

Abundance

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.

Look up the word abundance in the dictionary and you will find it defined as “a very large quantity.” Our minds might conjure up an overflowing cornucopia — a mythical horn providing nourishment and prosperity in large and endless quantities. But look more closely at the dictionary, and you’ll find another definition without reference to quantity. It says, “plentifulness of the good things of life.”

It is in that definition that I spot the beginnings of a theological understanding of abundance found in so many parables and religious teachings — the idea that true abundance is not a matter of quantity and cannot be measured by either counting or clutching what is in hand. Rather, it is something we participate in by opening our awareness to the fullness of the present moment, to what is possible but perhaps untallied and beyond possession or even, sometimes, beyond perception.

Think of the five loaves and two fish that Jesus used to feed the crowd of five thousand. Or the void from which creation began in Genesis, the story itself spawned by the premise of abundance and a promise that it would continue. In many religious teachings about opening our awareness to the interdependence of all being, we are told to neither accept a premise of scarcity nor to deny the impact of scarcity when it appears. Rather, we are invited to participate in uncovering or creating abundance by noticing and choosing from the wider possibilities woven into every moment, even when we might not see them.

Wendell Berry, in his poem “The Peace of Wild Things,” describes the worries and grief that can keep us awake at night, despairing the state of the world. Then he notes how nature can offer a sense of abundance not just by what is seen but by the presence of what we know to be there, out of sight, across a distance of time and space. He writes,

*And I feel above me the day-blind stars,
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and
am free.¹*

On a recent warm summer’s night in the Twin Cities, following a tip from a friend, David and I visited the shore of Pickerel Lake near the Mississippi, at dusk. Overlooking a small and unremarkable area of tall grass and low shrubs that slopes down to the water’s edge, we waited for dusk. Then, as the sky darkened and the birdsong silenced, the magic we were hoping to witness began. First one pinpoint of light in the grass. Then another. And another. And another. Until the field was alive with an abundant flickering of fireflies, dancing with a visual syncopation, like plentiful glitter blinking through the enchanted brush.

We walked through the twinkling field, and it was impossible not to feel some kinship with the tiny lights flashing around us as they called to the fallen stardust within us. And the sheer abundance of the shimmering sparks nested in my heart as if to remind me of the light embedded everywhere and in everyone, like

day-blind stars, present even when I cannot see it. Can I remember this and believe it — especially when it is least evident around me — and live my life accordingly? This is what our Universalist faith asks of us.

[T]he real abundance,” writes the poet Marge Piercy, “is the power to say yes and to say no, to open and to close, to take or to leave and not to be taken by force or law Or fear or poverty or hunger.²

Our faith calls us to the abundance found in choice. Our choice to say yes and no. To consider the wider possibilities present even in the midst of loss and suffering, and to faithfully choose when we will open and when we will close, what we will take and what we will leave. And how we will choose not to be taken ourselves — by fear or poverty or by our insatiable hunger for more, and more, and more.

The world is replete with messages of scarcity. Let us choose instead to open a way toward a real and lasting abundance that is grounded in justice and equity and illuminated by our faith in the sacred sparks within us all.

By Karen Hering on behalf of this month's theme team: Andrea Anastos, Drew Danielson, Tom Duke, Ray Hommeyer, KP Hong, and Laura Park

¹ Excerpted from *The Selected Poems of Wendell Berry*, Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2009.

² From the poem “The Sabbath of Mutual Respect” by Marge Piercy, Marilyn Sewell, ed., *Cries of the Spirit*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1991, 227.

JULY SUNDAY SERVICES AND OFFERING RECIPIENTS

Sunday Services

Please join us online for multigenerational Sunday services live-streamed from the Sanctuary at 10:00 a.m. Summer Sundays in the Garden information is on page 10.

July 4: America's Real Abundance

Livestream: <https://youtu.be/Z4Lot2Cni5s>

Our community is blessed with an abundance of visionaries. As we celebrate freedom, liberty, and independence, can we hear — and heed — their calls for true freedom and liberation? Angela Wilcox and her beloved children Lucy and Nelson Moroukian will lean in to explore and celebrate these visions, nurtured and shared with us by our all-American neighbors.

July 11: Coming into “The Peace of Wild Things”

Livestream: <https://youtu.be/Q07gjhOMO38>

Wendell Berry writes, “When despair for the world grows in me... I come into the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief.” Nature provides many of us with refuge and solace when life feels overwhelming and it’s all just too much. But what about when our “despair for the world” is due to the very real and serious threats of climate change? When the place we seek relief is what’s at stake? Join worship leaders Bailey Webster and Rebecca Flood as they explore what it means to lean into our connection with nature’s abundance even as we grieve its losses.

