Partners, has joined a Chalice Circle, and sings in Unity Choir.



### Craig Cox

Craig was born and raised in Saint Paul but spent 30 years of his life split between Washington, DC, and Iowa. He devoted his working life to protecting natural resources and the environment. He's an avid fly fisherman, birder and hiker and loves anything that involves being outside.



### Kim Wolston

Kim grew up attending Unity Church and is happy to be back and experience how the congregation has evolved over the years. She's especially looking forward to assisting with and photographing the kids' Sunday gardening classes again next summer.



## Gender + Faith Retreat

Unity Church is delighted to announce a second Gender + Faith retreat. Join us for a faith formative experience which expands our personal and collective understanding of gender, faith, and the intersection between them. As we both return to and expand our exploration from last year, we continue to ask:



- What role does gender play in a faith community? Why do we so often divide according to gender? What do we gain when we divide by gender? What do we lose? What do we gain when we have conversation across gender experiences?
- How might expanding and complicating our understanding of gender and our understanding of faith deepen our personal spiritual practice and our relationships with one another as members of Unity Church?

Together we will explore our gender journeys, share stories about the intersection of gender and faith in our lives, and work to create a brave space where people of all genders can show up whole and holy in the multiplicity of their identities.

Interested in attending? Please complete a participant interest form by Monday March 6: [unityunitarian.org/gender-faith-retreat.html](https://unityunitarian.org/gender-faith-retreat.html). Videos or one-on-one interviews instead of written responses are also welcome.

The retreat will be held on Saturday, March 18, approximately 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., at Unity Church. Lunch is included and the church will be covering all costs for the retreat. Questions? Contact Laura Park at [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org) or 651-228-1456 x110, Ray Hommeyer at [ray@unityunitarian.org](mailto:ray@unityunitarian.org) or 651-228-1456 x127.

## Serve as a Worship Associate

Unity's worship associates program provides lay members an opportunity to participate in the co-creation of worship. The work of worship associates includes quarterly meetings; theme, sermon, and service discussion; research on related readings; and occasionally offering original reflections during worship and serving as a summer worship leader. You must be a member of Unity Church to apply. New associates will begin in April of 2023. If you are interested in serving as a worship associate, please complete the online application: [bit.ly/ucuwaapp](https://bit.ly/ucuwaapp).

## Emergency Preparedness at Unity Church

How would you respond if we had to evacuate the church? What is the protocol if there's a medical emergency, or if a person is demonstrating inappropriate behavior? Where would you go if there was a tornado?

Unity's Emergency Preparedness Team has developed an Emergency Action Plan ([bit.ly/ucueap](https://bit.ly/ucueap)) which offers guidelines and procedures in the event of an emergency. The plan outlines the location and use of first aid kits, defibrillators and evacuation chairs; it identifies weather shelters and evacuation paths; and it offers a response structure for staff and volunteers.

We encourage you to read our Emergency Action Plan! If you have questions or are interested in the ongoing emergency preparedness of Unity Church, please contact Barbara Hubbard at [barbara@unityunitarian.org](mailto:barbara@unityunitarian.org).

## A Spiritual Practice to Feed Your Soul: Lectio Divina

**Second Wednesday (February 8) // Fourth Tuesday (February 28)**  
**7:00-8:30 p.m. • Online via Zoom, register: [bit.ly/lectio22-23](https://bit.ly/lectio22-23)**

Following a Benedictine spiritual practice of contemplative reading, a chosen poem is read aloud, as attendees are encouraged to lift up what they heard and how the poem spoke to them. A rich way to receive poetry's gifts in a small group setting.

## Fellowship Groups

For more conversation about getting connected, contact Laura Park at [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org).

**Afterthoughts** offers time following the 9:00 service to discuss the service.

**Caregivers Group** meets on the third Thursday of the month.

**Evergreen Quilters:** This quilting group meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-9:00 p.m. and fourth Saturday of the month.

