

Suffering

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.

Story tells us, the Buddha was once asked how he crossed the great flood of suffering. The exchange went like this:

“How, dear sir, did you cross the flood?”

“By not halting, friend, and by not straining I crossed the flood.”

“But how is it, dear sir, that by not halting and by not straining you crossed the flood?”

“When I came to a standstill, friend, then I sank; but when I struggled, then I got swept away. It is in this way, friend, that by not halting and by not straining I crossed the flood.”¹

The first of the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism and lived reality itself teach us that suffering is inevitable. Each of us, because we are alive, knows suffering. The question, then, is not how to avoid it, but what we will do with it. As the writer Ben Okri put it, “The most authentic thing about us is our capacity to create, to overcome, to endure, to transform, to love and to be greater than our suffering.”

Certainly, the natural inclination to prevent or diminish suffering, our own and others’, is an important skill for survival and wellbeing. But avoidance is another thing, and the Buddha’s answer about crossing the flood of suffering offers the wisdom of a different way. Notice, the Buddha did not step back or turn away from the flood. Nor did he look for, or even build, a bridge to cross it from on high. He stepped *into* it and, neither halting nor straining, he crossed it.

It calls to mind another story from Hebrew scripture, when the Israelites

are fleeing slavery and coming to the Red Sea with the Egyptian army on their heels. Trapped between the shore and the approaching soldiers, the Israelites complain to Moses that he has led them on a quest for freedom only to be slaughtered there. Moses, turning to God for guidance, receives God’s reply: “Tell the Israelites to move on!”

As this story tells us, the Red Sea parts, offering the Israelites safe passage to the other side, then closing again and destroying the Egyptian army in pursuit. One Midrash, though, suggests the sea did not part before the Israelites moved on. Only when one bold Israelite, a man named Nachshon from the tribe of Yahudah, stepped into the rising waters and kept going did the sea finally open, making a path on dry land to the other side.

When suffering comes, as we know it will — and as it has with abundance this year, flooding us with loss and illness, with despair and grief, with fear and anger — these stories and others advise us not to hold back, not to turn or look away, but to wade into the waters. To neither halt nor strain, but to move on, passing through the suffering that comes.

Life will always involve suffering, sometimes in such large measure we cannot see the other side of it. How will we approach it? What might it mean to cross it without halting and without straining?

One step at a time we move through it. Staying present to our own pain and that of others, we discover that being present to pain means we are also available to love and joy. Remembering that pain, like all

experiences, will not be permanent. That change is as surely a part of life as suffering is. That being present to this moment asks only that we take one more step; and then, one more after that, neither avoiding suffering nor straining against it. We keep moving, one step and one moment at a time. Especially when we don’t know where we’re headed or how long it will take to get there, we let go of how we were before and with each step, we begin again. Opening our hearts to how it is now, we begin to participate in shaping how it might be tomorrow.

By stepping into the present, we give ourselves to a deeper and wider truth that began before us and continues after us. We discover that under the floodwaters of suffering run the currents of love and connection and change, ready to carry us as we cross. Not halting, not straining, we begin again in love.

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

¹ <https://suttacentral.net/sn1.1/en/bodhi>

Suffering 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 and by request from karen@unityunitarian.org.

Just Words



I am curious about many things. One of the things I am curious about is the source of the food I eat. I like to know where it comes from. I like to imagine the journey it took from field and farm to our table. I like to buy food that is sustainable both for the planet and the people who work hard to get that food to our table. I prefer to buy locally when possible. My food curiosity was sparked once again as the pandemic highlighted the many dangers endured by those who work in the fields, farms,

markets, and slaughter houses. Their labor and many sacrifices make our meals possible. There is an estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in this country. Five million of whom are essential workers including those who work the land and harvest our food, transport it and make it available to us in stores. We have grown accustomed to our food being readily available, but at what cost? I find myself asking this question over and over again, but no easy answers come. We do know that many folks working in the central valley of California and the slaughterhouses of Minnesota have gotten sick, and some have died, from Covid-19. I wonder if there had been a real shortage of fresh food if it might have led to intentional questions being raised about the working conditions of those in the food industry.

In the late 1960s, when consumers were asked to support the California farmworkers by boycotting grapes, my family gave up the fruit for years in response to the request. The farmworkers organized all over the state and then the country to fight for better working conditions and higher pay. Filipino-American Larry Itliong's role has long been in the shadows but it was his leadership that sparked the movement. He joined forces with César Chávez to create the Farmworkers Union, an organization that worked nonviolently to change the rights of agricultural workers around the state of California. Their efforts created fairer working conditions and the California Agricultural Labor Act of 1975 gave farmworkers bargaining power in labor negotiations. It was progress, but their sacrifices continue. Their solidarity reminds us of what is possible when forces join together.

This month we will mark the one-year anniversary of the arrival of Covid-19 into our state. We all remember how we were asked to shelter in place, to shut down schools, houses of worship, shops, and gyms, among many other places. We pivoted in place while we stocked up on beans, rice, and the things we could imagine would help us get through if we really couldn't leave our homes. Despite all the shortages of things like yeast and toilet paper, the fresh produce kept showing up in our local stores. May we never take the availability of our food for granted and find ways to support the dignity and worth of the workers who ensure that food is available to us.

Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs



The Wheel of Life

In Celebration

Kathleen Radspinner

Unity Children's Choir Director was named Minnesota Musical Educator of the Year

In Memoriam

Vivian Stone

May 10, 1921 – January 30, 2021

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 or send an email to janne@unityunitarian.org and a minister will contact you.

Flowers for Worship

If you would like to provide flowers for Sunday worship, email Martha Tilton at martha@unityunitarian.org.