July 18: The Abundance of Solidarity

Livestream: <https://youtu.be/5JjiUt32Fjc>

In her book, “The Sum of Us,” Heather McGee posits that a core idea of white American thinking goes something like: “there is an us and a them, and what’s good for them is bad for us.” This is not true for all Americans. In fact Black Americans, Asian and Indigenous communities, and other communities of color don’t necessarily equate better outcomes for their communities with worse outcomes for white people. Our Unitarian Universalist principles invite all of us, as people of faith, into a framework of abundance rather than the zero sum game. Join The Rev. Ruth MacKenzie and worship associate Ray Wiedmeyer in exploring what joining together in solidarity, and inherent worth and dignity, has to do with abundance.

July 25: The Longest Table

Livestream: <https://youtu.be/i8wga0nK8d8>

When abundance and scarcity seem to exist side-by-side in every life, how do we intentionally create a culture of care and belonging for each person in the human family? Do our perceptions of abundance and scarcity shape how we live out Unitarian Universalism’s seventh principle, which affirms our respect for the interdependence of all existence? Worship leaders Erika Sanders and Richard Lau will explore how we and our communities may become more healed and whole when we expand our capacity to practice greater spiritual generosity and humility.

Offering Recipients

Each Sunday, thirty percent of the offering supports Unity’s Community Outreach Ministry and seventy percent is given to a chosen community non-profit. Donate: bit.ly/sundayoffering

July 4: Protect Minnesota

Protect Minnesota is committed to ending gun violence in Minnesota. Its outreach centers around community investment, education, and legislative lobbying. In its response to 583 gun suicides in 2021, Protect MN is partnering with community centers, police, and health departments to identify ways to encourage people to check in on one another and give their guns to someone to hold for them until they are in a better state of mind. This collection will support community efforts to raise awareness of hand-gun suicides and create local networks to reduce their occurrence.

July 11: Northwest Passage

Northwest Passage provides residential treatment for youth ages 12-17 using a program that blends traditional mental help interventions with arts and nature-based therapies. Its “In a New Light” program is a therapeutic nature photography initiative, emphasizing experiences in nature immersion with the goal of empowering struggling youth to define themselves by their strengths rather than their weaknesses and see themselves through the lens of their awe-inspiring accomplishments. This collection will support Northwest Passage’s unique Artist-in-Residence program. Unity’s Mark and Sally Foster, Sue Conner, Sherm Eagles, Ray Wiedmeyer, and Karen Abraham are among “In a New Light” supporters.

July 18: Days for Girls

Days for Girls provides washable feminine hygiene kits to send to girls in developing countries as a way to help them continue their education, avoid marrying at a young age, and break the cycle of poverty. This collection will help the Arden Hills Days for Girls Team meet its 2021 goal of preparing and distributing 800 kits. Unity Church member Denise Dejarlais is part of this Arden Hills Team.

July 25: Neighborhood House

Neighborhood House, founded in 1887, serves more than 15,000 people annually in its six locations throughout St. Paul, helping them gain the skills, knowledge, and confidence to thrive in diverse communities. Neighborhood House assists immigrants and refugees through its multiple services revolving around food and housing security, financial literacy, and educational and youth programs. This collection will support a distance learning site in the Wellstone Center providing supervised support for kids working through learning deficits incurred during a school year interrupted by pandemic restrictions. Unity members Sally Scoggin and Andrea Bond have been powerful energy sources for Neighborhood House.

BELOVED COMMUNITY STAFF TEAM

Next Right Action: A Reflection

Russel Balenger



A recent Wellspring Wednesday has caused me to reflect on my life in recent years and what Unity Church has defined as one's "next right action" around racial justice in this unsettled time.

Most of my life, I have been seeking racial justice and continuously pondering my "next right action." To do this, I have used Peace Circle work for many years. Circle work, for those not familiar with the term, is a way of bringing people together to work on creating community, or to problem-solve, that is very much centered on listening and taking turns at speaking. Its origins can be traced back to native peoples around the world and how they dealt successfully with conflict. During this time of pandemic and unrest, the Circle process has been valuable in creating space for our extended community to talk about issues like racial justice, which are hard to discuss for some.

Circle is always part of my "next right action," but then, "next right action" around race is probably seen differently for people who feel that their lives don't matter and those that don't have to question that. In many ways, nothing has changed for me in the past year. I still have to be continuously aware of how I appear in the world, so as not to be judged as "less." I still have to be conscious of not getting tangled in some situation around the police. I still feel the urgency that things have to change, but that urgency has always been there for me, while others can easily take a break from this freedom fighting with no consequences.

Pondering further the idea of "next right action," I am reminded of the importance not only of action but also the importance of being open to

changing one's thinking. Two summers ago, fellow Unity Church member Ray Wiedmeyer and I traveled with a small group to Ghana. From the moment we left our shores, our experiences of that trip were dramatically different. I was immediately awash in spaces filled almost completely with Black bodies, allowing me the rare opportunity to not feel the center of people's attention. Ray, on the other hand, became conscious of being very much in the minority because of the color of his skin. As a white man, he could move around quite comfortably and unobtrusively back home, but he had to check his expectations and assumptions continuously in Ghana.

used to fill our heads; these are now replaced by pictures of thriving people, living lives not that different than our own. This change in our thinking was certainly as important as the action.

