

Thresholds

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.

It was easily the widest threshold I have come across in an interior doorway — a beautifully finished piece of Pippy Oak stretching more than half a foot on either side of the door. Sanded smooth as a riverbed stone and varnished like a sacred text written in the script of the tree's grain and punctuated by its large knots.

When I first saw this beautiful threshold into the sanctuary of Common Ground Meditation Center, I approached it with reverent curiosity, shoeless in keeping with sangha customs. Remembering ancient taboos against walking on a threshold, I took as big a step as my legs allowed to stretch across it. Then, I noticed the sangha members entering the room, every one of them stepping right on that threshold as if it were an arboreal doormat specifically meant for the soles of their stocking-clad feet.

Later, I learned the threshold was purposely designed to *require* that you step on it. It was meant to make you notice, I was told, a reminder to pay attention as you enter the sanctuary for meditation and as you leave after meditation is over.

Thresholds, physically and metaphorically, are places of encounter and transition — between inside and outside, the known and unknown, here and there, and then and yet to come. In its literal sense, a threshold is a raised strip at the base of a doorway that keeps the mud or snow and cold from coming inside. Just as I did in the sangha, we typically step over it as we come and go, focusing on one side or the other rather than on the place in between.

Not surprisingly, we often do the same when crossing our metaphorical thresholds, too. We try to step across, not lingering in the uncertainty and chaos

found there. Whether it's a passage we have desired and chosen (graduation; new relationship, baby, or identity; new job, opportunity or capacity), or one wholly unbidden and unwanted (the end of a job, relationship, role or ability, or onset of illness or decline), we often avoid dwelling in the risk and dangers in between.

Thresholds require us to leave something, someone, perhaps even some part of ourselves behind. They are marked by vulnerability, as we face the possibilities of transformation, in our surroundings and often in identity. On the other side, we might be required to do things we've never done before, to face fears we have shunned for years, to discover our limitations as well as new abilities, gifts, and opportunities.

Honoring the risks and challenges present on the threshold, many cultures have stories, rituals, blessings and even deities offering protection and safe passage. In ancient Rome, the god Janus reigned over comings and goings. His image, carved over the gates of Roman cities, showed two faces connected at the back and pointed in opposite directions. With one face looking out from the city gate and the other looking in, Janus promised protection while reminding those passing below to notice what they were leaving and where they were going.

There is no question: we are globally all living in threshold times today. The pandemic has quickly swept away our familiar ways of being, living and doing. The magnitude and variety of our losses and uncertainties are too many to count — including the loss of many familiar rites of passage (graduations and coming of age) that happen in the spring and now must be delayed or reimagined.

It is natural to focus on what we are losing, and equally natural to ask, how long will this last and what will the world be like when we move on? But what might we learn — and what might be possible — if we pause and focus instead on the wide, perhaps frightening but also potent threshold of not knowing? To imagine and discover new ways of being present to our heart's truth and to one another in this in between time? What are the stories, rituals and sacred powers that might offer us protection as we do?

Our congregational life offers us the protection of spiritual practices and covenantal relationships to help us all pause and notice what we are departing from and where we are headed. To linger in the chaos of the unknown, which will be different for each of us, but need not be experienced entirely alone. To feel the threshold beneath the soles of our feet. To learn and to practice what grounds us, even there. To notice new choices when we do. To make use of the chaos and choose wisely when we move on.

The challenges of this threshold time are as daunting as they are unique. But if we can pledge ourselves anew to one another now, the net we make for protection and connection will serve us well beyond this time, into the unknowns of every time to come.

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

Thresholds Theme Resources
Resources for further reflection
are in this month's Chalice Circle
packet at [www.unityunitarian.org/
chalice-circles.html](http://www.unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html).

Just Words



We are living in uncertain times. My last *Just Words* column was for the March newsletter and I wrote about our plans for retirement. I never imagined that our lives would change so quickly. Now I am trying to find ways to not just survive in these challenging times, but find new and unexpected sources of strength and solace. I know the same is true for many of you.

