

PILGRIMAGE

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.

I have worn glasses almost as long as I can remember. Still, to my dismay, some days my perception grows dull, and no simple lens will correct it because it is obscured by a cataract of the inner “eye.” I experience a clouding of my heart’s own awareness, a brume shrouding the world’s “under glimmer,” as the poet Basho once put it, leaving me in a place that is colorless and blurred — or sometimes, just so customary that I fail to notice it.

A pilgrimage is a call to unveil and reawaken our inner vision or awareness. Whether it’s a journey to a historical or holy site, like the Hajj that, before the pandemic, brought several million Muslims to Mecca annually; or a tracing of an ancient path walked by many before us, like the *Camino de Santiago*; or a personal quest on an uncharted course; any of the many forms of pilgrimage invite us to observe the world anew. “Peel your eyes,” my mother used to say, as if the rind of routine looking could be pulled back like potato skins so we would notice something important. This is what we do on pilgrimage: we let the scales of familiarity fall away to restore our perception, and to stir our wonder or impel our action.

A pilgrim leaves behind the repose — and the certainty — of home not only to discover new places in the world as any tourist might, but also to explore the foreign terrain carried within. Traveling an external route on the earth, the pilgrim takes an equivalent path in the soul, outer and inner journeys mirroring and illuminating each other and inviting a larger wholeness. “I only went out for a walk,” said naturalist John Muir describing the pilgrimage of a single day’s wilderness hike, “and . . . going out, I found was really going in.”

You don’t have to venture far to take a pilgrimage; but it does require more than the average amble around the block. A pilgrim travels light, leaves comfort behind, climbs the steep path, encounters the stranger, becomes the stranger, greets the unknown, and surrenders itineraries and sometimes even maps. Pilgrims find their way by opening their senses wide and reading the signs all around them; and as they do, their inner awareness sharpens too and they themselves are changed.

Often, it is not just the place visited but the community around us that awakens us on a pilgrimage — the community of our fellow travelers, of others we encounter in the moment and of those who have made the pilgrimage before us or will make it after us. When Malcolm X performed the Hajj in 1964, he was astonished by the equality and kinship of the pilgrims making the Hajj together, sharing meals and drinks, words and silence, movement and rest with royalty and commoners alike, and with people of different races and from many parts of the world. Never before had he experienced such mutual regard and relationship across racial difference and such a profound oneness with them, and it changed him. “I could look into their blue eyes,” he wrote in a letter describing his experience, “and see that they regarded me as the same (Brothers).” He said, it “forced me to ‘re-arrange’ much of [my] thoughts pattern and to toss aside some of my previous conclusions.”

In pilgrimages Unity Church has offered — to Transylvania, Boston, Bolivia, India, Selma and, near to home, B’dote where the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers meet — it is often the group making the pilgrimage together that both sparks and supports the transformative power of the journey. Our conversations with one

another, before, during and after a pilgrimage, help each of us to let the challenges and discoveries of our encounters open new understandings within us, and sometimes new identities as well.

Perhaps we are all pilgrims now on a challenging trail that winds through a pandemic and longterm racial and economic injustices, a pilgrimage made by many before us. The question is how will we travel it now? Are we willing to leave comfort behind, to climb the steep path, to encounter the stranger and become the stranger, to greet the unknown as an invitation to our own transformation and into a world also changed?

As a child, I remember receiving my first pair of eyeglasses and walking to grade school the next day agape with wonder. Astonished by the sharp clarity of the street signs and the faces of my classmates in the distance, I wandered slowly down the sidewalk taking in the great abundance of detail and dimension. Across the street from the school, I paused at the curb agog. I stared in awe at the intricate grid of mortar outlining each brick in a building that had grown familiar to me as only a single blurry block that I approached and entered every morning.

On that morning, my vision was sharpened, and like so many pilgrims whose perception has been cleared, I walked into a world made fresh with crisp and shining patterns emerging everywhere around me. And the world and I, we would never be the same again.

By Karen Hering on behalf of this month's theme team: Andrea LaSonde Anastos, Ahmed Anzaldúa, Drew Danielson, Tom Duke, Ray Hommeyer, KP Hong, Kathy Hurt, and Laura Park (and adapted from an earlier reflection by Karen Hering).

