

BOARD OF TRUSTEES / MST UPDATE



Normalizing Courage

Jess Landgraf, Trustee

Because I am a year-round commuter by bicycle, I sometimes hear awe mixed with consternation from colleagues, especially around more extreme weather events. They'll tell me, "You biked to work in this?!" or "I couldn't do that — I'm too [insert excuse here]." I used to engage with the speaker (upkeep of my bike and gear costs less than a quarter of the amount of our car's annual expense plus I get fresh air and cardio exercise) but now I mostly nod and hear my colleague out. Often I end up shaking my head, amused. My colleagues clearly think I'm courageous — or crazy — especially when I bike through what would otherwise seem insurmountable challenges.

I realize I have privileges that enable me to bike commute and since adolescence I've leaned on those privileges to build our household's structures so that I have to bike commute. Many days my only alternatives are either slower (i.e. Metro Transit and walking) or expensive (taxi service), and neither our budget nor our garage have space for an additional car. These structures encourage my accountability to bike commuting. Rarely are my colleagues intrigued enough to slow down and listen to the choices and structures that prescribe my seemingly courageous action of biking to work. It isn't that I somehow have more courage than my colleagues. Rather, the difference to me with some exceptions, bike commuting is simply the way I get to my job. To those who have made different choices, bike commuting appears courageous (or crazy) but definitely not a mundane fact of life that they themselves could choose.

I wonder, what if labeling a choice, an action, or a behavior as "courageous" gets in the way of doing that act, again and again, until we simply cannot do life any other way?

When these moments of disconnect crop up, I've noticed that one major difference between my colleagues and myself is what we consider the path of least resistance. For them, it's driving. For me, it's biking. I wonder where we might go if we apply this lens when looking at Unity Church's habits. As we continue the transitions within our Executive Team, we will continue to have opportunities to reevaluate and reestablish what are our paths of least resistance. Would we be more comfortable in identifying white dominant culture within our gatherings if we chose to see conversations about race as simply necessary? What if we pushed against the urge to label a protest movement "courageous" — or crazy — would we be more likely to show up in solidarity?

At the annual meeting of the congregation in November, the congregation elected two new trustees (and re-elected trustee Clover Earl). Visit the board webpage to meet Debbie Cushman and Kevin Ely (and the rest of our board!): <https://www.unityunitarian.org/board-of-trustees.html>.

Update from the Ministerial Search Team

Morgan France-Ramirez, on behalf of the Ministerial Search Team: Avi Viswanathan, Betsy Hearn, Mary Baremore, Pauline Eichten, Lia Rivamonte, Jake Rueter, Dan Huelster, and Marg Walker



At this time, the Ministerial Search Team is excited to announce that we are moving to the next step of our search process! As we shared at the annual meeting in November, we have absorbed all the information we received from the congregational survey and listening sessions in our own data retreat, and we have used that insight to create our Congregational Record. As of December 1, our Congregational Record was posted to the UUA MinistrySearch database where it can be viewed by ministerial applicants. The names and Ministerial Records of interested applicants are then released to us in early January. So, as you are reading this, we are just starting to receive applications from interested ministers! Once we receive applications, we will spend the next three months discerning the best fit for Unity Church. We will begin by conducting virtual interviews with an eye towards arriving at three candidates for in-person interviews. If all goes well, we will then be able to select a final candidate at the end of March.

As we await applications, we are still busy preparing. We are finalizing our documents packet, a collection of additional, more detailed materials describing Unity Church, which is sent to applicants. These are things like our by-laws, contractual information, and sample newsletters. However, the main focus of our work between now and January, is preparation for discernment and interviewing. As we create our resume review criteria and interview protocols we will be working with Alfonso Wenker of Team Dynamics to ensure fairness and equity in our processes.

As we enter this exciting next phase of our ministerial search, we want to extend our deep thanks to the congregation and church staff for holding us in this process and for participating so fully in our information gathering process.

Members of Unity's Ministerial Search Team have posted bios and introduction videos on the transitions webpage. Click on over and get to know the members who are doing this important work on behalf of the congregation: [unityunitarian.org/ministerial-transition.html](https://www.unityunitarian.org/ministerial-transition.html)!