Just the other day I was talking to a good friend and colleague and she said how much she missed the physical proximity of her congregational members and friends. She reflected upon how much she has learned during the pandemic. She has learned that she is a person who appreciates touch much more than she realized. "I am used to a reassuring arm on a shoulder when someone is struggling, or a hand on a arm of someone dying. I don't think of myself as a hugger but I am starved for giving and receiving hugs!" She said that she had just read an article attempting to address this need that so many of us have. "Go out and hug a tree!" was the primary suggestion of the article. She had decided she was going to go out into her neighborhood and hug trees, because she didn't care what her neighbors thought of her. I hated to rain on her parade but I thought she should know so I said, "I'm sorry to say this, but it is the height of tick season and hugging trees right now is not a great idea." I was worried that she would begin to weep, but instead she laughed. She realized I was right and that she should wait to go on her tree hugging walk until later in the season. I was relieved that she laughed. I think she did so because she has faith that someday she will be able to boldly walk in her neighborhood by Lake Nokomis and hug all the trees she wants. She has faith that someday she will be able to hug her parishioners and that she will do so with renewed appreciation and connection.

I am surviving these days because I have faith. Faith in science, in the essential goodness of humanity, in human ingenuity and creative leaps of understanding and consciousness. I also have faith that there is always lessons of creation to lead me to deeper sources of wisdom. I have faith that we are held by a larger love of which we are a part and in true partnership. Some would call this faith in God. Call it whatever you want, but faith is a leaning into the source of life and allowing oneself to be held and behold.

The theme for this month is thresholds. These are not the thresholds I had ever imagined crossing. I had imagined welcoming previous interns back and preparing for a ritual of release of both minister and congregation. I had imagined inviting previous interns and colleagues into our offices to have a chance to pick books they would like to add to their libraries, letting go of beloved books that have guided and informed our ministry. But what one of the lessons that the pandemic has taught me is that I have cloaked myself in an illusion of control and certainty afforded by privilege and a lack of awareness. We are always living with uncertainty and I hope that I have greater appreciation for that reality now. This awareness has made the things of which I can be certain much more precious. I begin with the rising of the sun in the morning and go from there. I open my eyes to see what might be there to steady me. May the things that are certain in your life help you manage these days of such uncertainty.

Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs

The Wheel of Life

In Memoriam

Steve Dahlke
March 26, 2020

Marion Watson
March 28, 2020

John Haley
May 13, 1947– April 13, 2020

In Celebration

Emily Jacqueline Foster-Walters
born one more redeemer
March 22, 2020
to parents
Sarah and Nick Foster-Walters

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MAY SUNDAY SERVICES

Sunday Worship

As of the May *commUNITY* publication date, our building remains closed in response to the Minnesota stay at home 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. Services are being recorded and may be viewed at your convenience following the live stream. Details and links, including access to past services, are available online at www.unityunitarian.org. For information about our Sunday welcome lobby and coffee hour, please see page 7.

May 3: Foote Music Sunday

With the impossibility of Unity's choirs coming together for Unity's annual music Sunday, Director of Music Ministries Ahmed Anzaldúa will offer an intimate solo piano performance. Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs and worship associate Marg Walker explore the role of music in spiritual practice.

May 10: Coming of Age Sunday

Passing through Gates

There are certain gates and threshold moments that none can pass through without being initiated into a deeper intimacy with life. What is it to come of age at a time when we touch the very limits of our human condition, or find ourselves stuck in countless places with their aching possibilities? What signals our strongest aspiration than braving the impossible? Coming of Age Sunday celebrates the signature year-long journey of our ninth grade youth, transitioning from the inherited faith of childhood to the adult journey of faith, and marked by youth sharing their statement of faith (credo) with mentors and family.

May 17: Flower Communion Family Sunday

Our Sure Blossoming

As spring takes hold all around us, we let it into our hearts as we gather for our annual Flower Communion. We will share the story of Norbert Capek, a Czech Unitarian minister who stood up to the Nazi terror by helping others share what beauty they could see in the midst of deep adversity. Please watch for an invitation to participate in a virtual flower ritual.

