

## BLESSING

*The life of a congregation is a rich community tapestry of people, programs, ministries and worship. We lift up the patterns of this tapestry at Unity Church with the threads of monthly themes woven through our worship and programming. These themes deepen our understanding of our own faith and strengthen our bonds with one another in religious community.*

What does it mean to bless and be blessed in a pandemic replete with loss that has or will come to us all? It is not, as some might suggest, a matter of sweetening the undeniably sour taste of these days, making lemonade when life gives us lemons.

Blessing is much more powerful than that. It is less about what we make from what has been given or taken from us, than it is about noticing the wholeness that is always ours beneath and beyond whatever comes our way. Blessing names and evokes that wholeness, clears a view by which we might glimpse it, opens a relationship by which we might know it.

Of the many challenges we face in this pandemic, one of the more existentially difficult experiences is the sense of isolation underscored by social distancing and wearing masks. In any time, when illness, trauma or death enter our lives, the comforts of human touch and nearness are often what we depend on to make it through. Or when those we love are suffering and words fall short, that same touch and nearness can feel like all we have to give our hurting dear ones. What is left to offer now, when touch and proximity are not allowed? What balm still permitted can heal the hollowing distances within us when facing our own fears and anxieties alone, without the trusted companionship we typically rely on to soothe and encourage us?

Thankfully, blessing remains, powerful and permissible, an activity as old as human history and in this pandemic time still effective, essential, and capable of being shared without transmitting the virus. It might be words, spoken or written, either your own or borrowed

from others. It might be a candle given or lit. It could be a sign wishing wellbeing, held up to a window. Or hands held in the shape of heart in a screen-time meeting. The practice of blessing and being blessed can tether us across the distances we now must maintain. It offers comfort and awakens healing, with or without touch. Blessing, as John O'Donohue put it, "converts all distance into spiritual space," and in that spiritual space, we can rediscover and reclaim our wholeness, both inside us and between us.

Think of the moon's tidal pull, invisibly yet resolutely tugging across a quarter million miles of space to move the oceans' waters here on earth. Think of a word or phrase that once similarly moved your heart, letting you know you had been seen and loved for who you really are. Or think of a gesture or ritual that acknowledged who you wanted to become — and were already becoming. Think of a time when your eyes met those of another, spanning the distance between any two separate lives, drawing your heart into relationship across difference, large or small. A blessing — whether word or gesture, ritual or act of kindness, literal or symbolic — brushes off the dust of the day so we can see the shine of wholeness connecting us across any distance, physical or otherwise.

Blessings, given and received, are not only connective across space but also across time. Their invocation of wholeness and healing is an open door between our present desires and intentions and the future where those longings can become real. Think of the biblical creation story, when God's naming of light and nighttime, sky and land and sea called each of these into

being. So too, what we name in our blessings summons forth a future more inclined toward that christening.

In this time of necessary physical distancing, can we let the practice of blessing draw us nearer to our own sacred source and to one another? Might our willingness to bless and be blessed in the chaos of these days begin to call forth new and more just ways of being together? It seems worth a try.

*May the distance now stretched  
between us  
draw us nearer in heart and spirit.*

*May the longing awakened by  
separation  
open our hearts to a larger love  
holding us close through fear and loss.*

*May the kindness stirred in troubled  
times  
move in heart and deed  
long after the troubles subside.*

*May the world that emerges then  
be shaped by the tug of true  
relationship  
that survives all distance and time.*

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

### BLESSING THEME RESOURCES

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

## Just Words



Janne and I are downsizing. The excruciating exercise began with a brutal culling of our personal library. My father, a disenchanting tax lawyer, found true vocation operating a rare book business out of our home. The walls were lined with old books and he had ready stories about them all. At his knee I learned that you could discern a good deal about a person's interests, character, and foibles by reading through the titles on their shelves. One's books are inseparable from one's ego. So, downsizing the library

has been an exercise in stripping away some of the masks of my ego and moving towards some semblance of humility.

In contemplating retirement, I have been asking myself a number of core questions about identity and meaning. I have always both loved my work and counted on it to bolster my sense of self. Who am I? Simply put, I am a Unitarian Universalist minister. But who am I once I lay down that robe and stole and all the social status the role provides?

How will I introduce myself? I am a singer. I am a grandfather. I am someone who once had an impressive library part of which I'd even read.

Downsizing is a process of discernment. What do I really need? What really matters? In a sense the pandemic is causing us to ask the same basic questions. The present crisis asks us to consider our lives in light not only of our own mortality but also of our neighbor's needs.

In his fine sermon for Coming of Age Sunday (May 10, 2020, watch and listen here: <https://youtu.be/hpr4jMAUjk0>), Rev. KP Hong admonished us to linger for a while in the full force of social isolation in order to integrate all we're learning now about how profoundly interdependent we actually are. Yet the notion that society might benefit by staying shut down longer is in very real tension with the needs of people far less privileged than many of us. People are hungry. Many are homeless. How can we linger when our neighbors are in such urgent need?