Bringing it back home again: for me the Circle has always been about community and bringing people together to create true local change. Prior to the pandemic, we had been working hard to make juvenile justice more just. Totem Town, which had become a place to lock up kids of color, has been closed down thanks to the efforts of community and to folks at Unity Church. I would now like to see the land that Totem Town is on turned into a camping experience



Russel and Ray with their group at W. E. B. Du Bois home in Accra, Ghana.

At the top of my wish list while there was to walk through the neighborhoods to see how people lived, since most of my life I have been called "African American." If I was African somehow, after all these generations of being stolen to American shores, what did that mean? My father's father was Cuban Indian and his mother was German and white. My mother's father was a light brown man and her mother was a dark-skinned woman. Going to Ghana meant the world to me. There were moments of shared adventure and a chance to talk about many things, and in the end, Ray and I both returned changed. I now simply see myself as American. And when we both think of Africa, we have had to give up the pictures of impoverishment that

for community that would operate year-round. The Circle of Peace Movement I founded with my wife Sarah, which runs the Monday night Circle of Peace at Unity, also now operates as an alternative to locked detention for youth in Ramsey County. We have found ways to work with teens in trouble without incarcerating them. One of those solutions was to find mentors for them, and another involved food. When we provided families with regular bags of healthy food and mentors, kids stopped getting into trouble for livability crimes. Perhaps solutions to injustice are not that far from our grasp. We just need to be open to friendships that help us see and think more clearly where we can be most useful. And there might be our next "right action."

BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Reflections and an Invitation

Louise Livesay-Al, Trustee

When I think back to my time on the board a little less than 20 years ago for the first time and now, I realize that being on the board is part of what helps me live a life of integrity, service and joy. Yes, joy is very much a part of board work. There is laughter, growing friendships, joy in creating and stating its Ends, and helping the congregation achieve its Ends.

The conversations are rich and generative about the future and how we want to be in the world as an organization. As a trustee, I link with Unity's stakeholders. That involves some work and intention, but it is also a task filled with joy. Joy in connecting with amazing people

And I have found that each board I have been a part of, and it is a new Board each year of the three-year cycle, has operated with incredible integrity. Integrity exhibited towards one another, the executive team, to church members and stakeholders. We ask ourselves important questions about being an antiracist congregation and how we work towards that, and how we make decisions as a board through that lens. How do we change our ways to do things better, more thoughtfully, mindfully? We monitor our executive team to assure accountability to the limitations set under Policy Governance and that we are making measurable progress towards achieving our Ends.

In all that we do as a board, we strive to embody wonder, open-hearted engagement, and courageous action, which are the values of Unity Church. This last week at our monthly meeting, we had a generative conversation about how we want to use some money received from the Currier bequest that is set up as a board designated fund. We are challenging out normative response and discussing possible courageous action. Wonder and curiosity were part of that conversation. No answers yet, but there will be more courageous conversation before we make decisions.

I find my time and work as a trustee to be meaningful. Board work is about us, you, every member, and those who yearn for the Beloved Community and see Unity Church as an instrument for its realization. It is about this place, this important spiritual home to so many. It is about the change we want to see in the world as a collective. It is about how this place can facilitate each of us living lives of integrity, service, and joy. That is how change in the world happens; Unity is the conduit for that work.

Think about whether serving as a trustee is something that you might be interested in being a part of starting this November (it is a three-year term). Talk to a current or past trustees about their experience on the board. I find it is work that feeds me, feeds my spirit and deepens my love for this place. We need board members across all demographics of our congregation. We need people who engage in life at Unity Church from different vantage points. We need people with a variety of skills and expertise. There is no one kind of trustee. Might you be one? This may be your time to say, "Yes!"

Have you felt a pull into deeper service to the congregation, or know someone who is? If so, we invite you to consider serving or nominating someone to serve on the Board of Trustees. We are now accepting applications and nominations for new trustees. For more information, please reach out to Alex Askew, Board Secretary, at alexaskew@gmail.com. You can fill out a nomination form or an application at <http://bit.ly/unitytrustee>.

Introducing Unity's Interim Minister

Reverend Doctor Kathy Hurt



Unity's Board of Trustees is pleased to announce that The Reverend Doctor Kathy Hurt will serve as our Interim Minister for the coming year. Ordained at Unity Church, Reverend Hurt has roots in our congregation, and understands where we have been and where we want to go. Through the interview process, the board was impressed with her knowledge of Policy Governance, her respect for our Ends Statements, and her ability and experience to manage transitions. We are confident that she will be able to step in as part of an Executive Team and support the congregation and Ministerial Search Team as we prepare to call our next settled minister(s).

Reverend Hurt will begin her interim year with us on August 1. Please look for more information as summer unfolds. We look forward to welcoming Reverend Hurt in early August as we prepare for our new church year together.

MINISTERIAL SEARCH TEAM UPDATE / FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

Summer Greetings from the MST

Marg Walker, on behalf of the Communications Team of the Ministerial Search Team (MST)

As I write this, we are in the middle of sauna-like weather that is predicted to last a while. Things are heating up for the MST, too, and we are beginning to plan ways to involve you in some of the ground work for the search. Here's what you can expect in the months ahead, and where you will have the chance to get involved.