May 24: To Survive, To Cross Over

On the Sunday before Memorial Day we honor those we've loved and lost to war and pray for peace. This year we will include a collage of voices to honor not only our own but, recognizing that there are no other people's children, all those whose lives have been uprooted by conflict.

May 31: Consider the Radiance

In his poem "The City Limits" A.R. Ammons offers up a praise song for the natural world. The beauty that surrounds us can be a threshold through which we step as we accept the mantle of like beauty in ourselves and in our neighbors. One of the hidden blessings of physical isolation is that staying put and slowing down can really help us notice all the beauty that surrounds us.

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."

May 3: Arthur Foote Music Sunday Fund

Arthur Foote was minister at Unity Church from 1945-1970. Upon his death in 1999, the Arthur Foote Music Fund was created as a permanent endowment to provide an annual music Sunday in his memory. This year, the offering will be used to continue to fund Unity's Foote Music Sunday and to commission a new anthem to mark the occasion when the church reopens for worship.

May 10: Hallman Ministerial Intern Fund

In 2001, Unity Church brought ministerial education to the heart of its concerns by establishing the Hallman Ministerial Internship. Named to honor the Rev. Dr. Laurel Hallman on the 20th anniversary of her ordination into Unitarian Universalist ministry, the internship is intended for candidates with a particular interest in serving large congregations, who demonstrate both high potential for ministry and a deep commitment to spiritual practice. Ministers who were Hallman interns now serve in pivotal roles across our Association and beyond.

May 17: Dream of Wild Health

The mission of Dream of Wild Health is to restore health and well-being in native communities by recovering knowledge of and access to healthful indigenous foods, medicines, and lifeways. This collection will support Garden Warriors, a summer youth program for kids ages 13-18, offering in-depth lessons in native farming, seed saving, and food preservation and preparation. Unity Church member Nancy Heck is a supporter of Dream of Wild Health.

May 24: Veterans for Peace

Veterans for Peace works to increase public awareness of the cost of war; restrain the government from intervening, overtly and covertly, in the internal affairs of other nations; end the arms race; reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons; seek justice for veterans and victims of war; and to abolish war as an instrument of national policy. Unity Church members Barry Riesch, Mike McDonald, and Michael Orange actively participate in the work of Veterans for Peace.

May 31: Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf

The Hallie Q. Brown Community Center, the lighthouse of the Selby-Dale/Rondo community since 1929, operates a food shelf and clothing closet serving families in the neighborhood. H.Q. Brown offers a client-choice model where community members can pick food items they will use instead of being handed a stock bag which may contain items that do not meet their dietary or cultural needs. This collection will support the purchase of food and emergency services.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES/ FINANCE UPDATE



Unanticipated Challenges, Unbelievable Grace

Alex Askew, Trustee

Has it been a month already? Is it still 2020? What day of the week is it?

I don't think I'm alone in feeling slightly lost lately. The disruption of all my routines; isolation from friends, family, and coworkers; and the intimate familiarity I now feel with every nook and cranny in my house are all adding up to a spring that was not like anything I had imagined.

And yet, the flowers are still coming up. The loons are back on the lakes, and the birds outside my window are making sure I'm getting up before 7 AM, even on the weekends (whenever those are). I'm still opening my emails and checking my USPS mailbox, feeling bursts of joy when a familiar name appears. There's construction on the water lines outside my house, and running now only requires a t-shirt, shorts, and a sense of exploration.

My service on the board mirrors these aspects of my life: unanticipated challenges, unbelievable grace. As a member of the transitions subteam, I was part of making hard, unexpected decisions that will impact our community for the next few years. We mourned the changing of our gathering rituals while simultaneously grappled with the necessity of making strategic decisions around the leadership of our congregation. Would we be able to secure the pastoral, prophetic leadership we need, now more than ever, during the co-minister transition timeline as previously envisioned?