And yet we know full well the urgency is always there. "The poor," Jesus said, "will always be with you. But I am here only for a while." We are in a time of spiritual downsizing, let's not squander it by letting fear force us through too quickly. There is so much to be thrown away. What a good chance to lighten our load and make our Nation a more just, equitable, and Beloved Community.

Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs

## Pastoral Care

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

## Alert

### Scammers Posing as Congregational Leaders

Unity Church has seen an increase in phishing attempts of all kinds. Phishing is a form of social engineering, whereby a hacker with bad intentions sends an email (or text or phone call) pretending to be someone the recipient trusts and asks the recipient to take an action which can have adverse effects. Sometimes, they request money. Other times, they invite the recipient to click a link or open an attachment that can trigger malicious code. Unity Church ministers and staff have been a target of these scams.

Here are a few tips for handling emails you are not expecting:

- Check the email address in the FROM field. While it might say "Janne Eller-Isaacs" the email address, if coming from Unity Church will always be [janne@unityunitarian.org](mailto:janne@unityunitarian.org).
- Reach out to the supposed sender through another channel to verify if the email is trustworthy and DO NOT click on a link, send money or gift cards, and confidential information without verifying.
- Use your own email provider to report phishing attempts.

## Healthcare Workers Circle

If you are a healthcare worker helping to respond to the pandemic, you are likely living with a wide array of feelings. Spiritual maturity helps people understand that one can experience contradictory realities at the same time. Duty, fear, pride, deep worry... how can I do my job and do it well when I am so concerned about my health and that of those I love?

Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs and Dr. Jennifer Welsh invite you to join them for online conversation and support on Wednesday evening, June 3, from 7:30-9:00 p.m. Please register online at <https://bit.ly/healthcarecircle>. Once registered you will receive an email with information about joining the meeting.

# JUNE SUNDAY SERVICES

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## Sunday Worship and Virtual Coffee Hour

Our building is closed as part of the Stay Safe Minnesota order. Multigenerational Sunday Services are being live-streamed from the Sanctuary at 10:00 a.m. Religious Education opportunities will be offered beginning at 11:00 a.m. Details and links, including access to past services, are available online at [www.unityunitarian.org](http://www.unityunitarian.org).

Each Sunday, church members, friends, and newcomers are invited to join a virtual Zoom welcome lobby before the service and coffee hour check-in after the service. The welcome lobby opens at 9:30 a.m. with time to pop in, share a smile, and offer a quick hello. After the service, you are welcome back for a virtual coffee hour, at time for more intentional conversation and sharing. To participate in the lobby and/or coffee hour, please refer to the link in our weekly Sunday service email. If you would like to receive our congregational emails, please visit [www.unityunitarian.org](http://www.unityunitarian.org) and click on the "Join our email list."

### June 7: A Circle of Light

A blessing, according to John O'Donohue, "is a circle of light drawn around a person to protect, heal, and strengthen." Blessings can be welcome at any time, but they are especially important and powerful when we are on a threshold, living through significant change as they help to steady us when the ground beneath our feet is shifting. Rev. Karen Hering and worship associate Kara Younkin Viswanathan will explore the power of blessing in the midst of great change. The service will include the congregational blessing of this year's group of thresholders — people living on the cusp of personal change who have been meeting together for the past two months in our annual Thresholds program.

### June 14: All Blessings Flow

In her marvelous novel *Gilead*, Marilynne Robinson tells a story about joining a small group of children in baptizing a litter of kittens. She writes, "There is a reality in blessing...It doesn't enhance sacredness, but it acknowledges it, and there is a power in that. The sensation is one of really knowing a creature, I mean really feeling it's mysterious life and your own mysterious life at the same time." Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs will speak to the reality in blessing and how we prepare ourselves to bless and to be blessed.

### June 21: Blessing from Crossed Hands

Stories from the Jewish tradition reveal the giving and receiving of blessing as awakening in the bearer the presence of the Holy One. But often, blessings do not flow in expected ways. At the moment of blessing his grandchildren, Jacob crosses his hands. Mixed blessings? Blessings somehow confused? Or blessings that surprise and expand possibilities? It may be that Yahweh's blessings are as surprising and disturbing as they are reassuring. This service will be led by Rev. KP Hong.

### June 28: The 12 Corners of Unity Church

This is Rev. Lisa Friedman's last Sunday at Unity Church before she moves into her new role as Development Minister at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Minnetonka.

*As your Minister of Congregational and Community Engagement, I have had the joy of working at the center of Unity's vibrant shared ministry. I often envision myself standing with signal flags at a busy intersection, introducing people to fellow travelers and showing the best turn for the next leg of their journey. It is a unique, inspiring, and challenging view, and one that has taught me much about the power, promise, and challenge of our shared faith. As we come together on my last Sunday to bless each other on our journeys, I want to share this view with you, with gratitude for who you are and dreams for who you can become.*

## Offering Recipients

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

### June 7: Protect Minnesota

Protect Minnesota is the only independent, state-based, grassroots gun violence organization in the nation. Promoting a culture of safety for all Minnesotans by preventing gun violence through research, education, advocacy, and community investment, it is in a unique position to lend legitimacy and relevance to the call for sensible gun laws in Minnesota.