INTERIM REFLECTIONS / WHEEL OF LIFE

Interim Reflections



I recently read about a traditional Celtic spiritual practice called *peregrinatio*, or wandering. The Irish monks who developed this practice would settle into small boats called coracles, and launch themselves in a river or out to sea without sails, oars, paddles, or rudders, with the intention of being completely open to the will of God as that divine will might emerge in whatever currents or winds came along to move the coracle in some direction.

The month of November invites our reflection on the worship theme of pilgrimage, which strikes me as a journeying theme that is quite different from *peregrinatio*. One going on a pilgrimage has a specific destination and often travels holding a specific intention for the journey, though that intention could be broad in scope. Unlike the Irish monks, who sought to keep their hearts and spirits open along with holding the little coracles open, persons on pilgrimage journey with a kind of focus that keeps them from being sidetracked.

Are we making this transitional year in a *peregrinatio* fashion, our church our collective coracle that week by week is opening further to the winds and currents of the future, come what may? Or are we journeying together as people on a pilgrimage, our eyes and spirits focused on the endpoint of the transition when the congregation will call a new settled minister? As we struggle to move into our post-pandemic lives and ways of doing church, are we moving pilgrimage fashion, intent on settling into a new kind of normalcy, or are we wandering, our direction shaped by changing CDC information and our own respective views of risk and safety? Some days I might answer one way, other days another, shifting from pilgrimage to *peregrinatio*, because neither seems to fit entirely.

Both ways of journeying offer meaningful spiritual possibilities — but they invite very different perspectives and may take us to very different conclusions. As we consider the pilgrimage theme throughout November, perhaps we might ask, of ourselves and one another, what sort of journey we are making, and why.

In faith, hope, and love,

Kathy

The Wheel of Life

In Memoriam

Cay Emkovik

September 14, 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. You may also contact Karen Hering, Associate Minister, by email to karen@unityunitarian.org.

Ongoing Pastoral Care Groups

Families Living with Mental Health Challenges: A support group for families living with mental health challenges.

Caregivers Group: Are you a part-time or full-time caretaker of loved ones in your life? Do you need support in order to sustain the care you are giving? Join Pastoral Care Team member Cynthia Orange for an informal support group for caregivers.

Living With Grief Group: A group for people living with grief and loss. All are welcome to come to discuss issues related to the grieving process.

Contact Rev. Karen Hering if you would like to participate in one of these groups.

Pilgrimage Theme Resources

For further reflection on this theme, a variety of resources are listed in this month's Chalice Circle packet available at www.unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html and by request from karen@unityunitarian.org.

Support Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf

Donations are needed to feed families through the holidays!

During September, 234 pounds of food and school supplies was donated by church members and friends to Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf! Thank you!

For November and December the food shelf is in need of holiday basics: boxed dressing, canned yams/sweet potatoes, pumpkin pie filling, canned green beans and corn, cranberry sauce, instant potatoes, and gravy mixes. Let's continue to support the wonderful work of our community food shelf and help bring holiday cheer, and much needed food security, to the community!



SUNDAY SERVICES / OFFERING RECIPIENTS

Join us in-person and online for Sunday services! If you join us in-person, we are asking everyone to wear a mask in the building and to sign in as you enter, in the event we need to contact trace for Covid-19 illness.

November 7: Too Tight a Fit

In-person services at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.

Livestream at 9:00 a.m. only: <https://youtu.be/nRQblvfeUR8>

In order to set out on a pilgrimage, one has to leave most things behind, often carrying only what will fit in a backpack. Often in order to understand our lives more deeply, we have to leave things behind or set aside much that we have been attached to so that our ability to see is clearer, uncluttered. In this service, Rev. Dr. Kathy Hurt, worship associate Rich Lau, and Director of Music Ministries Ahmed Anzaldúa consider what we may need to be prepared to leave behind if we are intent on going on a pilgrimage and being open to the changes the journey may bring.

November 14: A Spiritual Facelift

In-person services at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.

Livestream at 9:00 a.m. only: <https://youtu.be/ZAmfkoyEWEw>

Pilgrimages have traditionally been a key spiritual practice, a journey one makes in order to grow in some way. Just what is it about going on a pilgrimage that enables spiritual growth? Kathy Hurt, worship associate Jen Welsh, and Ahmed Anzaldúa reflect on the nature of pilgrimages as spiritual practices and how they work (or don't work) to foster spiritual growth.

November 21: Change of Mind, Change of Heart

In-person services at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.