First up is a congregational survey conducted in August/September to get members' assessments of where we are as a church. You'll be asked your views on things such as the strengths and needs of our congregation, and what inspires you as an individual to stretch, to experience belonging, and to live a dynamic UU life. This survey will replace the annual congregational survey, but we anticipate that it will incorporate a few essential questions regarding the achievement of our Ends.

In the fall, the MST will invite the congregation to participate in a variety of small group sessions to further articulate who we are as a church, and explore where we want to grow. We think conversations are an ideal way to ground ourselves as we come back together in person, and build off each other's ideas as we imagine the future.

These two processes will help the MST compile a portrait of our congregation for prospective ministerial candidates. We want that portrait to be deep, honest, and engaging. We hope you'll help us create it.

Now Hiring

Part-Time Facilities Person

Unity Church is hiring a part-time facilities person to work evening and weekend hours. Great work environment, \$16.00 per hour, and full benefits. Send contact information and work history to Barbara Hubbard by July 5: barbara@unityunitarian.org.

Fellowship Group Meetings

Fellowship groups provide many ways for people to come together to form a "community of communities" here at Unity Church. Some of these groups are meeting in person again, others are still meeting online. Please contact the person listed for information about meeting locations. For more conversation about getting connected at Unity Church, contact Laura Park, Acting Director of Membership and Hospitality, at laura@unityunitarian.org.

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

Caregivers Group meets on the third Thursday of the month. Contact: Karen Hering, karen@unityunitarian.org

Evergreen Quilters: This quilting 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 meets the first Saturday of each month, 9:30-11:30 a.m. Contact: Karen Hering, karen@unityunitarian.org

Five Animal Kung Fu meets Saturdays, 9:30-10:30 a.m. Contact Barney Kujawski, barney.kujawski@gmail.com

Living With Grief Group meets on the third Tuesday of the month. Contact: Karen Hering, karen@unityunitarian.org

Men's Breakfast Group meets monthly on the first Saturday for breakfast in the Parish Hall from 8:30-10:00 a.m. In July the group will meet the on July 10, rather than July 3. Contact Tom Zell, tomzell@me.com

Men's Coffee Group meets every other Wednesday (July 14 and 28) at 10:00 a.m. for light-hearted conversation. Contact Tom Zell, tomzell@me.com

Men's Conversation Group meets Monday, July 12 and 26, from 7:00-9:00 p.m., to discuss a wide range of topics. Contact Terry McDanel, tmcdanel@gmail.com

Men's Retirement Circle: Monday, July 5 and 19, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact Tom Zell, tomzell@me.com

Music Ministry: All choirs are meeting and singing virtually. Contact Ahmed Anzaldúa, 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 meets Wednesdays, 6:00-7:00 p.m. Contact Dayna Kennedy, daynamelissa@icloud.com

Single Parenthood Support Group meets every other Wednesday, July 7 and 21, from 7:00-8:00 p.m. Contact Laura Park, laura@unityunitarian.org

Textile Arts Group meets every other Wednesday, July 7 and 21, from 7:15-8:30 p.m. Bring your knitting, embroidery, etc. Contact Johanna Stammeier-Toole, johanna2le@gmail.com

Unity Book Club meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m. Contact Jack Hawthorne, jack.hawthorne@centurylink.net. Upcoming discussions include:
July 13: *Kindred* by Octavia Butler
August 10: *The Time is Now* by Joan Chittister
September 14: *Tender is the Night* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Women In Retirement meets the second and fourth Thursday of the month, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact Laura Park, laura@unityunitarian.org

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

WELCOME NEWCOMERS



Welcome Words

Laura Park, Acting Director of Membership and Hospitality

If you've recently started attending services and programming at Unity Church, you'll notice congregational life slows a bit in July and August. As summer offers winter-weary Minnesotans an abundance of warmth and sunshine, and as we follow the pattern of the school season, we tend to spend a little less time at church and a little more time in the cathedral nature offers us.

Which is not to ignore the blessings church offers us in the summer months. Many of our services are led by lay leaders, who offer us a variety of theologies and perspectives in their summer sermons. Our children spend the summer in the church's garden, learning about the interconnected web that is the heart of our Unitarian Universalist seventh principle. And this year, we're continuing Wellspring Wednesday, with one offering each week on spiritual practice (see page 7 for more details), making summer the ideal time to establish personal practice to help you find and keep your balance.

This slower pace can also make this time the ideal time to explore a deeper connection with Unity Church. My virtual door is always open and my physical door is opening wider for more conversation about the pathways you might explore to know the church better and deepen your spiritual life. Contact me at laura@unityunitarian.org or call the church office and leave a message: 651-228-1456 x110. I look forward to getting to know you!

Welcome New Member Isaac Fried

I'm Isaac, a college student at Carleton in Northfield, MN. I grew up at Unity and am excited to join the church as a formal member! My interests lie in math, art, and community building. A fun fact about me is I can juggle.