The decision to ask our Senior Co-Ministers Janne and Rob Eller-Isaacs to stay on for an extended time was an exercise in all the practices that we hold dear. Holding our congregation and our leaders in careful, deliberate covenant, it was necessary to sacrifice plans and timelines in order to better serve our community. What follows next will be an even larger test of our shared values, as we move forward down a path that we can't envision, a form that will remain formless until we reach it.

While the plans are constantly changing, I know that we're changing with them. We're not the congregation that we were two months ago; we've been altered and found adaptation, remembered old ways to reach out and be there for each other, and even have mastered the ritual of lighting our own chalices on Sunday mornings. We're not lost, we're just starting to find our way. Let's find it together.



Unity Church Finances During the Pandemic

Barbara I. Hubbard, Executive Director

Are you curious about the impact of the pandemic on Unity's finances? Is the staff still working, are they still being paid?

What's happening to the 2020 approved operating and capital budgets?

We all know that the length and breadth of this pandemic is unknown and without either historical data or solid assumptions, it's hard to predict what will happen to the budget as time goes forward. But, right now, Unity Church is okay. We are a mere \$3,955 from our 2020 operating pledge goal of \$1,350,000 and so far, most of us are paying our pledges. Our building income and investment income are taking a hit, and we had to halt our spring fundraiser abruptly. Without programming on-site, budgeted income and expenses are also thrown off.

Staff members have been provided the means to work from home and where possible, duties have been reassigned to allow for meaningful work. A few staff members are coming to the church as necessary to make possible virtual connection through minister's messages and live stream services, take care of program and financial work, and care for our facility. No one on staff has been laid off, and people are being paid at their budgeted hours. We jumped on the opportunity to apply for a Payroll Protection Plan loan through the Small Business Administration, and we were awarded a loan which covers eight weeks of staff compensation and benefits. The loan will be largely forgiven if we maintain staff at our budgeted levels.

We are able to continue with capital projects because construction companies are exempt from the stay at home order. We have installed a new video system in the Sanctuary for live streaming. We're making upgrades to lighting and sound in the Ames Chapel, and hoping to get our leaky roof fixed.

We are hearing from members and friends how important our online presence is during this time of fear and uncertainty. Thank you to each of you who continue to support the church by paying your pledges, by supporting our offering recipients, by making special gifts, and by staying connected through phone calls, Zoom meetings, and virtual services. Please let us know if you are struggling emotionally or financially, so that we might be of support to you.

May kindness and good health prevail!

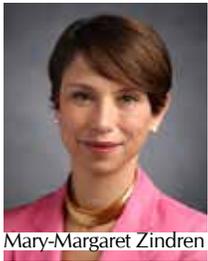
BELOVED COMMUNITY STAFF TEAM

Your Gifts and Your Wounds Are Welcome Here

My First Service at Unity Church

Mary-Margaret Zindren, Beloved Community Communications Team

Beloved Community Staff Team note: As we continue the work of living into our Ends and creating an anti-racist, multicultural spiritual home, we are being called to explore more deeply the important role of culture and the sense of welcome and belonging we create – as individuals and a community – for newcomers. What we experience as welcoming or unwelcoming is informed by cultural identity, and how well we communicate across cultural differences. This month the Beloved Community Staff Team shares Mary-Margaret Zindren's story of what brought her to Unity Church and where she found connection. We know there are many stories that speak to our individual experiences as newcomers. If you are willing to share your story, please email pfeichten@yahoo.com; we would love to hear and learn from you.



Mary-Margaret Zindren

There is a reason why there are Kleenex boxes in the pews at Unity Church. I wasn't the first to need them, and I surely won't be the last.

I learned about Unity Church in a roundabout way from Gary DeCramer, my then professor at the University of Minnesota Humphrey School. He had invited a community activist from India to speak at my graduate seminar. The activist was profound and inspiring. I asked why he was in Minnesota and he mentioned he was invited to speak at Gary's church. That intrigued me. A church that was giving this man a platform seemed like a place I should check out.

I hadn't stepped inside a church for nearly ten years. My mom was Catholic and I attended Catholic schools growing up. My father was somewhere between agnostic and atheist. At a certain point I came to question nearly everything coming from the pulpit. At Catholic services, I bristled at saying words I didn't believe.