Livestream at 9:00 a.m. only: <https://youtu.be/OH6wm36rhKc>

We use these two phrases that reference two different aspects of ourselves to describe how we change, sometimes saying "I changed my mind" and sometimes saying "I had a change of heart." What distinguishes those different sorts of changes, and which kind of change comes at the end of a pilgrimage? On this Family Sunday, Kathy Hurt, worship associate Ray Wiedmeyer, and Ahmed Anzaldúa and the Unity Choir explore the many kinds of mind and heart change that we experience on the journeys we make as people on pilgrimages.

November 28: Pilgrimage in Place

In-person services at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.

Livestream at 9:00 a.m. only: <https://youtu.be/sMkQSpJQ4kU>

A pilgrimage doesn't always mean traveling far from home; but it does require a willingness "to open the door of our ordinary life and walk into another reality," as pilgrimage guide Gil Stafford puts it. Rev. Karen Hering, Ahmed Anzaldúa, and worship associate Merrill Aldrich will ask what does it mean to make a pilgrimage in place? In a world rapidly changing around us, how might we bring a pilgrim's awareness to the ground beneath our feet?

Thirty percent of our Sunday offering supports the Community Outreach Ministry at Unity Church and seventy percent is given to a community non-profit recipient. Donations are gratefully accepted online at <https://bit.ly/sundayoffering>.

November 7: Sarah's... an Oasis for Women

Sarah's... an Oasis for Women is a home dedicated to the safety and dignity of a diverse community of women who have survived violence, abuse, torture, war, discrimination, and trauma. The residents of Sarah's begin new and productive lives through programs that build self-esteem, self-sufficiency, confidence, determination, and community. Sarah's connects its residents to social services, education opportunities, job preparedness training, and medical care. Since its founding in 1996, more than 600 women have called Sarah's home. www.sarahsoasis.org

November 14: Protect Minnesota

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

November 21: Partner Church Ministry

Unitarianism is alive and well in Transylvania, Romania, where it has been an active faith for more than 450 years. Unity Church has had a partnership with the Unitarian Church in the village of Homorodszentpeter for more than two decades. The Partner Church Ministry uses this annual offering to subsidize travel expenses for church members and members of our partner church community in Homorodszentpeter, Transylvania, so that our relationships continue to grow.

November 28: Frogtown Radio, WFNU

WFNU is a volunteer-run radio station airing weekly shows that range from music of all genres to arts, politics on both sides of the spectrum, call in shows produced by youth, Black Lives Matter and Asian storytelling, conflict resolution, recovery, and more. Its focus is hyper-local allowing it to tap into local talent and engage its listener base in ways larger stations cannot, providing a space for community voices, languages, and ideas. This collection will help pay for software and equipment costs and training for local volunteers eager to produce their own shows. Unity's Patricia Ohmans, a Frogtown resident, is a supporter of WFNU. www.wfnu.org

Nominate an organization to receive our Sunday offering: <https://www.unityunitarian.org/sunday-offering.html>.



Safe Space to Brave Space

Clover Earl, Board Chair

“The point of a pilgrimage is to improve yourself by enduring and overcoming difficulties. In other words, if the journey you have chosen is indeed a pilgrimage, a soulful journey, it will be rigorous.” — Phil Cousineau, author of *The Art of Pilgrimage*

On Sunday, October 10, Interim Minister Kathy Hurt, at the start of her sermon, “Going to Extremes,” invited us to consider times when we may have gone too far; been too extreme such that an action taken left us vulnerable to judgment, if not overt criticism. She ended with a challenge that we reflect on times when, as an individual, we might have felt tentative and even held back, despite feeling moved to take a stand about something that feels “holy” urgent.

I remember the first time I heard the words “brave space” spoken from the pulpit. Our then Intern Arif Mamdani used the phrase in a sermon, and I thought maybe I had misheard him. After the service I tracked him down in Parish Hall to express my concern that one of the things I most treasured about my engagement here at Unity might be at risk, that is my “safe space.” I am unable to recall the words he used to try and comfort me, but I do remember that I was not sold on this idea of brave space as something I could embrace.

Now here we are, already a quarter of the way through our interim year and much is being asked of us as we make our way through this momentous period in the life of the church. The Ministerial Search Team has surveyed us, listened to us, offered us the Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop, all of which supports the work of calling the right settled minister for our church. We are being asked to prepare ourselves to let go of things we hold dear; to make way for the unknown. There is an expectation that the congregation engage in the challenging and often uncomfortable work of self-examination about what it means to live an antiracist life.