**Families Living with Mental Health Challenges** meets the first Saturday of each month, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

**Kung Fu** meets Saturday mornings, 9:00-10:00 a.m., online via Zoom. Email [barney.kujawski@gmail.com](mailto:barney.kujawski@gmail.com) to receive the link.

**Living With Grief Group** meets on the third Tuesday of the month.

**Men's Coffee Group** meets every other Wednesday at 9:00 a.m. for light-hearted conversation.

**Men's Conversation Group** meets Monday, February 6 and 20, from 7:00-9:00 p.m.

**Men's Retirement Circle:** Monday, February 13 and 27, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

**New Look at the Bible** meets the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m.

**Recovery from White Conditioning** meets Wednesdays, 6:00-7:00 p.m.

**Textile Arts Group** meets online the first and third Wednesday of each month from 7:00-8:30 p.m. Bring your knitting, embroidery, etc.

**Unity Book Club** meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m. February 14: *Behold the Dreamers* by Imbolo Mbue

**Women in Retirement** meets on the second and fourth Thursday of each month, from 1:00-3:00 p.m., in the Center Room. Social hour at noon!

**Young Adult Group** (ages 18-35) — all are welcome. Email [kp@unityunitarian.org](mailto:kp@unityunitarian.org) for details.

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

## Evergreen Quilters

### What do they do with all the money?

Have you ever wondered what Unity's quilters, who offer handmade treasures for you to purchase, do with the money they make from their sales? Every time they have a sale, they distribute the money to local non-profit organizations. After the December quilt raffle and sale, they were able to donate \$1200 to each of the following organizations.

**Project Home** provides 24/7 shelter for up to 30 families or 100 individuals at their location on Randolph Avenue. They have been serving families without homes for over 23 years.

**Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf** in the Rondo neighborhood has a wide variety of food available including dry goods, canned items, fresh produce, culturally specific foods, and pet food.

**Jeremiah Program** supports single mothers in college by providing child care, housing, job training, parenting classes, and more.

Thank you for your continued support of the quilters and these organizations! Pictured here is Mary Kerres, the lucky winner of our raffle quilt.



### Donate to the Food Shelf

In December we collected 475 pounds of food for Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf. With that final donation, it brought our total amount of food collected during 2022 to 3,145 pounds. A big thank you to everyone for their contributions!

During the month of February, besides food donations, the food shelf needs toilet paper, paper towels, disinfectant wipes, all-purpose cleaner, shampoo, conditioner, body and hand soap, and body lotion. They will also accept pet food. If you would like to donate money for perishable food items please visit [hallieqbrown.org](http://hallieqbrown.org).

## Buy a Pie!

### Support LGBTQ+ Community and Outreach

Unity's annual Pi(e) Day (3.14.23) Bake Sale is here! Order a blueberry, apple crumble, or French silk pie in the Parish Hall on Sundays during February, or order online at [bit.ly/pieday23](http://bit.ly/pieday23). Plan to pick up your pie(s) on Sunday, March 5, between 10:00 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. A limited number of pies will be made, so order early.

Volunteers are needed! No baking experience necessary. To volunteer, email Kevin Ely at [kevin.m.ely@gmail.com](mailto:kevin.m.ely@gmail.com). Volunteer bakers have a lot of fun and are essential to the success of the fundraiser.

Your pie purchases and volunteer hours make it possible for Unity Church to bring in queer and trans presenters and facilitators, support our partner organizations like Transforming Families, and foster LGBTQ+ fellowship within our congregation.

## Gun Sense Team

### Gun Legislation with Senator John Marty

Wednesday, February 15 • 7:00-8:30 p.m. • Robbins Parlor

Unity's Gun Sense Team will welcome Senator John Marty, co-author with Sen. Sandy Pappas of legislation concerning gun safety, to Wellspring Wednesday. Working from the premise that we could treat gun ownership and use much like we treat car ownership and operation, Senator Marty will help us understand and explore ways the congregation can engage in legislative efforts toward more effective gun safety.