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MARCH SUNDAY SERVICES

Sunday Worship and Coffee Hour

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

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

March 7: Freedom in Flight

Livestream: https://youtu.be/pb_kNP5gSWE

There are many sources of suffering. One source is forced confinement. We have each had a very small taste of confinement this year as we have been forced to shelter at home. Imagine being an innocent person on death row. Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs and worship associate Lia Rivamonte will share the stories of those who have suffered in various prisons of confinement.

March 14: Transforming Suffering

Livestream: <https://youtu.be/zXwSrMjWlr8>

In his "Voices from Lemnos," Irish Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney wrote, "Human beings suffer. They torture one another. They get hurt and get hard. No poem or play or song can fully right a wrong inflicted and endured." Yes, and the capacity to transform suffering is among the most widely accepted attributes of spiritual maturity. Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs and worship associate Rebecca Flood will offer some of what they have learned about suffering.

March 21: Suffering Together

Livestream: <https://youtu.be/W4tdKJdYsVE>

We recognize the voice of collective suffering, of "being in this together" and "when one member suffers, we all suffer." Collective suffering reflects something greater than individual narratives or actual events, a greater symbolic power that reconstructs and reimagines the struggle and how it has rendered reality. Rather than descriptions of what is, they raise questions and arguments about what must have been and what should be. Rev. KP Hong and worship associate Bailey Webster explore questions that emerge from our collective suffering and how we are to make our way.

March 28: Not My Will but Thine

Livestream: <https://youtu.be/W4tdKJdYsVE>

Knowing he would suffer and die if he went to Jerusalem, Jesus felt he had no other choice. His faith gave him what the disciples judged a foolhardy courage. But they were (as usual) wrong. It was not courage, it was loyalty that led him through those gates. Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs and worship associate Lia Rivamonte will recall the old strong story as we enter into the days our Christian friends call Holy Week.

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."

March 7: Ramsey Middle School Food Pantry

Ramsey Middle School Pantry emerged as teachers at the school realized that food insecurity was becoming a reality for many students doing distance learning. A survey was sent to school families to help identify those in need of food assistance and one hundred families responded affirmatively. Staff created the food pantry which now makes weekly food deliveries to 67 families. Unity Church members Rebecca Flood and Ruth McKenzie are pantry volunteers.

March 14: Face It Foundation

Millions of men experience depression, far fewer seek help. The Face It Foundation gives men the support they need to face depression, take control of their recovery, and get their lives back. Face It currently provides its entirely free services to over 150 men. Providing services during Covid-19 has been especially challenging due to the additional building maintenance (cleaning, improved air handling, etc.). This collection is earmarked for pandemic expenses. Unity Church member Steve Harper has been with Face It for three years, first as a participant and now as a group facilitator.

March 21: Exodus Lending

Exodus Lending is Minnesota's only non-profit dedicated to helping Minnesotans get out of payday lending debt. The program model allows enrolled participants to "gift" their past-due payday loan to Exodus who then pays off the loan in full. Program participants repay Exodus in twelve monthly installments. Those enrolled in the repayment program also have access to free financial counseling. This collection will support the refinancing of payday and other predatory loans, and advocacy for fair and just lending practices. Unity Church member Karen Abraham nominated Exodus Lending.

March 28: Mixed Blood Theater

Mixed Blood Theater, located in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood of Minneapolis, brings audiences and artists together to imagine and create a more just world. Using theatre to illustrate and animate, Mixed Blood models pluralism in pursuit of connection, shared humanity, and engaged citizenry. Unable to produce live theatre since the pandemic shutdown, Mixed Blood has partnered with Coyle Community Center to secure donations for the purchase and distribution of food and other essentials to residents living in Cedar-Riverside — the majority of whom are East African immigrants and refugees. Unity Church member Lia Rivamonte serves as Development Director of Mixed Blood.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Holding Suffering with Compassion

Louise Livesay-Al, Trustee

We are living in such a liminal time. In some ways many things are suspended in our lives. We are waiting to return to our workplaces and schools, to get vaccinated, and to see positive results of political change. Our new normal feels like we are suspended in time and also on the threshold or in transition to something...new. What that is, is unknown. Is it better times or more suffering?

I have heard from some people that this pandemic has been an unexpected gift of life slowing down and giving them a much-needed pause from the treadmill of life. They have time to connect with family in ways that had not been previously possible. The number of meals families eat together has skyrocketed. Game nights are a popular way to pass time. Reading has experienced a surge during the pandemic. People are learning instruments, gardening (thought not in winter), and taking up baking bread — things that take time and connect us. What a gift for many people.

And for others, the pandemic has meant loss of lives, income, connection, health insurance, and basic necessities like food, among so many others. Isolation has led to greater loneliness at an alarming rate. Depression could be up three fold, particularly for people with money stressors. Racial disparities have become more pronounced during the pandemic and we see it in education, access to health care and vaccines, job loss, the death rate, and so many other areas. So for many people, this pandemic is anything but a gift. The desire to return to a “new normal” for many people is profound.

These are completely different experiences of the same event, resulting in very different realities. And what Unity Church has found is that people in both these worlds are turning to the life and work of the church. The number of people seeking Unity Church as an important touch point and spiritual home each week has increased during the pandemic. Going virtual has allowed our shared ministry to reach more people in new ways. The number of pledging households has increased to 711 households, up 28 from all of last year. Our targeted operating and capitol pledge goals are well within sight. Our willingness to dig deep and give generously when we can, along with prudent financial management by our executive team has put us in a very healthy financial position. We are seeing greater than anticipated special gifts, Sunday offerings, and gifts to the Minister’s Discretionary Fund since moving to a virtual setting, which are expressions of gratitude and commitment from our members. Yet even with this wonderful news, we have people suffering due to the pandemic. While maybe not as visible, they are present and real. We are not immune.