Mentoring at Unity

A Path to Deeper Connection

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. 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.

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 or 651-228-1456 x110.

Finding Yourself at Unity

Sundays • 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 & the Liturgical Year; Social Justice & Community Outreach; Membership 101 & Congregational Life, and even an online Building Tour! This month's offerings:

- July 4: No class
- July 11: Social Justice and Community Outreach
- July 19: Q&A with Congregants
- July 26: UU History

Sunday morning church emails include the class topic and a Zoom link to get connected (<https://bit.ly/UnityFYU>), or email laura@unityunitarian.org to receive weekly reminders.

Committing to Unity

Dates to be determined, fall 2021

- *Develop personal practice to help you find and keep your balance.*
- *Develop the skills of intimacy that let you 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! Let Laura Park know you're interested in the next class when it's scheduled at laura@unityunitarian.org. She can also arrange a private signing ceremony.

JULY WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

Discover or Deepen a Spiritual Practice

Online and In Person

Throughout July and August, you are invited to attend a small group sharing one of four spiritual practices important to the Transcendentalists and their emphasis on “growing the soul.” Each week, on Wednesday evening at 7:00 p.m., one of the four practices – writing, reading, conversation and contemplation – will be shared in a facilitated group, some online and some in person at the church.

The Transcendentalist’s four practices have been adapted to draw upon shared practices familiar in our congregation life. (See the descriptions at right.) A day or two before the groups meet, the weekly minister’s video message shared in the church email will highlight that week’s featured practice. A brief video describing all four practices, recorded at the June overview program, can be found on our YouTube channel at https://youtu.be/dyeKYw_QjM.

No preparation for the groups will be required but pre-registration or an RSVP will be appreciated to help us prepare. Whether you’ve been wanting to try a new spiritual practice or to meet others interested in a practice you already claim, we hope you’ll try one or more (or all!) of these summer groups.



July 7 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Writing as a Spiritual Practice: Theme of Justice

In person, meeting at Unity Church

RSVP: <http://bit.ly/JulAugWrit>

Engaging a practice of guided writing known as “contemplative correspondence” and prompts from Karen Hering’s book, *Writing to Wake the Soul*, this in-person group will focus on the theme of justice. Bring what you need to write on and with. Group leader Mary Baremore will provide the rest. (This practice will also be offered August 4, on the theme of hospitality.)



July 14 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Reading as a Spiritual Practice: Lectio Divina

In person, meeting at Unity Church, led by Debbie Cushman

In person RSVP: <http://bit.ly/JulAugLectio>

Online, led by Shelley Butler

Online registration: <http://bit.ly/julylectio>

Following a centuries-old Benedictine spiritual practice of contemplative reading, these two groups (one online and one in person) will share in Lectio Divina. As an invitation to receive the wisdom and gifts of poetry, each session will engage the group in hearing a particular poem read aloud multiple times as participants listen for “what is found there.” Rather than discussing the poem, group members lift up what they heard and how the poem spoke to them. For those who love poetry and those who wish to experience a new way to receive its gifts, this practice will be rich. Led by Shelley Butler (online) and Debbie Cushman (in person). (This practice will also be offered August 18.)



July 21 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Conversation as a Spiritual Practice: Theme of Hospitality

In person, meeting at Unity Church, led by Mike Funck

In person RSVP: <http://bit.ly/JulAugConvo>

Online, led by Jim Mulvey

Online registration: <http://bit.ly/julyspconvo>

This spiritual practice adapts the Chalice Circle process to engage conversation with special emphasis on the practice of listening. Facilitators will introduce a theme (this month, hospitality) and, as each person, in turn, shares from the heart, the group listens to receive the truths spoken and unspoken without discussion. Unlike the year-long Chalice Circles, this group is designed for drop-in participation without pre-work and without a commitment to multiple gatherings. Groups will be facilitated by Mike Funck (in person) and Jim Mulvey (online). (This practice will also be offered August 11 on the theme of belonging.)



July 28 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Contemplation as a Spiritual Practice: Meditation

In person, meeting at Unity Church, led by KP Hong

RSVP: <http://bit.ly/JulAugMeditate>

Rev. KP Hong will guide members “to the cushion” for a shared practice of Zen meditation. Whether you’ve been meditating for some time or wish to begin, this group invites you to experience the grounding and renewal of shared meditation, supported by a gifted teacher. (This practice will also be offered August 25.)



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Obama School Outreach Ministry Team

Nancy Heege, Obama School Outreach Ministry Team



Left to right: Mike Carls, Diane Grasse, and John Christiansen

As the school year ends, we've had some news about Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School. A new principal has been hired and will begin his work over the summer. Mr. Elias Oguz comes to Obama with twenty years of experience as a teacher, assistant principal and principal, and most recently as executive director of Minnesota Math and Science Academy. After earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Istanbul, Turkey, he received a Master of Education degree in Indiana and later an Education Specialist degree with Principal Licensure from Minnesota State University at Mankato. We look forward to working with Principal Oguz once he is settled at the school.