So, it was with some trepidation that I arrived at Unity Church. That trepidation was elevated by the fact that I literally couldn't find the door.

This was before the entrance was transformed; there was still a cloister around the church. I must have been late, because there wasn't anyone to

follow. The actual way in didn't look like a door at all — more like a secret entrance on a wall.

Once inside, I was greeted warmly by someone with a "welcome" button on their shirt and directed to where I should go for the service. The church was beautiful. I was grateful I could sight read music and was able to sort of follow along with the opening song. When I sat down, I sat on a Kleenex box.

There was an invitation to greet our neighbors. I was used to the Catholic version, saying "Peace be with you," but in this case people were using their own words, which moved me. There was a swell of noise and you could almost feel the connections growing around you. After the minister reined everyone back in to continue the service, that feeling of connection remained.

And then it happened — the Embracing Meditation. It felt like a calling in for those within and beyond the church walls. The minister said, "Your gifts and your wounds are welcome here."

It felt like these words had been spoken directly to me. The fact was, I was wounded. I had been grappling with PTSD following a trauma and wasn't doing well. It was probably why the idea of returning to a faith community seemed like a good idea for the first time in a decade. I started to cry. And then I remembered there were tissues right there waiting for me.

At the end of the service, I stood in line to thank the ministers. I think I actually hugged them. I went to the Parish Hall and there were donuts. And there was coffee. And there was Gary. He introduced me to people I now consider friends.

Attending services has been hard for me sometimes. It may have to do with that first visit. Hearing "your gifts and your wounds are welcome here" brings me back to that difficult time in my life. But I would never want those words removed from the Embracing Meditation. There is someone out there who, upon attending Unity Church for the first time, may hear those words and feel that they have found a home. We should keep the Kleenex boxes, too.

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 to learn more about the work of the team.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE



Welcome Words

Rev. Lisa Friedman
Minister of Congregational and Community Engagement

This past month, our church community has been deepened and widened in ways that we could never have imagined just a short time ago. To all you who have joined our services, daily messages, and programming online — we are so glad you are with us! Your presence matters and we look forward to strengthening connection with you in these poignant days. Whether you are joining us for the first time from your living room in St. Paul, or outside of Minnesota, or across an ocean, we welcome you to Unity Church and to Unitarian Universalism. Please see below and in these pages some of the ways to get to explore the journey of faith with us. My virtual door is open to you and I would be glad to explore with you. Let me know how I can help. See you in online church!

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 or 651-228-1456 x 107.

Finding Yourself at Unity: A Deeper Inquiry

Finding Yourself at Unity will move to a weekly online one-hour class in the coming weeks. These sessions can be attended in the order that works for you. Topics will include: UU History, Religious Education for Children, Youth, and Adults, Pastoral Care, Q & A with a Minister, Worship & the Liturgical Year, Social Justice & Community Outreach, Membership 101 & Congregational Life, and perhaps even an online Building Tour! Check the website, online calendar, and weekly emails for the class schedule and zoom link or email lisa@unityunitarian.org.

Committing to Unity: Joining Unity Church

Saturday, May 30 • 10:00 a.m. - noon • Will meet online if necessary.

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.

Mentoring at Unity: A Deeper Path to Connection

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.

Wellspring Wednesday

Wellspring Wednesday will continue through the whole month of May either online, or in person, should the stay at home period end. 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, and by checking the online ministry calendar: www.unityunitarian.org/calendar1.html. All are welcome!

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 or team member will contact you.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Welcome Lobby and Coffee Hour

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. The lobby will remain open during the 10:00 a.m. service but all attendees will be muted and the service will not be shown in the virtual lobby. After the service, the lobby stays open for a virtual coffee hour 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 and click on the "Join our email list."