Our financial position allows the church to respond to the suffering around us, within our virtual walls, in our neighborhoods, and in the broader community. Our ministers are able to respond to the suffering with pastoral care but also with gifts from their discretionary fund. We have been able to help keep people connected to their spiritual anchor during the pandemic instead of becoming unmoored. As a community we have lost church members, friends, and family during the pandemic, and we have been able to provide critical ministry to those grieving losses. We cannot escape suffering, unfortunately. But we can thankfully say that together we are able to hold the suffering with compassion and love because of all the gifts we have to share.



*we're
in
this*

TOGETHER



**UNITY CHURCH
ONLINE AUCTION
SATURDAY, MARCH 20
7:00 PM
DETAILS ON PAGE 8**



BELOVED COMMUNITY STAFF TEAM

Board of Trustees Commitment to Cross-Cultural Competence

Beloved Community Communications Team

Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself. — Rumi

“Authentic relationships ... personal practice ... an ever-widening circle of belonging for all people ... brave space for racial healing,” are what “we the people of Unity Church-Unitarian” pledge to create and sustain, as outlined in our Ends Statements. Racial equity and diversity inclusion work isn’t a program, but a lifestyle, according to Trina Olson, co-founder of Team Dynamics.* Inherent in our pledge is a commitment to build from what’s been started, maintain momentum, and as Trina said, to “create a container where the assets from our mixed team are showing up ... to make a really meaningful impact.”

The Unity Church Board of Trustees is passionately committed to working toward our promises/ends and in 2021, plans to build on the important efforts already begun. Trustee Jackie Smith reflected on this work:



Jackie and her sons.

The board engaged with Team Dynamics and the IDI (Intercultural Development Inventory) on several levels in 2020. Team Dynamics served as a resource as we formed our framework for the Ministerial Search Team (MST). We appreciated the support of Team Dynamics in identifying priorities around identity, expertise, and perspective as we developed criteria. This helped us prioritize, evaluate, and address a process for forming the MST.

By early spring of 2020, all trustees had completed the IDI, and participated in both individual

and group debriefing sessions. Our scores and debriefings motivated the board to work more deeply on growth plans. We engaged in a three-session series with the IDI facilitators to set goals and action steps in the context of our individual scores. The impact of the IDI inspired the trustees to recommend that new trustees and members of the MST engage with the IDI.

These two resources helped us to examine systems, processes and interpersonal norms present in board work. We now have tools for naming and examining the presence of white supremacy. This led us to slow down some decisions, examine our own deeply held cultural tendencies, and engage in more meaningful reflection. We are still learning and support one another as we go.

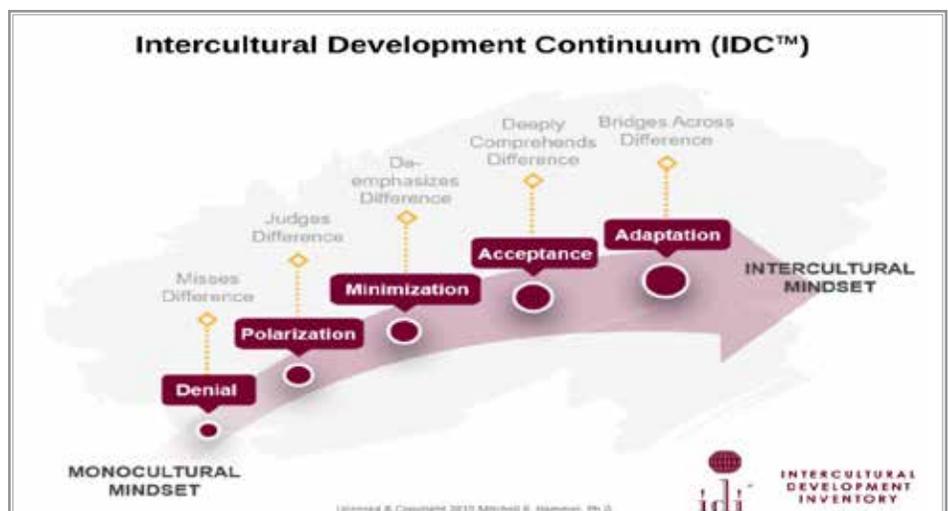
The IDI framework and collaboration with Team Dynamics have supported our growth in governing toward the Ends. The opportunity to engage in personal and community reflection has empowered us to name things, and question interactions, systems, and

processes that impact our efforts to reach the Beloved Community. We will continue to incorporate our learning and growth into board duties such as monitoring our Ends, supporting the ministerial transition, and engagement of new trustees. The board has a deep commitment to our Ends.

Note: The Intercultural Development Inventory (idiinventory.com) is a tool to help us assess our place on the continuum of and point us forward to greater cultural competence.

Opportunities to complete the Intercultural Development Inventory and work with a qualified administrator are available to Unity Church members and teams. If you are interested, please contact Drew Danielson at drew@unityunitarian.org.

*Trina Olson and Alfonso Tomás Wenker, *Behave*, podcast audio, December 15, 2020, <https://behave.libsyn.com>.



WELCOME NEWCOMERS



Welcome Words

Laura Park, Acting Director of Membership and Hospitality

Suffering is not a theme I would usually associate with welcome and hospitality. Yet many people start a spiritual journey in suffering, looking for ways to navigate the challenges of this life without being overwhelmed by them. If you find yourself exploring our community in difficult times, we hope you find Unity Church to be a place that can help you find and keep your balance.

Whatever launched your spiritual journey, we are glad it brought you to Unity Church. My virtual door is always open for conversation, information, and consideration of the pathways to deeper connection to the life of the church. The best way to contact me right now is email, if possible, laura@unityunitarian.org. Or call the church office and leave a message: 651-228-1456 x110.

Pathway to Membership Classes

These offerings 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 Online • 1:00-2:00 p.m.