We also send our thanks and best wishes to outgoing Principal Niceta Thomas as she begins a new leadership position in another school district. It was an honor to work with her.

In the past few weeks, a number of our Obama volunteers have taken the Intercultural Diversity Inventory (IDI), as part of the church's efforts to increase the number of congregants who are participating in this work. We appreciate the ongoing support for this developmental work.

We continue to look for ways to support the Obama School community and are hopeful that it will be possible to go back into the school as classroom assistants, tutors, and library workers in the fall. We'll keep you posted!

Canopy Connectors: Connecting Trees and People

Lisa Burke, Act for the Earth Outreach Ministry Team

There is a magic machine that sucks carbon out of the air, costs very little, and builds itself.

It's called a tree.

— George Monbiot, British writer and activist.



Unity's Stop Climate Change Action Team met in December of 2020 to consider six potential initiatives on which to focus. At the end of a spirited discussion, we voted to focus on three areas in our first year: reducing home emissions, advancing policy changes, and carbon sequestration.

In March, the then Sequestration Team, now the Canopy Connectors — a name coined by ten year-old Louisa Verbrugge, our youngest member, whose sister, Alice, created our logo — hosted a Wellspring Wednesday event at which Rennie Gaither, Americorps volunteer assigned to Frogtown Green, gave a compelling and engaging presentation. Frogtown Green is a resident-driven initiative for environmental sustainability in Frogtown, St. Paul's most diverse and economically challenged neighborhood. At a time when we need healthy trees to sequester carbon and mitigate the effects of climate change, thousands of ash trees are being removed from St. Paul streets and they will not be replaced for several years. Volunteers with Frogtown Green have nurtured cost-effective bare root trees in their gravel beds and planted 500 trees on private property in Frogtown. Raising these bare root trees in a gravel bed for three to six months dramatically increases their root volume and their survivability. In addition, the cost of bare root trees is about a quarter that for balled and burlapped trees, and about half that for container trees.

After Rennie's presentation a number of those in attendance expressed an interest in creating a gravel bed at Unity, with the goal of planting trees in the Summit-University-Rondo neighborhood, also in need of more canopy.

We wrote a proposal, which was enthusiastically granted, to build a bed at Unity and to make a long-term commitment to improving our community. Our group moved quickly to build the bed, fill it with gravel, and establish an irrigation system in time for the trees to arrive, in mid-May. The trees were donated through a grant to Frogtown Green from the U.S. Forest Service, 25 for this year and another 25 for 2022.



One of the many positive outcomes of the Canopy Connectors project is the relationships we are forming. We used reclaimed wood donated by Tree Trust to build the gravel bed. We met with an arborist and St. Paul city forester, who assured us our gravel bed could support up to 75 trees. Moving forward, we hope to develop enduring relationships with neighbors and leaders in our targeted area who can help us find homes for trees raised at Unity Church. This effort began in earnest with a Juneteenth event at the Rondo Commemorative Plaza at which the Canopy Connectors had a table.

For more information, or to volunteer, contact Lisa Burke at misslisam@msn.com.

ART TEAM / LIBRARY-BOOKSTALL TEAM

Attention All Artists, Creators, and Makers!

An Invitation from the Unity Art Team

Maura Williams, Unity Art Team

We have longed for the time when we will return together to the physical space we fondly acknowledge as our communal spiritual home. Finally, that day is in sight. So Unity's Art Team has come up with a fitting "welcome back" opportunity to know each other more deeply and in new ways. Let's learn more about new faces we met remotely and get reacquainted with those we have missed over the past year.

The Unity Art Team invites you to submit something you have made to be exhibited in a congregational exhibit we're calling *Celebrating Our Creative CommUnity*. We invite you to submit:

- An item hand-made by you
- That can be hung on the wall or shown in a display case
- That you have created with careful and engaged attention
- That you proudly (and bravely?) exhibit as an expression of yourself and your interests

We recognize that some may have found new forms of expression while quarantined, perhaps even about experiencing the pandemic, while others have honed their craft for much of their lives. Either avenue to your self-expression is welcome.

The details:

- The items will be exhibited in the Parish Hall and beyond for the month of October, 2021.
- This is not a juried exhibit. All submissions will be accepted pending screening for appropriateness of content and safety of presentation.
- One submission per person.
- Entries may be submitted by members and friends of Unity Church, age 15 and older.
- All two-dimensional submissions must be wired and ready for hanging on the wall. Each must be no larger than 48" on any side.
- Three-dimensional objects smaller than 18" on a side will be shown in covered display cases. Larger 3-D objects need to be mounted and ready for display. The art team will follow up with entrants about displaying 3-D objects if there are challenges.
- Because there are other opportunities to share written materials within Unity, entries featuring calligraphy will be the only acceptable written word submissions.
- Unity cannot accept submissions of video productions, or any item requiring AV equipment.
- Items may be sold. Unity collects a 20% commission on sales.
- Submissions will be received electronically starting July 1. The submission deadline is midnight of September 1, 2021.