Unity Church Groups: Connecting Virtually

The following groups have committed to meeting online during Minnesota's stay at home order. More information is available online at 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

Men's Breakfast Group meets on Saturday mornings at 8:00 a.m. Contact Tom Zell, tomzell@me.com

Men's Conversation Group meets May 11 and 25, from 7:00-9:00 p.m., to discuss a wide range of topics. Contact Terry McDanel, tmcdanel@gmail.com

Men's Retirement Group: Monday, May 4 and 18, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact Tom Zell, 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

NEW! 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

NEW! 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

Textile Arts Group meets the first and third Wednesdays of each month from 7:15-8:30 p.m. Contact Johanna Stammeier-Toole, johanna21e@gmail.com

Unity Book Club: Second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m. May book: *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens Contact Jack Hawthorne, 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

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.

Open Page Writing Sessions

We are currently offering the monthly guided writing sessions online. To receive instructions and an invitation to participate online or by phone, please sign up at www.unityunitarian.org/literary-ministry.html.



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.

Living on the Threshold Wednesday, May 27

7:00-8:30 p.m.

A threshold, whether physical or emotional, personal or shared, is a place of great vitality and exchange, where new greets old, where outside meets inside, where stranger crosses over to become friend. This session invites you to explore the thresholds in your own life as places of heightened awareness and possibility.

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.

Hey! If it's good enough for Saturday Night Live, it's good enough for Café Unity!

Shelley Butler, Library and Bookstall Team

Who could have ever predicted that we'd be holding the **12th Annual Café Unity Poetry and Music Salon** online? Not me, but we've come to see that Café Unity — the proverbial "show" — must go on. It's one more way to stay connected, to reach out to each other, and to let a little light in, hopefully. We need each other now as much as ever.

So, who is in — who will read, tell stories, sing, and/or play music for our community this year? **To sign up, contact us at library@unityunitarian.org.**

Music is most definitely medicine for the spirit, as everyone around the world and here in St. Paul has proven. *USA Today* published "100 Songs to Help Lift Your Spirits During a Pandemic," and it includes things that you would expect like Bob Marley's "Three Little Birds" (...every little thing's gonna be alright) and "Get Together" (...try to love one another right now), with a few nods to more current songs. In my opinion, since much of the list took me back in time, there were some obvious omissions like Dylan's "Shelter from the Storm," "The Weight," and pretty much anything sung by Aretha.

What songs are holding or lifting you this spring? What would you like to sing or hear at Café Unity? Contact us with suggestions or to sign up to share music.

Something special happens at Café Unity every year; I don't think even a pandemic can change that. Check the Unity Church home page for information on how to attend Café Unity by Zoom on Friday, May 15, 2020, at 7:00 p.m.

See you online!



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Gun Violence Prevention in the Time of Covid-19

Sue Conner
Gun Sense Ministry Team

With the virus and its impact needing to be a primary focus, we don't expect to see action on Minnesota gun violence prevention bills this session

We would, however, like to call attention to the major increase in gun and ammunition purchases during this time of pandemic. This increase is seen all over the country and it began immediately with the first mention of the virus and its implications. There are many articles about this phenomenon available online. This piece in the *Star Tribune* is worth particular mention: "[COVID-19's spread fuels record run on guns in Minnesota.](#)" The Trace, a gun violence prevention news resource, has many articles and links on the issue as well. You can subscribe to their publications at www.thetrace.org.

This strong societal (at least for many members of our society) urge (need?) for tools of violence and aggression, is, we think, rooted in fear and anxiety.

As we work to create gun violence prevention policies we need to also work to mitigate fear and calm anxiety in our society. How do we do that?



Update from the Obama School Ministry Team

Nancy Heege, Obama School Ministry Team

Cub Foods gift cards, contributed by many at Unity Church, are being distributed to families from Barack and Michelle Obama School who are in need of food and other essentials.

Distance learning at the school began April 6, and will continue through the end of the school year, with teachers and the principal finding new ways to reach the scholars and their families.



Thinking ahead: Members and friends of Unity Church have a unique opportunity to make a positive difference in our community. The children and staff of Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School need our help and support. As a classroom volunteer, you can make a difference in two ways: creating a positive relationship with a child helps build the child's confidence and feelings of self-worth, and tutoring helps build the child's academic achievement. In addition, there are other ways to be involved. The teachers and children are enthusiastic about our volunteers and we'd like you to consider joining us.