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

March 7: Building Tour

March 14: Worship and the Liturgical Year

March 21: Social Justice and Community Outreach

March 28: Membership 101

Committing to Unity • Thursday, April 29

- *Develop a personal practice to help you find and keep your balance.*
- *Develop the skills of small-group intimacy that allow you to go deep quickly with strangers.*
- *Use 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 and officially join the church! RSVP by email to Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org.

Welcome New Member



Taoyuan Li

My name is Tao Yuan. A trick to remember how to say my name is to think about "Tao(ism) and UN (United Nation). I was born in Taiwan, came to the Twin Cities in 1993 to study speech-language-hearing sciences at the University of Minnesota. I have lived in the Twin Cities for almost 28 years. My two teenage sons were both born in St. Paul.

My current passions are meeting my fitbit goal of walking 10,000 steps per day and taking at least one Zumba lesson per week — just trying to be active while spending a lot of time on Zoom calls and paperwork. I have never liked being outdoors in the winter. During the pandemic winter, I started doing something I've never done before over my past 28 winters here in Minnesota: going outdoors as much as I can and saying "Hi" and smiling to strangers with my eyes above my mask.

What brings me to Unity Church is the open-minded faith community and the wonderful music programs. Even though I am new to Unity Church and have only met a few people in person, I have already appeared in two Unity choir videos — thanks to Ahmed and the warm and welcoming virtual choir meetings he has been leading. I hope to get to know more people from this community when church reopens!

Mentoring at Unity

Would you welcome having a guide to congregational life at Unity Church? Request a mentor! Your mentor will meet with you at least once a month, face-to-face, and be available for ongoing questions and advice. To learn more or to request a mentor please email Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org.

STAYING CONNECTED

Online Group Meetings

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

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

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

Connecting with Ourselves and Others: Relationships and Sexuality: Meets Thursday, March 25, 7:00-8:30 p.m., on the topic The Charmed Circle: <http://bit.ly/connectingselfandother>. A monthly series offering a candid look at gender identity, sexuality and relationships. Contact Mike Huber, mikehuberece@gmail.com

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

Families Living with Mental Health Challenges: A support group for families living with mental health challenges. Meets the first Saturday of each month, 9:30-11:30 a.m. Contact: Janne Eller-Isaacs, janne@unityunitarian.org

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

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

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

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

Men's Conversation Group meets Monday, March 8 and 22, 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, March 1 and 15, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact Tom Zell, tomzell@me.com

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

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

Single Parenthood Support Group: A single parents group building community together. Meets every other Wednesday, March 3, 17, and 31 from 7:00-8:00 p.m. Contact Laura Park, laura@unityunitarian.org

Textile Arts Group meets every other Wednesday, March 3, 17 and 31, from 7:15-8:30 p.m. Bring your knitting, embroidery, etc. Contact Johanna Stammeier-Toole, johanna2le@gmail.com

Unity Book Club: Second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m. Contact Jack Hawthorne, jack.hawthorne@centurylink.net.
March 9: *Swede Hollow* by Ola Larsmo

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

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

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 or 651-228-1456 x105.



we're in this **TOGETHER**

UNITY CHURCH ONLINE AUCTION

SATURDAY, MARCH 20 • 7:00 PM

**Join Unity Church members and friends in our first ever online fundraiser!
This free and live event will include a virtual auction, special guests, and lots of fun!**

Donate your gifts, talents, skills, memberships, online events, and gift cards from local restaurants and stores. The deadline to submit an auction item is March 10. The auction catalog will open for viewing by March 18 and bidding will open on March 20 at 7:00 p.m. Donate in one or more of the following categories:

Local Establishments: support your favorite local restaurants and stores: buy gift cards to donate to the auction. Businesses are suffering during the pandemic. This is a win-win!!

Virtual Master Class: offer a virtual class on songwriting, cooking, knitting, photography, birding, origami, setting up social media accounts... the world's the limit! Or donate an online class (e.g. The Loft, local community education, UMN extension, etc.)

Merchandise: donate homemade creations, signed books, collectibles, art, jewelry, and more. The donor will be responsible for mailing the item to the winner, so your piano might be a little out of the question.

Memberships and Subscriptions: support your favorite museums, gyms, online news sources, public media stations, state and national parks by donating a membership or subscription.

Readings and Performances: offer an online poetry reading, musical performance, or webinar from your home or tickets to an online event from one of your favorite venues (e.g., The Dakota, Crooners, etc.)

Services: offer to build a website, consult on a resume, create a logo, or take a professional photo for someone. Remember, this is a virtual donation that will be delivered online.

Keep in mind that you/the donor will be responsible to mail or deliver online all auction items sold. Unity Church will not collect nor distribute auction items this year. Thank you for staying home!

Make your donation here: bit.ly/ucuinthistogether

Questions? Contact Barbara Hubbard at barbara@unityunitarian.org with "Auction" in the subject line.

WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

Unity Church's Wellspring Wednesday has long been a multi-generational opportunity to gather midweek at church for food, fellowship, and fun. While the church building remains closed due to the pandemic, we continue to gather online for programming. If you haven't yet participated in an online program using Zoom, church staff can help you get started. Unless otherwise noted, you can use the registration link right up until the program starts to participate.