For more information about Unity's Gun Sense Team or to join a meeting, contact Richard Birger at [rmbirger@yahoo.com](mailto:rmbirger@yahoo.com).

## Obama School Team

### Staff Appreciation Week

Staff Appreciation Week at Barack and Michelle Elementary School is March 20-25. The Obama School Team is making plans to recognize the staff throughout the week. Please contact Nancy Heege at [nancyheege672@gmail.com](mailto:nancyheege672@gmail.com) if you are interested in assisting with any of the activities throughout the week.

The Obama School Team is exploring options for our volunteers because of the closure of Obama Elementary at the end of this school year. It is anticipated that the building will be closed for two years to complete the renovations. More information regarding the volunteer opportunities will be available as we move through spring.

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

## Affordable Housing Team

### Got Spare Keys? Help Unlock the Metro

Drop off your unused keys at our Affordable Housing Team table in Parish Hall on the first and third Sundays in February (and March).

Why? Metropolitan Council, the largest distributor of housing vouchers in Minnesota, does not have a policy to distribute them as Project Based Vouchers (PBVs), and our partner, Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative, cannot develop deeply affordable housing units without PBVs.

In an effort to put the pressure on Met Council, we will deliver the thousands of keys collected from churches all over the metro during a clergy press conference at the end of March and demand that they "Unlock the Metro" and create this needed policy. Don't have any spare keys? No problem. Drop by our table to sign a "tag" that will be fastened to the keys we've already collected.



## Warming Hubs Update

The St. Paul Warming Hubs Committee is streamlining volunteer work to one location: Faith City Church, 781 East 7th Street. This site serves women and families, and trained staff is onsite. Volunteers are needed to hand out warm beverages and winter clothing for two-hour shifts. Each evening, staff drive to area shelters, making sure to find anyone who can't get into a full shelter and bring them to a warming hub. If you are interested in seeing what shifts are available or to sign up to volunteer, please visit [bit.ly/stpwarm](http://bit.ly/stpwarm).

## Saint Paul City Council — Four Open Seats for November Election

We have a unique opportunity to shape housing policy by electing new city council members who share our sense of urgency. But we need delegates to the Ward conventions in order to vet candidates. This would entail a precinct meeting and a Ward convention (likely in March and April). If this sounds daunting, or you are curious/have questions, contact Dayna Kennedy [daynamelissa@icloud.com](mailto:daynamelissa@icloud.com).

Please consider checking out one of our Affordable Housing Team meeting! Contact Judy Miller for more information at [jmkmam@comcast.net](mailto:jmkmam@comcast.net).



On January 11 Unity's Affordable Housing Team rallied at the Capitol with Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative to ensure that every Minnesotan has a home!

## Winter Warm-up Drive

### Continues Through February

Help people recently released from incarceration by donating warm clothing and hygiene items. **New items only please! Size XL and larger are of greatest need.**

- Winter coats, long underwear, T-shirts, hats, gloves, boots, and scarves
- Deodorant, toothpaste, hand lotion, soap, shampoo, hand sanitizer, and washcloths
- Tote bags to carry items



Donate financially or drop off items at Unity Church in the Parish Hall on Sunday mornings or at the front desk M-F, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Questions? Please contact Ray Wiedmeyer at [raka1260@gmail.com](mailto:raka1260@gmail.com).

## Truth Telling and Healing: Indigenous And Environmental Justice Series

### Land and Reparations

Wednesday, March 1  
See page 9 for details.





## The Secret to Great Congregation Book Read Discussions

Shelley Butler, Library-Bookstall Team

Last month, we asked, “Why is it necessary for a Queer Muslim to state the obvious?” The obvious being that “we have always been here.” Let’s try to answer that and many other questions related to this year’s book read title *We Have Always Been Here: A Queer Muslim Memoir* by Samra Habib in our congregation discussions.