It has taken time and a commitment for me to understand that in a world as broken as ours, that my comfort — my preference to feel “safe” — is deeply embedded in my white privilege. My friend Jane (a white woman) came to visit from her home in Oakland, CA, a few years ago, and she shared a story when I picked her up at the airport. She had been waiting at the curb when a police car with its lights flashing and sirens blaring came careening around the corner. Jane was standing next to a Black woman who looked utterly terrified, her eyes darted around, perhaps looking for a place to find safety. In that moment, Jane recognized her own white privilege.

This is just one of many experiences I have had over the last few years that have propelled me to step fully into courageous action (one of Unity’s values); to truly embrace what it means to say “yes” to showing up for those who have been oppressed by white dominant culture for far too long.

This month’s theme is pilgrimage. A decades long friend of mine named Danette (another white woman) and I had been in conversation for quite a while about the need we felt to *do something* about systemic racism. George Floyd’s murder was what it took to propel us forward and commit to an unexpected action: “Hey, White People, We Have Work To Do!” a pilgrimage planned for May 28, 2022, from the Minnesota State Capitol to George Floyd Square, was born. We know that there are exciting possibilities as well as potential pitfalls that await us as two white women entering the public realm to discuss issues of race.

What is being born during this time of moving from safe to brave space here at Unity Church is something vitally important for all of us to reflect upon.

And... Mark your calendar for the Annual Meeting of the Congregation on Saturday, November 20, at 10:00 a.m. Details to follow.

News from the MST

Jake Rueter, on behalf of the

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

Friends, I’m writing this with a deep sense of gratitude. Over the last couple of months the Ministerial Search Team (MST) have asked you to dig deep, to spend probably more time than you wanted to with SurveyMonkey, and to join with fellow members of our congregation in listening sessions and focus groups to share your hopes and anxieties for our shared future. You have met this call with enthusiasm and in doing so are helping us to live into the sixth point of the MST’s covenant:

We will safeguard the sacred trust of our congregation by informing as transparently as possible, listening with an open heart, and engaging broadly.

We have listened to each other with open hearts and we certainly hope that the opportunities to complete the survey or participate in a listening session or focus group have felt attainable. Each of our conversations, whether virtual or in person, have renewed the energy we will need as the search process continues into its next phases.

We have tried our best to engage this community broadly, and we are now shifting into the third component in this line of our covenant — to inform as transparently as possible. As a team we are working diligently, and with care, to unpack what you have graciously shared with us. The results of the survey, listening sessions, and focus groups will be the focus of an upcoming retreat for the MST in November. At this retreat we will look for common themes and guidance from the congregation for the search as it continues. A summary of this work will be shared at the annual congregational meeting on November 20 and made available online at that time. We hope to see you then!

SoulWork: Bridging Faith Formation and Antiracism

Pauline Eichten and Laura Park, Beloved Community Staff Team

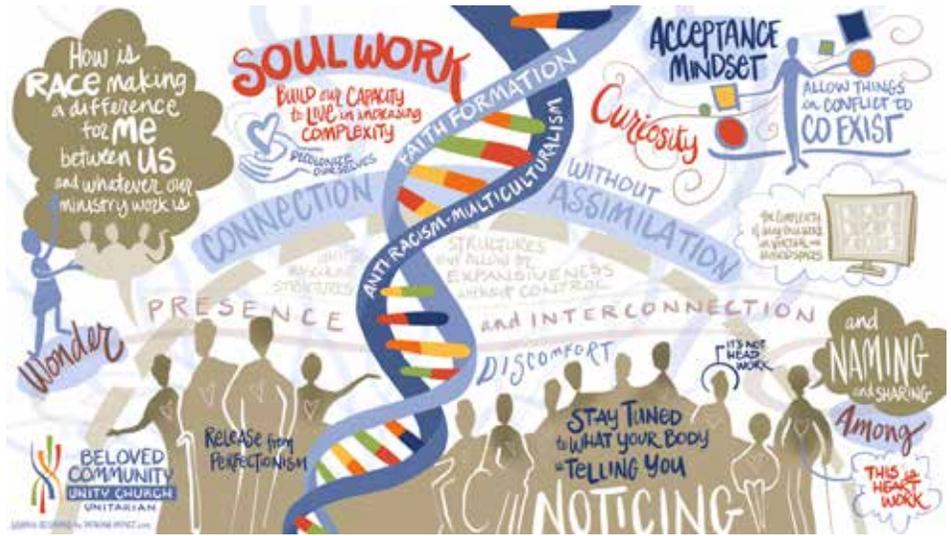


How do faith formation and our work of antiracism and multiculturalism intersect? How do we build practices that bridge between the two? The SoulWork gathering on September 25 offered a double helix model to help participants consider those questions. You'll be hearing more in the weeks to come about how to use this model in your groups and ministry teams, but for now, here are a few things that came out of the SoulWork session.