Questions? Email artteam@unityunitarian.org. Submit your amazing creation at <http://bit.ly/creativecommunity21>.



The Library-Bookstall Team

Shelley Butler, Unity Library-Bookstall Team

Thank You, Janice Gestner!

With infinite thanks, we wish longtime Bookstall co-manager Janice Gestner all the best as she retires from her book-buying and volunteer-coordinating responsibilities in the Unity Bookstall! She and continuing co-team leader Barb Foss jumped into the Bookstall in August of 2010, and over the past ten years have transformed the Bookstall into the warm, inviting, relevant, and successful little Parish Hall bookstore that we now know and love. Barb describes Janice as, "the most amazing, talented, mission-focused, hard-working, dedicated, engaged, always-reliable, and un-matched-in-competency co-Bookstall-manager possible." All the best to you, Janice!



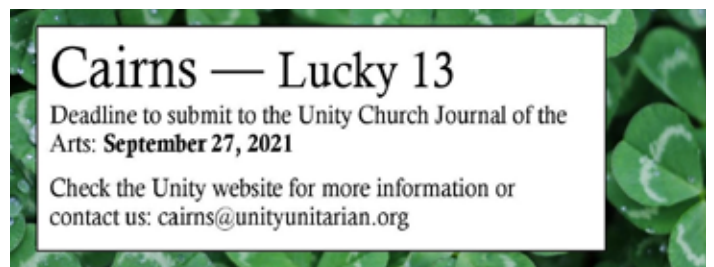
Unity Church Bookstall Seeks New Co-Manager!



All of the above means that the Unity Bookstall is in need of a new book buyer and volunteer coordinator. Be honest, haven't you always wanted to run a bookstore? Here's your chance to share the job with ten-year veteran Bookstall co-manager, Barb Foss. If you are able to step up, contact Shelley Butler at library@unityunitarian.org. Looking forward to working with you!

In the Justice Database

"A Lesson on Critical Race Theory" by Janel George, *Human Rights*, Vol 46:2, January 2021. A good starting point to understand CRT, why it is demonized, and the harm being done as a result of the attack on it. <https://bit.ly/JusticeData>



MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Pitter-pattering Questions

[...like raindrops on the window, and little feet running through the house]

Rev. KP Hong, Minister of Faith Formation

A scene from the original *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* movie evokes the yearning of all parents to protect our children, to dream with them, to abundantly provide them with all that they will need to grow into their promise. A teacher asks how many Wonka bars each child has opened in

search of the five coveted golden tickets that would grant the lucky few entrance into Willy Wonka's chocolate factory. It's a heartbreaking scene when Charlie admits that he has opened only two bars. His classmates, who can afford boxfuls of chocolate bars, ridicule such foolishness. For the purchase and consumption of those bars meant everything toward securing a place in a peer culture that Charlie longed to, but could not, fully belong. His parents and grandparents shared no less in that same longing, to provide him with enough Wonka bars and the chance at a golden ticket out of poverty and disadvantage of too many children left behind.

But how many is *enough*? Is enough two tiers above poverty and one tier below excess? Some optimal measure between scarcity and abundance? When do we attain pretty enough, smart enough, teeth white enough, accomplished enough? Can there be healthy enough, justice enough, environmentally conscious enough? Measurement tools are critically useful and necessary, but they are also not immune from oversimplifying complex interdependent variables. As we bargain our way between have and have-not, working our calculations and layers of evaluation-achievement-doubt, we may forget our essential wisdom, motivation, and trust.

There is an "economy of dignity" at work in the hearts of parents and children in our consumer culture, notes sociologist Allison Pugh, where the purchase of *Game Boys* or soccer shoes symbolically mediate children's place, social dignity, and belonging among peers. As children begin to understand the stakes at play in popular mainstream culture, they long to join the social conversation at school and on the playground. And what parent would not long to purchase these passports for their child's participation among peers in an economy of mobility, status, and belonging? What would we not do to abundantly provide for our children with golden ticket opportunities? Except... there are things that cannot be sold and bought in the marketplace, and that to claim belonging and dignity in the human community as an economy is to distort the very nature of such sacred community. For such dignity and belonging is a covenant of grace, and grace refuses any attempt to be managed as an economy, its very essence being the impossibility of balancing the account.

What if *enough* has little to do with calculation, exactitude, or certainty but is an epistemology underdeveloped in our world torn by more and without? What if enough is the wisdom of context and an invitation to relearn conditions that compassionately honor limits and possibilities of relations? "Enough is a verb, a conversation, a fugue, a collaboration, a recalibration of our relationships. It is not a static state, something achieved or accomplished. It is relational, by nature unpredictable, punctuated by wonder, surprise, and awe. It may feel dangerous and inefficient. It demands that we stay awake, pay attention to what is true in this moment, in our hearts, and make the choices always and only from that place." (Wayne Muller) What if enough is a praxis of faith that acknowledges a world torn by the tensions of scarcity and abundance, and asks us to listen compassionately from within the interconnectedness of all life? Surely that is something worthy of our children's inheritance.