Here's how to get started in May, for beginning volunteer work in September. Email Karen Abraham at karen2bavol@gmail.com to request the application forms. She 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 by early May will be processed by the school district this summer; forms returned after mid-May 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.

Shopping at Kowalski's on Grand Avenue is another easy way to support the school. Each time you shop, please put your grocery receipts in the Obama School donation box located at the checkout area. The school will get a quarterly check based on the number of receipts in the box.

If you have questions about the work of this group or wish to get involved, please contact Nancy Heege at nancyheege@cs.com.

Generosity Ministry: Nominate the Plate

Each Sunday, seventy percent of our offering is given to community non-profits whose values we share and mission we support.

So how, you might ask, are those organizations chosen? By YOU! As a Unity Church member, you can nominate any organization that you believe would benefit from a no-strings attached donation (typically around \$1,200.)

It's easy! Just fill out the online nomination form at www.unityunitarian.org/generosity-ministry.html. Tell us why your nominee is so wonderful, and how they will use a contribution.

All nominations are considered! However, the team places a special emphasis on smaller non-profits whose annual budget is \$500,000 or less, where \$1,200 will make a substantial difference.

MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Pitter-pattering Questions

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

Rev. KP Hong, Director of Religious Education

Thresholds often feature as a central theme in children's literature, and particularly so in C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. The four Pevensie children — Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy — are evacuated from the bombing of London during the Second World War, and shelter in place in the countryside at an old house of an eccentric professor. Without their usual things to do and places to go, they explore the old house and discover an empty room with a big wardrobe. Once they enter and cross the threshold of the wardrobe, they step into the mysterious world of Narnia and the challenge to determine *who is to be trusted as truth-teller and what vision of reality is trustworthy*, uncertain and wavering between false and true narratives. Yes, there is a lion and a witch to the story, and other threshold themes of winter and spring, division and cooperation, death and new life. But it is the wardrobe-as-threshold through which the children come of age and become something they were not previously. Coats change into trees, mothballs become snow, and the children emerge into a world with new roles and fierce challenges that summon forth an enlargement and ennobling of their being.

Thresholds and liminal moments are the "frontier that distinguishes and opposes two worlds—and at the same time the paradoxical place where those two worlds communicate... vehicles of passage from the one space to the other." (Mircea Eliade) Travelers are, for a time, in both worlds and in neither one fully. The wardrobe stands "betwixt and between" two external worlds which bookend the threshold and reconstitute its contents. The children are not merely children but those to be reconstituted and crowned for a newly emerging world on both sides of the wardrobe. For life in both England and Narnia are awash in relationships infected by fear, enmity, virulent self-interest, and divisions that reveal the ailing character of fundamental moral relations.

As we shelter in place, suspended betwixt and between worlds, our children are surely making their way through the wardrobe and the possible worlds contained. (Peter, at one point, wonders about the existential width and depth of the wardrobe: "I suppose this whole country is in the wardrobe.") But to what worlds and realities worthy of their trust? The wardrobe stands poised with potential to reconstitute the existential-spiritual character of our children's values and commitments, where being "caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny" may finally shake off its rhetorical trappings and become their living, breathing credo statement. And with it, to reimagine and reconstruct the future. And as our children step through, when will we?

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

Religious Education

Staying Connected

Ministers and staff continue to anticipate the shape of church for the coming months, including Religious Education programs. For now, other than Family Sundays and major observances/celebrations, we continue gathering children for virtual sessions, with links sent via email from week to week. Please note: Coming of Age Sunday is scheduled for May 9-10. Senior Bridging for graduating high school youth is postponed, with the hope of being back together in the Sanctuary for the congregational blessing.

You may have already been contacted, but please watch for contact/phone calls from members of Unity's Religious Education Ministry Team who are serving as "connectors" for R.E. families, to check in and ensure everyone has a point of connection to the church as situations continue to change.