### June 14: Freedom School

St. Paul's Freedom School is a K-8 summer adventure with a primary outreach to students of color. This six-week program serves over 700 summer scholars and this year's offering will support Freedom School's shift to online programming.

### June 21: Frogtown Green

The mission of Frogtown Green is to make Frogtown the greenest, healthiest, and most beautiful neighborhood in Saint Paul. To do this, Frogtown Green advocates for greenspaces, promotes sustainable activities, and manages several parklets, urban farms, and gardens throughout Frogtown.

### June 28: MidAmerica Chalice Lighters

The Chalice Lighters program brings together Unitarian Universalists across the MidAmerica region to fund congregational grants for growth and development projects. Since its inception in the 1980s, the program has supported almost 100 congregations. An example of our covenantal faith, it is a powerful way for congregations to support each other.

# STAFF TRANSITIONS

## An Update from the Unity Church Executive Team

In light of the fact that Minister of Congregational and Community Engagement, Rev. Lisa Friedman, has accepted the invitation to become Developmental Minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Minnetonka in Wayzata, the Unity Executive Team has been hard at work determining how best to address the range of ministries for which Lisa took primary responsibility.

We are delighted to announce that two grounded, experienced members of the Unity Church staff have agreed to expand their work to take leadership in membership, hospitality, social justice, chalice circles, and adult programming.



Laura Park

Laura Park, at present the Managing Director of Unity Consulting, will become Acting Director of Membership and Hospitality. The Rev. Karen Hering serving as Associate Minister will oversee community outreach, small group ministries, and adult programming. Together they will serve through this year while Janne and Rob Eller-Isaacs will still be with us and continue through next year when



Karen Hering

the church will welcome an interim senior minister to the staff team. Assigned tasks will evolve over the course of the ministerial transition. For example, as Janne departs, Karen will assume significant responsibility for pastoral care.

In inviting Karen and Laura to take up these duties the Executive Team has been clear that we are confident they will help us strike the best possible balance between stability and innovation in congregational life. Among the innovations we anticipate is a commitment to build on the work of Lisa Friedman and KP Hong in clarifying and mapping pathways toward depth and spiritual transformation that are and will be available at Unity Church. In order to further that vital work, we are establishing a Faith Formation Team that will include KP Hong, Laura Park, and Karen Hering. The team will lead our efforts to be ever more coherent and focused in helping us all to lead lives of integrity, service, and joy.



Bill Lowell

Bill Lowell, our Facilities Manager, is retiring on May 31, 2020, after 14 years of dedicated service to the church. Bill facilitated

the ups and downs of church life, implemented new standards, supported growing programs, and was essential to our *Unity Tomorrow* capital project in 2012. We are grateful for his skills and good humor, and wish him the best in his retirement! Notes of gratitude and best wishes are welcome and may be sent to the church (Attention: Bill).



Heidi Birkholz

Given the pandemic and the short time frame, we posted the Facilities Maintenance Supervisor position

internally, giving current staff the opportunity for advancement. Heidi Birkholz, who comes with prior facilities and organizational experience, has accepted the position and the transition is underway. Heidi is teaming up with our Facilities Operations Coordinator, Teresa Connor, to keep the engines running!

### Celebration of Rev. Lisa Friedman

Saturday, June 13 • 2:00-4:00 p.m. • Zoom Webinar

The entire congregation is invited to celebrate Lisa Friedman's ministry with Unity Church on Saturday, June 13, from 2:00-4:00 p.m. This celebration will include testimonials and a collage of appreciations. To have a note or remembrance included in the collage, please send it to Janne Eller-Isaacs at [janne@unityunitarian.org](mailto:janne@unityunitarian.org). This celebration will be an online Zoom webinar; please watch for a link to register!



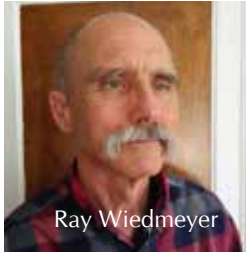
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# BELOVED COMMUNITY STAFF TEAM

## Steps Taken on a Journey of Life Long Learning

Ray Wiedmeyer, On Behalf of the Beloved Community Communications Team



Ray Wiedmeyer

*The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI, <https://idiinventory.com>), developed by Mitchell R. Hammer, professor of international peace and conflict resolution at American University, assesses intercultural competence as the capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities. To help us grow our ability to be an anti-racist, multicultural spiritual community, a number of key ministry groups at Unity Church are being invited to take the IDI. As part of a series of articles about the IDI, Ray Wiedmeyer, a member of the Beloved Community Communications Team, shares what he learned from the IDI and how he determined to increase his cultural competency. If you are interested in taking the IDI, please email Drew Danielson at [drew@unityunitarian.org](mailto:drew@unityunitarian.org).*

Back in the early 1970s, I spent a semester abroad in Malaysia as a college student. Classes consisted of Malay language study, Eastern Religions, a hands-on Asian Textile course, Psychology of Adjustment and included a month of travel in Japan, Thailand, and Taiwan. That semester of college was one of the most exciting of my whole college education. I was suddenly immersed in a world that was totally different from my world back in America. Everything from food, to housing, to government, to religion was totally “not” the culture I had grown up in or was used to. My return home months later was filled with culture shock. I suddenly saw things in my environment that I had never really seen before.