March 3 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Art in Bloom in Zoom

Register: bit.ly/artinbloominzoom

Just as we get serious about counting down to the spring equinox in March, we welcome the first ever Art in Bloom in Zoom at Unity Church. We'll encounter seven curated selections by Unity's Art Team, chosen from the congregation's rich and historic visual art collection, presented with corresponding interpretive flower arrangements created by seven floral artists from the congregation. Join us to learn the history and meaning behind each art piece and how it influenced the floral artist's design. Whether it inspires you to create contemplative floral interpretations of your own visual art at home or simply invites you to feast your eyes on art and blossoms, this is an evening to lift our winter-weary spirits. Or perhaps it will move you to pen a spring haiku, like this one from Shirley Candy:

*soft petals awake;
sacred gem of compassion
blossom into life*

March 10 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Let's Speak for the Trees

Register: bit.ly/speakfortree

Did you know that the city of St. Paul will be cutting down over 20,000 trees in the coming year? Thousands of ash trees that are infested with the emerald ash borer will be removed and will not be fully replaced — for nearly a decade. This will be devastating for our city's beautiful streets, but it is also an environmental disaster. Trees are our best and simplest answer to climate change! Fortunately, planting a tree is something that almost anyone can do, with a little money and a little muscle. Join Unity Church member Patricia Ohmans, director of Frogtown Green, and Rennie Gaither, Frogtown Green's Community Forestry Corps member, to learn how Frogtown residents have planted over 500 trees in their neighborhood, and how Unity Church members of every age and ability can help do the same, wherever you live.

Open Page Writing Session

The Suffering Heart as a Doorway to Compassion

Register: bit.ly/openpagesuffering

"The most authentic thing about us," wrote Ben Okri of humanity, "is our capacity to create, to overcome, to endure, to transform, to love and to be greater than our suffering." In this Open Page session, for writers and nonwriters alike, we'll engage writing as an alchemical tool for healing as we consider the suffering in our world and our lives. Rev. Karen Hering leads this guided writing session as an invitation to enter a correspondence with your own heart and your own life.

March 17 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Working Toward Prayer

Register by email to martha@unityunitarian.org

Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs offers this class to help participants summon a quality of attention, a way of being, he calls prayer. Attend this introductory session or register for the full six-part series, beginning on March 17 and continuing on five Tuesday nights: March 30, April 6, 13, 20, 27. The March 17 session is open to all, the remaining series is limited to 12 participants. This offering is free for pledging members and \$30 for non-pledging friends. Watch this video from Rev. Rob for more information: bit.ly/robwtp.

March 24 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Margaret and Us:

Hearing the Call of our Transcendentalist Foremother

Register: bit.ly/margaretandus

Join the Rev. Kate Tucker for an evening with New England Transcendentalist Margaret Fuller (1810-1850). We'll start with a look at our foremother's rich, evolving life — cut short when she was lost in shipwreck. In her brief life she became feminist, conversationalist, mystic, editor, foreign correspondent, activist, and nurturing friend to many. "We are here to unfold our powers" she said, and this is what she did, even when it meant expanding her view of the self's boundaries. In this program, we'll share an overview of Margaret's life, and let her own words summon us to an open-hearted investigation of our own complexities. The program will include opportunities for reflection, writing, and sharing. Rev. Kate Tucker is a Unity Church member and minister emerita at First Universalist Church Minneapolis. She was featured as the keynote presenter at Unity's annual women's retreat in 2019 and has been inspired, prodded, and challenged by Margaret Fuller's story and legacy for several decades.

March 31 • 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Author Diane Wilson reading from *The Seed Keeper*

Register: bit.ly/seedkeeper

Award-winning author of *Spirit Car: A Journey to a Dakota Past* and *Beloved Child: A Dakota Way of Life* returns to Unity Church to read from her new book just out in March, *The Seed Keeper*. A haunting novel spanning several generations, *The Seed Keeper* follows a Dakota family's struggle to preserve their way of life, and their sacrifices to protect what matters most. Diane is the executive director for the Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance, a national coalition of tribes and organizations working to create sovereign food systems for Native people. She is a Mdewakanton descendent, enrolled on the Rosebud Reservation, and lives in Shafer, Minnesota.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Movement & Meditation: Celebrate Spring

Tuesday, March 16 • 10:30-11:30 a.m.

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

The cycles of the year teach us about change and the acceptance of all things. Spring is here! In the Five-Element cycle Wood symbolizes this season. It is the time of new beginnings. Qigong teacher Lisa Schlingerman will guide you through movements and stretches to help wake up your body and mind from the long winter nap.



No experience necessary. Everything can be done standing or sitting. So... "Be like a tree in pursuit of your cause. Stand firm, grip hard, thrust upward, bend to the winds of heaven and learn tranquility." Come for this March Qigong session, or join in monthly at the same time every third Tuesday, March 16, April 20, and May 18.

Working Toward Prayer

Wednesday, March 17 • 7:00 p.m.

Followed by five Tuesday nights: March 30, April 6, 13, 20, 27

Register by email to martha@unityunitarian.org

Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs offers this class to help participants summon a quality of attention, a way of being, he calls prayer. The group will discuss varied understandings of prayer, as well as learn to pray for one another and for ourselves. Sessions will focus on our spiritual lives, intimacy, vocation, and religious experience. The March 17 session is open to all, the remaining series is limited to 12 participants. Participants are expected to attend all five classes and to be fully involved. This offering is free for pledging members and \$30 for non-pledging friends. Watch this video from Rev. Rob for more information: bit.ly/robwtp.



Cook Along: Let's make dumplings!

Tuesday, March 23 • 5:00 p.m.

Register: bit.ly/cookalongdumplings

This will be a live, interactive cooking class with church member Richard Lau and his family over Zoom. The class will feature dumpling soup with fresh dumplings made by you. Along with a tasty meal and fellowship, participants will receive a hand-delivered goodie bag. Register early as supplies are limited! Your recipe packet will be sent by email one week before the event. There will be a few items to add to your weekly grocery shopping. Gluten-free, vegan, and dairy-free options will be available.



Don't want to cook? You are welcome to tune in to watch, learn, and hang out with other soup enthusiasts.

We'll have another cooking class in April with church member Tomkin Coleman. This class will feature some Italian favorites.

Blood Drive at Unity Church

Tuesday, March 23

1:00-7:00 p.m.

**GIVE BLOOD.
SAVE LIVES.**



For an appointment, call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter UCUpaul to schedule an appointment.