One key area for discussion is intersectionality. Samra Habib (they/them) is not just queer, an immigrant, or a Muslim; they are all those things. To attach one label or another is to diminish them, as is any attempt to separate one identity from another. Yet, despite the richness of their being, they ask, “How do you find yourself when the world tells you that you don’t exist?” After searching for safety for most of their life, Habib comes to live fearlessly, embracing all of who they are.

So, what’s the secret to a great discussion? No pressure, but it’s *you!* Each person in every book read discussion over the past decade+ of the Unity Congregation Book Read has had something unique and important to say, that enriched the rest of us in the group. Just bring yourself and your thoughts and we’ll have a great discussion. There are several opportunities to talk about the book, two of which will be in-person at Unity Church and one on Zoom.

- Sunday, February 12, 12:30 p.m., Anderson Library
- Wednesday, February 15, 7:10 p.m., Center Room
- Wednesday, February 15, 7:10 p.m., online via Zoom, register here: [bit.ly/2023bookread](https://bit.ly/2023bookread)

The reading and discussion guide, available in the Anderson Library and the Bookstall, includes more information about the book and Habib, as well as thought-provoking questions. The ideas, thoughts, and discussions are sure to be rich, and hopefully, inspire further exploration and reading.

Browse the library catalog at [librarycat.org/lib/UnityChurch](https://librarycat.org/lib/UnityChurch).

### In The Justice Database

Communities Combating Hate is a coalition advocating for policy change and legislation to protect Minnesotans from hate. Incidents are on the rise and under-reported, and current laws and policies are not enough to keep people safe and help victims get support. [bit.ly/JusticeData](https://bit.ly/JusticeData)

## February Parish Hall Artists

Steve Simmer



As a natural resource professional and Minnesota based outdoor photographer, I have a lifelong relationship with landscapes and with photography. My passion is to apply an intimate knowledge of the natural environment, which I developed over a full career in the practice of forestry, to visually express the wonders of nature. The camera records more than the eye can see; bending time and light, magnifying detail or changing the perception of motion. I feel successful when my art helps a viewer see, feel, or understand some aspect of the environment they had not previously appreciated.

Ken Epstein



Growing up in New Jersey, I was captivated by the natural beauty of the Atlantic seashore and developed my artistic sense on sketchpad and canvas. My boyhood artistic attachment to nature transferred to the lakes, prairies, and woodlands of Minnesota and found expression through the digital camera. The subjects that most interest me encompass wildlife and close-up photography. The commonality in all subjects is the drive to create and display images that resonate with my innate human sense of beauty and hopefully yours, too.



## I don't know, what do you think?

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

There was a cartoon in the paper today that really hit home for me. One character is sitting across a table from another, their arms crossed, looking indignantly vexed as they say, "The problem with you is you

can only see both sides of the argument!"

I can feel cursed by my tendency to see both, and generally three or four sides of every issue. While I credit myself for being fair and open minded in considering all that, I also know I over complicate my decision making, and I wish I just knew exactly where I stand and was comfortable acting on my set principles.

More often I'm wishy-washy. Casting myself in the best light I say I am a "principled pragmatist." But I suspect I'm hiding my lack of convictions in that description. I think pragmatism means I make decisions on what I think will work best, and I qualify that by saying I'll be principled about how I decide. And as I say that, I can see how slippery that really is.

Folks, I wish I could tell you that as I work with our youth I was a paragon of integrity, consistently true to identifiable principles. Now, I can assure you I am comfortable pointing out when I think the kids are not acting in accordance to their principles, or to those we as Unitarian Universalists profess to hold dear. I can wag a finger and badger them. Is that good enough?

Now my dad, there was a man of principles. I believe he had integrity in all he did, and I don't believe I'll ever live up to his example. But I know that when I was young I didn't always read that as a virtue, I thought it was limiting. I also wasn't sure his values and beliefs were truly inarguable. I thought they were often quaint. How could he really be so certain? Weren't there times when the principle just didn't work? We never really talked about it in these terms, never tried to get to the bottom of it as it felt too dangerous, too disrespectful, too loaded.