In 2016 I took the IDI (Intercultural Development Inventory) for the first time at Unity Church as part of the Mid-America Mosaic Makers Conference. Prior to taking it, I would have told you that I thought I was a pretty culturally well-rounded person. After all, not only had I traveled world-wide in the years since college, but I also had friends and acquaintances from a variety of cultures. It was a surprise then when the IDI rated my intercultural skills as firmly in the center of the Intercultural Development Continuum, also known as Minimization.

It left me in a bit of a quandary. What was I missing? The competency they spoke of was something I wished I had. I saw it as a necessity if we really want

a world where everyone is treated as an equal and true justice is achieved. Our Unitarian principles are just words if I’m not working on a becoming a better me; a person moving in the world in such a way as to not ignore or negate others.

After taking the IDI the first time, I set up a one-on-one conversation with a qualified administrator. We went over those first results and she suggested some activities I might work on. One of those activities, I remember, was keeping an intercultural journal. This was a place where I “might reflect on cultural differences and commonalities I observe in my daily interactions with people from other cultural groups.” I remember doing this for several months and feeling more and more aware of those interactions as they came up.

I also continued to volunteer at Mano a Mano, where work activities here in the U.S. and my occasional trips down to Bolivia gave me frequent real-life practice interacting with that culture. I began to look for, and engage more fully in, the cross-cultural friendships I already had. I took part in events sponsored by Unity Church where I was immersed in the discussion of white privilege.

I began to read more about American racial history and I traveled to Africa to learn more about slavery. I found myself becoming more and more conscious of the white culture I was constantly swimming in and how it kept me from seeing and acknowledging that there

were other ways of seeing the world. And last but not least, I worked on staying present when my cultural view of the world was being questioned or challenged.

Recently, I took the IDI again. I believe it was the third time and I was glad to see that I had made some measurable progress. I believe it was what I had been working on the past four to five years that had moved me on the continuum, hopefully making me more competent in my interactions with other cultures.

Yes, I’ve made progress but I’ve also become aware of how much I still need to learn, so I am not about to end this life-long journey anytime soon.

*In 2016, the Beloved Community Staff Team was formed at Unity Church to strengthen and coordinate Unity’s anti-racism and multi-cultural work, and to share the stories of this journey with the wider community. We commit to sharing the struggles, the questions, and the collaborations here at Unity and in the wider world of our faith and city. The current members of the team include Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs, Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs, Rev. KP Hong, Drew Danielson, Rev. Lisa Friedman, Ahmed Anzaldúa, Pauline Eichten, and Erika Sanders. Visit [www.unityunitarian.org/beloved-community-news](http://www.unityunitarian.org/beloved-community-news) to learn more about the work of the team.*

# CONGREGATIONAL LIFE



## Welcome Words

**Rev. Lisa Friedman**  
**Minister of Congregational and Community Engagement**

"Here let no one be a stranger." William Channing Gannett's affirmation of a wide and inclusive welcome greet everyone who enters Unity's Sanctuary, as they do in my home congregation in Rochester, N.Y., where Gannett served in his later ministry. It is one reason that I have always felt at home here at Unity Church, but the biggest reason is you — each of you — and the amazing community you create as you come together to live out our values within, among, and beyond us. My Unitarian Universalism teaches me that faith is journey, but a journey that is not meant to be travelled alone.

How can I possibly thank you for all the moments of ministry we have shared? Conversations in the Parish Hall on a first visit or the joy of witnessing the signing of the membership book. Wellspring Wednesdays in all their laughter and learning, and classes where Unitarian Universalist history and theology came alive. Team meetings and capitol rallies, drives and marches, where our yearning for justice and equity transformed into action through all the challenge and hope. Weddings and memorial services, threshold moments for ourselves and our children. Spontaneous planning moments in the hallway or parking lot, as we looked ahead to future improvements and possibilities. I will always be grateful for the honesty, the openness, the creativity, the love and the dedication we found together in all of these moments and so many more.

How can I possibly thank you for all the lessons of ministry I have learned from you? The church has never been about a building, and you taught me the power and possibility of being a congregation grounded in vision and values, even in the most challenging times. You taught me the saving love of being a community for all ages, from the youngest babe in arms to the wisest elder in the pews. You taught me the depth of shared worship, where gifts and wounds and the fullness of our humanity welcome us into the presence of the eternal. You taught me the creative joy and discipline of team work, from the Executive Team and the Board of Trustees, to the Unity staff and the lay volunteers who roll up their sleeves and co-create ministry each and every day, because it matters. These lessons will shape my future ministry in ways I can only begin to glimpse now.