Monthly Series

Connecting with Ourselves and Others: Relationships and Sexuality

Thursday, March 25

7:00-8:30 p.m.

Register: bit.ly/connectingselfandother

This monthly series, that began last fall, continues taking a candid look at gender identity, sexuality and relationships, connecting our personal experience to the experiences of others and the forces of society at large. Led by Unity member Mike Huber and providing a critique of heteronormative expectations of dominant culture, the group discusses short articles or videos on a different topic each month and holds small group conversations reflecting on personal experiences. Topics include:

March: The Charmed Circle
April: Compassion in Our Everyday Interactions

May: Moving Past Us and Them

All adults are welcome. Members of the LGBTQ+ community are encouraged to register. Please feel free to invite friends who might want to join you in attending.

For more information, email mikehuberece@gmail.com.

LIBRARY-BOOKSTALL TEAM

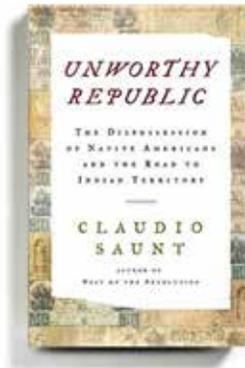


The Library-Bookstall Team

What We're Reading

Unworthy Republic: The Disposition of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory by Claudio Saunt. New York: Norton, 2020.

Claudio Saunt has produced a deeply researched and detailed narrative about Indian removal, or "deportation," by the U.S. government, characterized by greed and incompetence, as well as by the willingness to violate treaties and principles of common decency. A finalist for the National Book Award, an unusual recognition for a scholarly work. — Louise Merriam, Library-Bookstall Team



To read the full review, please visit the Beloved Community Team Blog at bit.ly/unworthyrepublic.

Cafe Unity: A Call for Musicians, Readers, Singers

Friday April 9 • 7:00 p.m.

Hey everyone, remember when we used to do this?

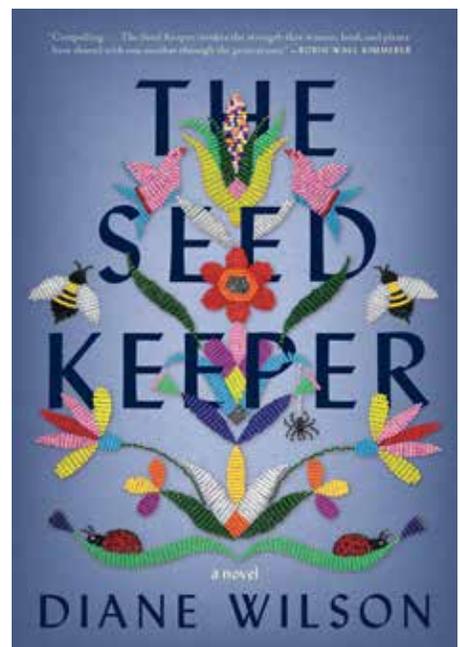


Well, we didn't do this last year and we're not doing it this year either, but there will be music and reading and togetherness in the comfort of your own home.

To make it happen, we need you! Sign up to read original work, sing, play music, or maybe even tell a joke or two by contacting Shelley at library@unityunitarian.org. Space is limited, so sign up soon or by Monday, April 5.

New in the Justice Database: bit.ly/JusticeData

The Marshall Project (themarshallproject.org) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit news outlet covering the national urgency of the U.S. criminal justice system, through award-winning journalism, partnerships with other news outlets and public forums. The Justice Database is a joint project of Unity's Racial and Restorative Justice and Library-Bookstall Teams.



Diane Wilson reads from her new book *The Seed Keeper*.

Wednesday, March 31 • 7:00 p.m.
Details on page 9.



Pitter-pattering Questions

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

Rev. KP Hong, Minister of Faith Formation

Wisdom traditions speak of suffering as elemental and even constitutive of being human, as inescapable as each precious and precarious breath we take. The first of the Four Ennobling Truths begins with an unequivocal acknowledgment of *dukkha* — “suffering” or, better still, “trouble” — as neither pessimistic nor optimistic but thoroughly realistic about the human condition. By venturing beyond the garden walls of his father’s exquisitely managed and trouble-free estate, Siddhartha realized that suffering could serve as an instructive companion, cutting through layers of protective guise and self-enclosed state of affairs, to awaken us to adverse conditions that foster an errant interdependence that is *dukkha*. Stated differently, suffering was the indicator of an impeded or errant interdependence, of relations gone awry in the existential spheres of our life “within, among, and beyond.” At the core, the Buddha’s unwavering strategy was to disclose and provide means of attending to the patterns of interdependence from which both suffering and healing arise.

Suffering as errant interdependence? One of the more difficult parts of the Buddhist story to reconcile with our modern sensibilities was that Siddhartha wandered forth as a spiritual seeker, leaving behind his wife and newborn child. Such a reading insinuates Siddhartha’s spiritual quest and awakening as a selfish act, motivated primarily toward his personal emancipation, to some transcendent state of being no longer entangled by the messy affairs of our very human condition. But the early second-century Indian poet Āśvaghoṣa understood differently and presented an alternative reading of the story: “[W]hen a man happens to see someone who is old, sick, or dead and remains at ease, unperturbed, he’s the same as a senseless man.” For being human is to be moved, summoned, by the suffering of others and to sympathetically recognize the interwovenness of life in an interdependent reality. Siddhartha went forth not as an individual terrified of his own impending doom but summoned by that “inescapable network of mutuality,” including his wife and child, and that one’s well-being can never be secured by our inattention to the suffering of others.

Suffering as errant interdependence? At a time when we are crossing numerous ethical thresholds and effecting planetary processes, facing our errant interdependence matters urgently and categorically. I cannot help wonder about our religious education with children and families, where spirituality is understood as *relational consciousness* (Rebecca Nye), and where *relational learning* remains the organizing, constitutive practice at the core of our ministry. Where else will we find medicine than resolutely facing the total complexion of our errant interdependence and loving our way into right relationship?