Which is really a shame. But I understand the fear and loathing around really examining our principles, my principles, how I interact with, follow or reject them. How *you* do the same. And I think that's the point here for us as a church community. As a youth group. We can talk about our integrity, hopefully without it feeling like a judgmental challenge. Or what the heck, maybe it absolutely is a judgmental challenge, but one we're open to being honest about, with a goal to help each other out. Not to make us just feel good about ourselves, but to raise our consciousness. Be thoughtful. Be accountable.

Of course, I could be completely wrong and there are two or three other ways to think about it...



## Music Notes

**Ahmed Anzaldúa  
Director of Music Ministries**

When faced with writing something for the February theme of integrity, I can't help but think of a piece of music and a poem. The piece of music is the final movement of "Babi Yar," the thirteenth symphony by Russian composer

Dmitri Shostakovich; the poem is "Career" by Yevgeny Yevtushenko, which is set to music in this movement. Part of my doctoral work at the University of Minnesota was to uncover a version of this symphony that had never received a public premiere, a version for two pianists and a choir of basses. I prepared an edition of it that included percussion and we performed the world premiere at Ted Mann Concert Hall, 50 years after the piece was written. This piece required assembling a symphonic choir made up entirely of basses, and involved a large contingent of bass singers from all over the Twin Cities, including several Unity members (years before I came to work at this church!)

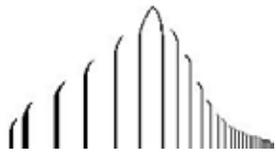
While most of the symphony is largely about the horrors of the Holocaust and Stalin's regime, the final movement, titled "Career," continued to haunt me well after the performance. Many of the performers expressed similar sentiments. This movement is in stark contrast with the terrifying music of the previous sections of the symphony. The poem starts by focusing on Galileo and the clergy's reaction to his assertion that the Earth revolves around the sun. However, it quickly turns to "a fellow scientist of Galileo's age" who was "no less wise than Galileo." However, the thing about this fellow scientist is that "he had a family" (these words are underscored by some of the movements scariest music) and needed to further his own career. The music and the poem glorify those who sacrificed their careers by sticking to their beliefs and mocks those who sought to further themselves by giving in to the authorities. It is those who kept their integrity that we remember now, and people who sought success that we have long forgotten.

Needless to say, this piece was controversial in its time. The reason why it was unperformed is because Shostakovich was forced to prepare a version played on pianos for the state censors to approve before having access to an orchestra. It is a remarkable work that I cannot recommend enough.

Here is the URL for a video where I conduct a full performance of this movement:

[youtube.com/watch?v=u3wial2iYUA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3wial2iYUA)

The video includes the option to have subtitles for the Russian text. Also, it is a 360-degree video, allowing the user to turn the camera around and look at the choir and the players! You might recognize some familiar faces from the choirs at Unity singing in the group!



# UNITY CHURCH-UNITARIAN

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## SAVE THE DATES! MARCH 9, 10, 11 2023 Unity Church Youth Musical

Musical alumni and church community members are needed to help with the set, stage, make-up, costumes, and numerous other tasks needed to make this musical the success that it is. Any amount of time and effort is welcome. Help will be needed throughout the rehearsal period as well as during tech week and on the days of the shows. High school volunteers will earn volunteer hours! Please contact Gabby Mead at [gabrielledmead@gmail.com](mailto:gabrielledmead@gmail.com) if you are interested in pursuing this awesome opportunity.



### Congregational Life Review • February 3 and 4

Details on page 4.

### Congregational Book Read Discussions

*We Have Always Been Here* by Samra Habib

Details on page 14.



### Meet Geno Okok

Unity's Next Artist in Residence

Turn to page 7!