How can I possibly express my excitement for all of the amazing ministry that lies ahead of you? You are on the cusp of so many changes and opportunities, and I know that you will continue to choose the path of bold becoming, deeper faith, and greater justice as you shape a new chapter for Unity's ministry. I know you have everything you need to meet this moment. I know you will welcome Laura Park and Karen Hering into the ministries we have shared and together you will create new strength and opportunities. I will be cheering you on from afar and a piece of my heart will always be with you.

In faith and gratitude, always,  
Lisa

*The congregation will gather online on Saturday, June 13, at 2:00 p.m. to honor Rev. Lisa. See page 4 for details!*

## Congregational Database Sign in today!

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

### To access from your PC:

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

### To download the App:

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

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

# CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

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## Wellspring Wednesday

Wellspring Wednesday will continue through the whole month of June. In the weekly Wellspring Wednesday email, you can count on a link to Wellspring Wednesday chapel and opportunities to participate in programming. You can find out more online at [www.unityunitarian.org/wellspring-wednesday.html](http://www.unityunitarian.org/wellspring-wednesday.html), and by checking the online ministry calendar at [www.unityunitarian.org/calendar1.html](http://www.unityunitarian.org/calendar1.html).

## Pathway to Membership Classes

During this time of online ministry, if you have questions or would like to have a conversation about getting connected or membership, please contact Rev. Lisa Friedman, Minister of Congregational and Community Engagement, at [lisa@unityunitarian.org](mailto:lisa@unityunitarian.org) or 651-228-1456 x 107.

### Finding Yourself at Unity: A Deeper Inquiry

Finding Yourself at Unity meets online each Sunday from 1:00-2:00 p.m. These drop-in sessions offer an introduction to Unity and can be attended in the order that works for you. Check the weekly Sunday email for the topic and zoom link or contact [lisa@unityunitarian.org](mailto:lisa@unityunitarian.org). June topics include:

June 7: Religious Education for Children, Youth, and Adults

June 14: Unitarian Universalist History

June 21: Social Justice & Community Outreach

June 28: Worship & the Liturgical Year

### Committing to Unity: Joining Unity Church Wednesday, September 30 • 7:00-9:00 p.m.

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

## Mentoring at Unity

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

## Connecting Virtually: Fellowship Groups

*The following groups have committed to meeting online during the Stay Safe Minnesota order. More information is available online at [www.unityunitarian.org](http://www.unityunitarian.org).*

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

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

**Kung Fu:** Join the House of the Upright Ox for some online Kung Fu! This 60 minute practice strengthens the body, calms the mind, and lifts the spirit. Contact Barney Kujawski, [barney.kujawski@gmail.com](mailto:barney.kujawski@gmail.com)

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

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

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

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

**Recovery from White Conditioning:** Wednesdays, 6:00-7:00 p.m. Contact Dayna Kennedy, [daynamelissa@icloud.com](mailto:daynamelissa@icloud.com)

**Single Parenthood Support Group:** Join us in a new single parents group to build community together. Single parents face special challenges and have unique perspectives that are magnified in these COVID-19 times. All are welcome! Contact Rev. Lisa Friedman, [lisa@unityunitarian.org](mailto:lisa@unityunitarian.org)

**Spanish with Mayra Mendoza:** Wednesdays, 7:00-7:30 p.m., to practice and learn Spanish. All ages welcome! Contact Mayra Mendoza, [mayraquitzia@hotmail.com](mailto:mayraquitzia@hotmail.com)

**Textile Arts Group** meets every other Wednesday, June 10 and 24, from 7:15-8:30 p.m. Contact Johanna Stammeier-Toole, [johanna21e@gmail.com](mailto:johanna21e@gmail.com)

**Unity Book Club:** Second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m. June 9 book: *Becoming* by Michelle Obama. Contact Jack Hawthorne, [jack.hawthorne@centurylink.net](mailto:jack.hawthorne@centurylink.net)

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

**Young Adult Group (ages 18-25):** Meets every two weeks on Wednesday, from 7:30-9:00 p.m. Upcoming meeting dates include June 10 and 24, July 8 and 22. Check out our YA blog by Meggie Exner to get a feeling for our gatherings and begin to participate as willing: <https://stayingabeatlonger.com/>! To be added to the Young Adults email list, please email [kp@unityunitarian.org](mailto:kp@unityunitarian.org).



## Cairns by the Dozen

Shelley Butler, Library and Bookstall Team

Twelve is somewhat of a magical number. It's use as a base number goes back to 3100 BCE in Mesopotamia. The cycle of lunar phases occurs twelve times per year. Krispy Kreme gave away a dozen free donuts to all 2020 graduates one day this spring. Proving its popularity, when searching "twelve fun facts," Google pulled up 249,000,000 results including "Twelve Fun Facts about Alcatraz" (really?), and "Twelve... About Paper You Might Not Know About," which brings us back to 3000 BCE and the oldest surviving trace of paper.