Community Outreach Ministry Teams

Working at the Intersection of Faith and Justice

As we move across the one-year anniversary of the pandemic and the church’s building closure, our congregational engagement remains vital, even as many activities have changed and evolved. If you are interested in staying connected to others within the congregation and beyond, and doing so at the intersection of faith and justice work, Unity’s Community Outreach Ministry Teams can be a good place to start.

This spring, each member-led team will be reviewing and renewing its focus, practices and partnerships, so this will be a good time to join as a new team member, learning about the team’s past work and participating in conversations that will shape its future. Whether you’re interested in volunteering, organizing, advocacy, learning or justice-based spiritual growth, these teams offer many different opportunities.

Each team has a focus (ecological issues/ sustainability, racial justice, affordable housing, gun violence, international relationships, etc.). The teams partner with organizations in the community as they plan and carry out service, education, and advocacy within the context of spiritual growth and development.



Pyramid of Religious Response from *A Chosen Faith* by John A. Buehrens and Forrest Church

For a five-minute video about how these teams work, please watch Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs’ comments to the team leaders at a recent leadership retreat: youtu.be/XIL9aRctVrs.

Current teams include:

- Act for the Earth formerly the Sustainable Living Team
- Affordable Housing Ministry Team
- Evergreen Projects Ministry Team
- Gun Sense Ministry Team
- Indigenous Justice Team (in formation)
- Mano a Mano Team (Spanish for “Hand to Hand”) Ministry Team
- Obama School Ministry Team
- Partner Church Ministry Team
- Racial and Restorative Justice Ministry Team
- Sanctuary Team (in formation)

For a description of each team’s focus, visit unityunitarian.org/community-outreach-ministry-social-justice.html. For more information or to volunteer with a particular team, please contact the person listed or Rev. Karen Hering at karen@unityunitarian.org.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Act for the Earth Team

Speak for the trees? Let us instead learn their language!

Dale Howey, Act for the Earth Team

Our faith tradition calls on us to respect the interdependent web of existence, a phrase that takes on amazing new meaning when it comes to trees.

In his book, *The Hidden Life of Trees*, forester Peter Wohlleben lays on some pretty astonishing stuff. Trees produce chemicals to attract or ward off insects, mammals, and birds. Tree roots intertwine with the roots of other species and fungi, becoming a super organism, timing blossoming among species, and communicating over thousands of miles. Trees can learn, and can recognize and help their young.

The science of trees and their partnership with fungi is just beginning to be understood. A solitary tree can live 60 to 100 years but in a forest, trees can thrive for thousands of years. They are certainly playing the long game. It makes me ask myself, what game are we playing? Can trees teach us something? I am dumbstruck with wonder the more I learn about the language of trees. I am moved to plant them and see what they have to say. Only 25 percent of the world's forest cover remains intact. We cannot live without them and their root systems, without their photosynthetic processes that filter carbon out of our polluted air. Yes, we need trees. We need to find a way to live in harmony with these magnificent beings.

Unity's Act for the Earth Ministry Team (formerly the Sustainable Living Team) will offer ways for all of us to act on their behalf as well as our own.



March Act for the Earth Events

On Friday, March 5, at 7:00 p.m., join us for two films and discussion (films will be streamed online). Register: <http://bit.ly/treesmarchfilm>

[How Trees Talk to Each Other](#)

Suzanne Simard TED Talk



Learn about the harmonious yet complicated social lives of trees and prepare to see the natural world with new eyes.

[Forest Man](#) (2013)

Directed by William McMaster



Since the 1970s, Majuli islander Jadav Payeng has been planting trees in order to save his island. He has now planted a forest larger than Central Park in NYC and has created a lush oasis.

Let's Speak for the Trees

On Wednesday, March 10, at 7:00 p.m., learn how a little green bug has triggered plans for the city of St. Paul to cut down thousands of public trees. Hear about a group of Frogtown residents who have planted more than 500 trees in their neighborhood. Find out how Unity Church members could help plant even more trees, using a simple hydroponic system. Register: bit.ly/speakfortree

Obama School Team

Nancy Heege, Obama School Team

Plato said, "Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and charm and gaiety to life and to everything." And there is a documented connection in children's academic success between learning math and learning music. Knowing that there was no weekly classroom music program at Obama School, a plan was put in place to form a partnership program with the school and Walker West Music Academy.

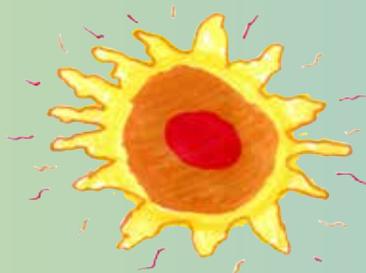
We're grateful to the congregation for supporting the Obama Sunshine Fund and Walker West through Sunday offerings, which provided partial funding for the music program this year. Recently, we learned that a generous Unity Church member donated the remaining \$1,500 needed to begin the program.

On Thursdays, children spend time online with a teacher and a videographer, creating video pieces of hip hop or jazz. Each episode is about twenty minutes long. The episodes were to be edited and ready for viewing yet this winter. This has been an enrichment to the scholars' virtual learning routine and has benefited both Obama School and Walker West.

Walker West shared this in their October 2020 newsletter: In a new partnership with Obama Elementary, we expand on our mission and highlight the K-5 student voice, despite limited access to music education in public schools. A series of online videos and mindfulness activities combine cultural representation with interviews of musicians and musical demonstrations. The host and narrator of the series is ten-years-old and videos are presented via remote learning this school year.

Thanks again to all who contributed!