Sharing questions that pitter-patter across our sacred journeys...

Summer Sundays in the Garden



Summer in the Garden welcomes children and families into the church garden for our summer religious education program. Typically for children ages 4-13, the garden program offers virtual and actual opportunities to work and care for our garden from seed to harvest. Step into the garden each week with videos on our YouTube channel: <https://bit.ly/UCUREyoutube>.

For more information, contact Anna Newton at asnewton3@gmail.com or Michelle Mecey at michelle@unityunitarian.org.

Merging of Waters

Remember to collect water this summer for our merging ritual on Sunday, September 12!



MUSIC MINISTRY



Music Notes

Ahmed Anzaldúa, Director of Music Ministries

I spent most of my childhood living near the border between Mexico and the United States, on the Mexican side. Our awareness of our own poverty and the violence of our surroundings was highlighted by our rich neighbors; on the other side of the river was the very picture of abundance, a constant presence in our daily lives. You'd look at the American side and it was clear that the streets looked cleaner, life felt safer, and everyone seemed to have much more of everything. The messaging from our teachers, politicians, and academics was always the same: our Third World country will someday become part of the First World, and we will be rich and respected and happy if everyone just behaves and does everything they're supposed to do with a smile and no complaining. At the end of the telenovela, everyone will get their reward. We can be like them! This messaging seemed to be less effective on those of us that lived on that border because it was so obvious that this was just impossible: if poor countries were ever to reach the level of production and waste of rich countries, the whole planet would die. This extraordinary abundance on the other side of the border was built on consuming every single thing, to its very last drop. Consuming everything, and that includes those of us on the south side of that border.

The theme of abundance troubles me greatly because my frame of reference is colored by having grown up on the border and, by coming to the United States to enjoy the extraordinary abundance of my former neighbors, I am now complicit in this mindset of consuming every last thing. I find myself personally consuming more resources: my personal carbon footprint has easily tripled from when I lived in Mexico. I find a perfectionist mindset starting to take over my musicianship: more intent on appearances and personal marketing than on transcendence, connection, and spiritual practice. I find that my beliefs about racial equity and social justice are suddenly sources of revenue, opening up professional opportunities and attracting donations to my organizations. Violence itself becomes something to be consumed, generating revenue for the violence industry, who sells it for a profit and turns it into a commodity: videos of Black bodies being killed that generate social media views and clicks; lawn signs, t-shirts, flags, and hats to show off your allegiance to one side or the other.

I am grateful for this abundance, for all that I have and the wonderful people in my life. I am also grateful that my child now has opportunities to grow and learn and pursue his dreams, opportunities that were completely out of reach back in Mexico. I am grateful for music, stories, and beauty. However, I am also troubled. For better or for worse, I am now part of the problem, and it's never more apparent to me than when I talk with the friends and colleagues that I left behind.

Sing with a Unity Choir

Unity's choirs (adult *and* children) are meeting virtually every week — and now in person to sing and record hymns for Sunday services! 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! If you are interested, contact Ahmed at ahmed@unityunitarian.org.

Organ Concert

Sunday, August 1 • 9:30 a.m.



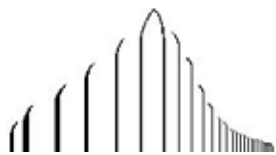
Dean Billmeyer and Laura Potratz will both be present to play an extended Sunday service gathering music selection to commemorate the passing of Fritz Noack. Watch for more details!



ReMembering: Singing Water

Exploring Minnesota's history as a place of homecoming for immigrants as well as a place of displacement for Dakota and Ojibwe nations, *ReMembering: Singing Water* is a collaboration with water protector Sharon Day, puppeteer Sandy Spieler, and singer-songwriter Sara Thompsen.

ReMembering will be screened at a variety of outdoor "pop-up" projection sites around the Twin Cities in September. Watch for more details on One Voice's website: www.onevoicemn.org.



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 • unity@unityunitarian.org

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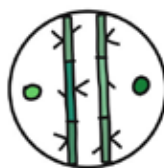
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**TIME SENSITIVE
MATERIAL**

Discover or Deepen a Spiritual Practice

Online and In Person



Throughout July and August, you are invited to attend a small group sharing one of four spiritual practices important to the Transcendentalists and their emphasis on “growing the soul.” Turn to page 7 for all the details.

The Wheel of Life

In Memoriam

Phyllis Peterson

August 31, 1926–June 21, 2021

If you have a joy or sorrow or life-cycle event you would like to share with the ministers or congregation, please complete the form at www.unityunitarian.org/pastoral-care.html or send an email to Karen Hering at karen@unityunitarian.org.

Canopy Connectors

Connecting Trees and People

Details on page 8.



Sunday Coffee Hour

After the Sunday 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: bit.ly/unitycoffeeshour.

Flowers for Sunday Service

If you would like to dedicate flowers for a Sunday service, please email Martha Tilton at martha@unityunitarian.org.