All this is to say that the 2020 issue of *Cairns: The Unity Church Journal of the Arts* will be Volume 12. While we can't promise that *Cairns* will survive 5000 years, we can say with some certainty that it will survive a pandemic, if our talented Unity Church artists and writers submit their work. About 95% of what we do to produce the journal is through email and online, so all we on the *Cairns* staff need is for you all to keep submitting despite our not being there to post notices, or talk and encourage you in person. We can do this, right?

Submit your art or writing anytime between now and September 28, 2020. It's an easy two-step process:

1. Fill out the online submission form at <https://bit.ly/cairns12>.
2. Email your word documents or art images to [cairns@unityunitarian.org](mailto:cairns@unityunitarian.org). Contact us at this email address with any questions as well.

What will you share with the Unity congregation this year? We can't wait to find out! As we always say: You submit. We publish. The congregation is enriched.

*Cairn image credit: drawing by Connie Oace from a photo by Ann Hite.*



On May 15 many wonderful poets and musicians shared their gifts during an online Café Unity. Did you miss it? Or, want to see it again? Watch today on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/Eyzt2jDfM2w>.

## Open Page Writing Session



Led by Consulting Literary Minister Karen Hering, Open Page writing sessions are invitations to correspond with the "still, small voice within." Using stories, poetry, images and objects as well as wisdom from religious teachings, science and history, and provided prompts, participants reflect on the month's theme in their own words and on their own pages. No writing experience is necessary. To receive instructions and an invitation to participate online or by phone, please sign up at [www.unityunitarian.org/literary-ministry.html](http://www.unityunitarian.org/literary-ministry.html).

### To Bless and Be Blessed

Wednesday, June 3 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

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

## Sing with a Unity Choir

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

**Unity Choir** is our non-auditioned ensemble of 60 to 75 voices. This singing community is the strong component on which our music program is built and is a vital and energetic presence in our community. Its members share various levels of musical experience and a wide variety of activities and interests, all of which are brought together by their love of singing, music, and community.

**Unity Singers** Unity's auditioned, a cappella chamber choir. Each singer's involvement is built on a passion for singing and willingness to work towards an ensemble of excellence capable of sharing varied musical genres with the community.

**Women's Ensemble** is a continually growing and evolving group with members bringing tremendous creative energy, commitment, and joy!

Unity Church houses the Twin Cities chapter of **Threshold Choir**, an ensemble that sings for those at the thresholds of life. Small groups of threshold singers bring music to people's bedsides as they die or are enduring illness or other suffering.



# COMMUNITY OUTREACH

## Affordable Housing Hygiene Drive

### Supplies Needed to Respond to Covid-19 for Beacon Residents

As part of their commitment to the health and safety of residents in supportive housing facilities, the Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative has asked for our help with a hygiene drive to collect supplies to help formerly homeless people protect themselves during this pandemic time. Items will be used at three of Beacon's St. Paul facilities, American House, Kimball Court, and Prior Crossing, that serve adults with long term histories of homelessness, some former residents of the encampments, and young adults ages 17-25.

Items needed include:

- Hand sanitizer: small refillable pump style and/or large bottles for refills
- Disinfectant soap: small refillable pump style and/or large bottles for refills
- Body lotion, disinfectant wipes, paper towels, laundry detergent
- Masks of all types

How to support this drive:

1. If you purchase these items on your essential shopping trips, they can be delivered to the collection bin located outside the Unity Church entrance in the Holly Avenue parking lot.
2. Order supplies online. For a shipping address for online purchases, email [LindaFei@aol.com](mailto:LindaFei@aol.com).
3. Make a donation to Unity's Affordable Housing Team. Send a check to Unity Church with "Beacon" in the memo, or Donate online at <https://secure.acceptiva.com/?cst=1aadb6> (select "Other Payment" and put "Beacon" in the comments.

## The Obama Ministry Team Invites YOU to Volunteer

Nancy Heege, Obama School Ministry Team

Obama volunteers would like to improve their skills in tutoring students in reading and math. We are looking for someone to lead a training session for our volunteers on a Saturday morning, early in the fall, either in person or on Zoom. If you have skills in teaching reading and math to children, or know of someone to recommend, please contact Marty Rossmann at [rossm001@umn.edu](mailto:rossm001@umn.edu).



Please consider being a classroom volunteer. The children and staff of Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School need our help and support. There are two important goals that we as classroom volunteers have when working with our Obama scholars. The time we spend with our scholars is taken from their classroom learning time so our first goal is to provide learning experiences for the scholars that further their reading and math skills during the time we spend with them outside of their classrooms. The second important goal as classroom volunteers is to build a positive supportive relationship with the scholars as we meet with them each week. There are also other ways to be involved, with varying time commitments.