Coming of Age Sunday

May 10, 2020

Coming of Age Sunday celebrates the signature year-long journey of our 9th grade youth, transitioning from the inherited faith of childhood to the adult journey of faith, and marked by youth sharing their statement of faith or credo. Services will include a collage of voices, with religious education staff and ministers leading in joyful celebration.

MUSIC MINISTRY



Music Notes

Ahmed Anzaldúa, Director of Music Ministries

Playing hymns for an empty Sanctuary or recording them on an electronic keyboard in my bedroom, trying to hold Unity's choir community together via online meetings, learning how to stream Sunday worship services... this is not how I expected my first year as Director of Music Ministries at Unity Church to go! All the grandiose musical plans I'd put together for my first

Unity Church Easter, Foote Music Sunday, Coming of Age, Flower Communion, and Memorial Day — not to mention the music for Rob and Janne's send-off celebration! — that will now have to wait. Rather than closing with a bang, my first year at Unity Church is sort of tapering off. That's not how this was supposed to happen!

As I come to terms with reality, however, I'm starting to recognize that we are now at an exciting threshold. I've found myself getting to know the people of the congregation much more intimately as we meet each other in our living rooms to check in and go about the business of church and making music (I am also certain that pants have become optional at most of these meetings, although I can't confirm that since we only see each other from the shoulders up). As I live this situation day to day I've had to rethink much of what I already knew about worship music, about music performance, and about the role of a music director. In just a few short weeks I've been forced to learn all sort of new skills and ways of being and communicating. While I'm still grieving for everything we're losing and tremendously afraid of what will come with all this uncertainty, there's also something about this uncertain situation that is filled with possibility and excitement.

I've built my career around bringing large groups of people together and, unfortunately, no one really knows when that can safely start happening again. However, I do know that when it does happen, I will not take it for granted. My first church year at Unity is not ending the way I expected but I did not expect a second year that was so full of possibility and excitement. Now my days are filled with thoughts of the music we will create when we are back together and what that music will sound like as we inflect it with the joy and gratitude of being with each other, as we pour into it our collective experience throughout this crisis. I know it will be magical.



Unity choirs continue meeting — and singing — together via Zoom!

Arthur Foote Music Sunday Sunday, May 3, 2020

10:00 a.m.

Live stream from Unity's Sanctuary

With the impossibility of Unity's choirs coming together for Unity's annual music Sunday, Director of Music Ministries Ahmed Anzaldúa offers instead an intimate solo piano performance. Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs and worship associate Marg Walker explore the role of music in spiritual practice.



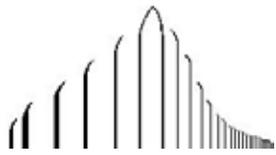
Border CrosSing presents

Mother's Day Community Sing

Saturday, May 9 • 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Border CrosSing will live stream their Mother's Day Community Sing! Learn some of the songs so that you can sing along and then Mariachi Son De Morelos will perform an online serenade for everyone's mom.

And... They're taking requests! If you have a mariachi song that you'd like to dedicate to your mom, send an email to info@bordercrossingmn.org with the name of the song, the perso it is dedicated to, and why it is meaningful.



UNITY CHURCH-UNITARIAN

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Annual Congregational Survey



It's in times like these that we discover just how much it matters to have church that matters. Even when we can't be together in person, we still need to know: how are things with Unity Church? In just a few minutes, you can tell us!

Your Board of Trustees has made a few changes to this year's survey to help us better reflect together on our journey toward making the outcomes of our Ends statements real. You should be able to complete the main part of the survey in five minutes. If you can give us ten minutes more, we have just a few additional questions to understand the depth of our ministry.

On Monday, May 11, you'll receive an email with the survey link. All church members, friends, and high school youth are encouraged to **complete the survey by Tuesday, May 26.**

Questions? Contact Clover Earl at 2clover@gmail.com.
Thank you!

**CAFÉ
UNITY
AT HOME**

**May 15,
2020
7:00 p.m.**