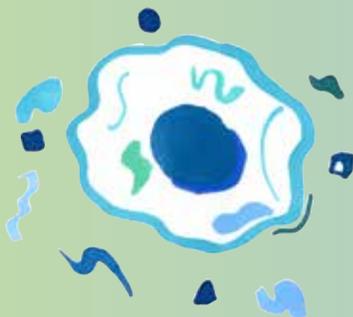
The 32nd Annual Unity Church Children's Musical



Planetdemic!



MISSION CONTROL THE SPREAD



Book by Mary Blouin Auffert

Music and Lyrics by Sandy Waterman

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



WORLD PREMIERE

Saturday, March 13, 2021

7:00 PM

www.unityunitarian.org



MUSIC MINISTRY / ARTIST IN RESIDENCE



Music Notes

Ahmed Anzaldúa
Director of Music Ministries

I miss people tapping their toes to a catchy beat, swaying to a soaring melody with their eyes closed and their breath in sync, humming to a beloved hymn they recognize. I miss sitting next

to my wife in the warmth of a church sanctuary, aware of the sub-zero temperature outside, our son curled up between us reading a book impatiently waiting for the service to end so he can get a doughnut. I miss being transported by a song, letting it carry me away to experience it not with my ears, but through the hearts and minds of the friends singing it — and when it's over, instead of applauding, sharing a look and a smile with the person next to me and thinking to each other "wasn't that nice?" and settling into our pew in our newly-created shared space.

This year we are privileged to have Marcus Young as Artist in Residence at Unity Church. Marcus' work is closely related to how we experience music, in body and spirit. He will lead workshops in March and April that will influence the music we program at this year's Foote Music Sunday service. Over the coming months, Unity's choir members will reach out to our congregation, looking for people to participate in shared videos and recordings, looking to awaken the communal musical connection that has been asleep during this year of collective isolation.

Making music in a room of empty pews every Sunday this year has been heartbreaking. Despite the many messages of appreciation and feedback in my email assuring me that people are listening, singing, and moving at home, it's clear that something vital is missing; our music feels disembodied. My hope for this year's Foote Music Sunday, a service dedicated entirely to music, is that we are somehow able to bring a bit of that missing body into our virtual medium, that the experience helps us wake up and prepare to return to being together again.

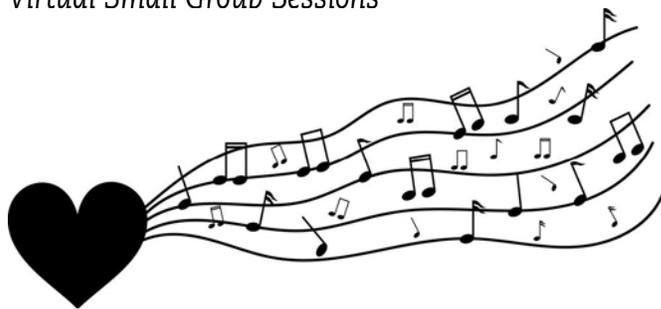
Sing with a Unity Choir

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

A Call for Music

Contribute to our daily music messages! Turn on your phone camera and record a video of your singing, playing a musical instrument, or doing anything else that's musical! Submissions should be sent to Ahmed at ahmed@unityunitarian.org.

Unity's Artist-In-Residence Team Presents
Listen with LOVE
Virtual Small Group Sessions



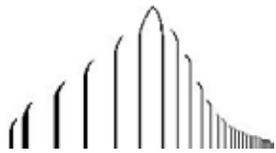
Do you have a favorite song these days? Would you like to hear someone else's favorite song? Join small groups to share and connect with others in an enjoyable 75-minute session. Together, we'll make a big playlist! Reserve a spot now through the end of March: bit.ly/listenwithlove.

Unity's artists-in-residence continue sharing many facets of *Don't You Feel It Too?* (DYFIT), a public art project of healing and activism. The first instruction of DYFIT is to "listen with love" — the focus of these small group workshops. During the session you will connect with one other Unity Church member and one trained facilitator in an intimate and heartfelt setting to explore and share your love of music. We all have music that we love, and it can sometimes remain within our private self. As a group we will honor and hold that song with you. Most of the session will include conversation and listening to music. By the end of the session, you may have a mini movement party. (Don't worry, it's okay to move off-camera.)

This exercise will help us cultivate a deeper level of embodied solidarity that will extend beyond the three people in your session. From the 30 sessions, a playlist will be created and will be used as inspiration for the design of Foote Music Sunday. Some participants will be invited to share during an in person, outdoor experience (Covid-safe) on May 2 for Foote Music Sunday.

DYFIT facilitators: Marcus Young, Laura Levinson, Imagine Joy
Unity Church facilitators: Ray Hommeyer, Bob Peskin, Jeannine Robinett

Visit the registration page, choose a date, and sign up for a small group: bit.ly/listenwithlove. Please choose one song you love and be prepared for your session by having a link for listening to your chosen song (from YouTube or some other publicly accessible platform). Be ready to share why you chose that song. Share the love!



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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**TIME SENSITIVE
MATERIAL**



we're in this **TOGETHER**



UNITY CHURCH ONLINE AUCTION • SATURDAY, MARCH 20 • DETAILS ON PAGE 9

The 32nd Annual Unity Church Children's Musical

Planetarydemic!

MISSION CONTROL THE SPREAD

Unity's Artist-In-Residence Team
Listen with LOVE



Virtual Small Group Sessions • Details on page 15



Working Toward Prayer

Wednesday, March 17 • 7:00 p.m.
Followed by five Tuesday nights:
March 30, April 6, 13, 20, 27

Register: bit.ly/workingtowardprayer

Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs offers this class to help participants summon a quality of attention, a way of being, he calls prayer. Series is limited to 12 participants. This offering is free for pledging members and \$30 for non-pledging friends.

Details on page 10.