The teachers and children are enthusiastic about our volunteers, and we'd like you to consider joining us. We hope to begin volunteer work again in September, contingent on decisions being made about school schedule, in-person vs. virtual instruction.

To get started as a volunteer, email Karen Abraham at [karen2bavol@gmail.com](mailto:karen2bavol@gmail.com) to request the application forms. Karen will send three things: a volunteer form to state your preferences; a Saint Paul Schools volunteer background investigation form, giving your permission for the school to do a background check; and instructions on how to return the forms. Forms that are returned over the summer may be delayed depending on the school's ability to process them. Note: each volunteer will be asked to pay the \$12 fee for the background check this year.

If you shop at Kowalski's on Grand Avenue, please put your grocery receipts in the Obama School donation box in the checkout area. The school will get a quarterly check based on the number of receipts in the box.

## Racial Justice Film Series: A Time for Burning

Sunday, June 7 • 3:00-5:00 p.m. • Online

The Racial and Restorative Justice team invites you to join them online to view and discuss the 1966 documentary, *A Time for Burning*. A young white Lutheran minister in Omaha, Nebraska, tries to reach out to a Black congregation but encounters opposition from his church elders and the acerbic opinions of a Black barber. The documentary chronicles these events and what unfolds. All are welcome — watch for a link to join the viewing.



# MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH



## You Have My Blessing to Feel Cursed

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

Don't worry, I'm not up to a conversation about counting your blessings. I absolutely get that I've had amazing opportunities afforded me by the stay at home orders and the necessarily relaxed, slower pace of my life. I know my many privileges and my affluence have protected me from the scariest threats of the pandemic. I am certain that this time I've enjoyed with my teenagers forced to spend lots of time with me watching movies and playing games and sharing almost every thought and feeling will in time feel like one of the greatest gifts of my life.

But I really can't in good conscience talk to anyone, or to myself, about looking on the bright side right now. And please don't tell me my attitude is unhealthy. Even if I'm pretty sure myself that it is.

As the Tower Club group moved to meeting via Zoom, actually almost right away once the Church building closed, the main thing we have done is to "check-in" on how everyone is doing while we "stay at home." I've asked several different versions of that from, "What have you been doing?" to "How is this all landing on your soul?" to "What is happening with your family, the people you are sheltering with together?" It's been interesting, fun even; I've felt good about connecting, telling my story, hearing those of the youth.

OK, I might even say I've felt blessed.

There has been something ultimately pretty unsatisfying about our sessions though, and not just that we didn't share snacks. My read is that the kids all feel like their contribution to our time together needs to be, in the end, reassuring and positive. "I am bored out of my mind, worried about my grandparents' health, devastated by the loss of my friends, completely untethered by the lack of a school schedule, and sick to death of my parents, but, yeah, overall we are doing well, hanging in there, loving Netflix and Sims!"

I understand the tendency, but I want to give them, and myself, blessing to knock that crap off and feel free to wallow in loss and pain and fear. And do it together, bring it! This is my current "Aha," my driving revelation — the more utterly honest we can be with each other about the depth of our vulnerability and fear, the more we are able to just let go. Let go of the need to self-preserve, to keep a safe distance (figurative!). And then I think we will enter into holy time, holy relationships. And that holiness is the real blessing possible in all this.

Mind you, I'm not a lover of sorrow and pain, I'm afraid of it — I'm always eager to break the seriousness of a moment by telling a joke. I'm fighting to avoid one now. With your blessing, I'll leave it here.

## R. E. Summer Update

Religious Education is planning for the **Summer Sundays in the Garden** program (typically for ages 4-12) beginning Sunday, May 24. Anna Newton and her garden team have been creatively imagining ways to combine video messages from the church garden with ways families can come by and work the garden. Please stay tuned for invitation.

**Summer opportunities for tweens/junior/senior high youth** are also being planned. Programs are intended to be opportunities and not obligations that extend the R.E. year indefinitely. We know that each family is finding patterns and commitments that work for them.

### **Wellspring Wednesdays will continue at least through June.**

Starting in June, however, the chapel service will be shaped by R.E. staff (Drew and Ray) keeping families and an intergenerational focus in mind.

R.E. staff and Unity Religious Education Ministry Team remain absolutely clear in centering relational learning at the core of faith formation, and structuring R.E. classes for the coming fall/winter season to build on existing relationships. While there will certainly be needed changes to classes, on the whole we think there's wisdom in keeping children/youth/teachers in communities from this past year. (Zoom sessions work so much better when relationships already exist and can build on that!) We are structuring enrollment for next year with this in mind, and will send out an invitation to enrollment sometime in June.

We know that distance learning landed uniquely and unevenly from family to family (especially when families had little time and practice to shift online!). We have begun making curricular adjustments for online learning, and will incorporate this into teacher orientation and training.

# MUSIC MINISTRY



## Music Notes

Ahmed Anzaldúa, Director of Music Ministries

In recent weeks, the choral music community had to come to grips with the reality that it may be a year or more before in-person rehearsals and performances of choral music can happen again in the United States, leading toward widespread despair about the future of our field. I wrote this message with the hope that my singer and choral director friends and colleagues would find encouragement and hope in my personal perspective. I'm now sharing this with our community at Unity Church with the hope that others outside of choral music may also find something meaningful in it.

My family and I came to the United States in 2012 from what was then known as "the murder capital of the world," a region of Mexico that has been especially hard hit by drug cartel and gang violence. Our current situation keeps taking me back to the experience of trying to make a living as a musician and raising a family in those circumstances. Shootings would take place frequently in public places such as playgrounds and malls, and going out after dark was just completely out of the question. For years we rarely left the house unless it was essential. Every single person we knew has lost a loved one to the violence that was and still is rampant in the region. Having lived through that, we were all connected by our shared grief and uncertainty for the future, a connection that I feel immediately when I meet fellow immigrants from the regions in Mexico that have been affected by the worst of the cartel violence.

Throughout all this, our government and institutions disappointed us constantly, refusing to acknowledge the reality of the situation. We all knew that the Mexican government would never come through for us, that the corruption and incompetence at every level were

too great. The police and military were just as dangerous as the cartels and gangs, and in many cases they were one and the same. It was clear that our institutions had failed us, that any sort of change could only come from grassroots organizing and from within our own communities.

Musicians were especially affected by the violence. Many of us had to drive or walk after dark following concerts or a full day of teaching. Some were targeted for kidnapping after a performance was covered in the media, and many had to perform at venues such as night clubs and bars, which were frequent sites of murders and mass shootings. The alternative was having no income at all. However, it wasn't just about the income: the act of making music never felt more necessary, more relevant. Music, dance, art, stories, are what made the whole situation bearable all those years.

It's hard not to feel overwhelmed by our reality. It's easy to feel powerless. We are at the beginning of a new reality and we are still trying to make sense of it. Most of our community is still in the early stages of grief or in triage, frantically trying to shift gears and remain employed, acquire new skills, care for families, and learn a new way of living. It is early in the process and things are changing every day. We don't know enough about what this new reality is — nobody does. We all have our process. For some it may mean pausing and introspection; for others it may mean exhilarated play, trying out new technology and interdisciplinary collaboration, making stuff. In the end, our role is the same it has always been, to make sense of the world, to convert reality into stories and give it a narrative. When that reality is particularly oppressive or senseless, art that brings joy, comfort, and insight is especially needed. Music provided moments of fun and lightness amidst the reality of living in the "murder capital of the world" while also helping us make

sense of the senseless deaths of loved ones murdered by the gangs and cartels.

My love for choral music is rooted in the conviction that there is so much more to it beyond "bringing a large group of people into a room to sing for another large group of people." I love it for its nearly limitless potential, for its incredibly vast repertoire and the countless expressions of communal and individual singing that have existed in every culture since before humans even developed language. There is room for everyone and everything in our field. The idea that every choral director and singer out there is going to just throw up their hands in the air and give up until there's a vaccine is just so absurd, so impossibly ridiculous, that it's not even worth considering. We are grieving because our music is our identity, it is at the core of who we are... what we're losing isn't just a hobby. However, that connection is also our power: our process will always find a way to enable us to tell those stories and connect with each other. Once we figure it out in this new circumstance, the need to tell stories and find human connection always wins out.

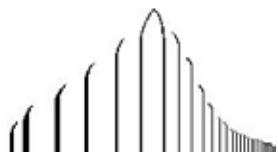
Now is when we can do the most good. If it wasn't obvious before, it should be obvious now: we are essential workers. Nobody knows what the future will look like, but we can at least be certain that we will be forced to learn new ways of working and supporting our work and we will emerge with a true appreciation for the act of being able to gather together and sing. This alone is reason enough to make me very excited for the future of our field.

**Share a music message!**

Turn to the back cover for details!

**Sing with a Unity choir!**

Turn to page 8 for details!



# UNITY CHURCH-UNITARIAN

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

JACKIE SMITH, CHAIR, BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
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REV. ROB ELLER-ISAACS, CO-MINISTER  
REV. KP HONG, DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
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## CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

### Online Celebration of Rev. Lisa Friedman

Saturday, June 13  
2:00-4:00 p.m.  
Details on page 4!



### A Call for Music

*Have you been enjoying the daily music messages? Would you like to be featured as one of our daily music messages? Here is your chance!*

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

Thank you!

### Affordable Housing Hygiene Drive Supplies Needed for Beacon Residents

Items needed include:

- Hand sanitizer: small refillable pump style and/or large bottles for refills
- Disinfectant soap: small refillable pump style and/or large bottles for refills
- Body lotion, disinfectant wipes, paper towels, laundry detergent
- Masks of all types



Turn to page \_\_ for ways to donate!

### Racial Justice Film Series • Online! A Time for Burning

Sunday, June 7 • 3:00-5:00 p.m.  
Details on page 9.

### Healthcare Workers Circle

Wednesday, June 3 • 7:30-9:00 p.m.  
Details on page 2.