The image at right was created in real time during the conversation between Rev. KP Hong and Alfonso Wenker of Team Dynamics that opened the session — how do the practices of faith formation and antiracism/multiculturalism interact and bond together? Take some time to let your eye wander among these amazing images and ideas.

Two particularly interesting ideas from a conversation between KP and Alfonso:

- **Co-Evolution and Relationship:** Co-evolution in biology refers to the way species influence each other in relationship. For example, some flowers have evolved particular colors to attract certain types of hummingbirds. As humans we too evolve in “relationships of mutual transformation,” writes adrienne maree brown. A faith community is one place where we can develop and strengthen these relationships.
- **Practice:** We develop our intercultural capacity through practice. Alfonso noted that our Ends invite us into a practice of “noticing.” We are all actors inside a racialized system and need to be mindful of race at all times. “We are either deconstructing the hierarchy of human value or we’re reinforcing it,” said Alfonso. Practice helps us build the capacity and complexity to achieve our goal of dismantling dominant culture. We’ll share videos in the weeks ahead with these and many other key ideas.



The model that shows the intersection of faith formation and antiracism/multicultural work is a basic double helix structure (below). Ready to start your work of building practice on both sides of this helix? Email Laura Park laura@unityunitarian.org for a version that will structure that work for you.

The Beloved Community Staff Team looks forward to working with groups and ministry teams to build practice on both sides of the double helix in the weeks ahead.

Credit: Graphic recording by Angelique McAlpine of Drawing Impact. Visit their website: www.drawingimpact.com.

Double Helix Model of Faith Formation and Antiracism



WELCOME NEWCOMERS / WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



Welcome Words

Laura Park, Acting Director of Membership and Hospitality

What could it mean to begin the journey into this religious community with pilgrim eyes? Where might the pilgrim's open curiosity and eagerness for discovery lead us? What if we entered hoping to

be transformed, understanding that something in us might be left behind in the process? What would we do with the experiences of religious community we carry in with us, both positive and negative? What commitments, what sacrifices might we find we're willing to make for the journey?

These are not questions with "right" answers, but questions Unity Church helps people explore about their spiritual lives. Ours is a living, breathing faith tradition and the journey with us can lead to unexpected destinations, even though, in the words of David Whyte, "you were more marvelous in that simple wish to find a way than the gilded roofs of any destination you could reach."

However you're thinking about your beginnings at Unity Church, however you want your journey to start, I'm here to help answer your questions about congregational life and the pathways you might explore to know the church better and deepen your spiritual life. Contact me at laura@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x110. I look forward to getting to know you!

Pathway to Membership Classes

Explore a deeper connection to Unity Church and the commitments and opportunities of membership.

Finding Yourself at Unity

Sundays • 10:15-11:15 a.m. • Gannett Room

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. Weekly church emails include the class topic or email laura@unityunitarian.org to receive reminders. November offerings:

- November 7: Worship and Liturgical Year
- November 14: Religious Education for Children, Youth, and Adults
- November 21: Membership 101
- November 28: Building Tour

Committing to Unity

Tuesday, January 11, 2022 • 7:00 p.m.

This session, for people ready to become members, explores the deeper meanings and expectations of membership and shared ministry. The class concludes with a ceremony as participants sign the membership book and officially join the church! Contact Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x110 to participate.

John Simmelink found at Unity Church the faith community he has longed for providing fellowship, compassion/love and freedom from a creed — a sanctuary! He has been married to Kathy 47 years. They have three children and six grandchildren.

John is a retired teacher/coach, a regular with Habitat, and enjoys biking, kayaking, woodworking, and baking.

After searching for an inclusive faith, **Kathy Simmelink** is delighted to join Unity Church. The emphasis on worship, beloved community, creativity, spiritual practice, and social justice all call to her heart. Kathy is a retired nursing instructor. She enjoys volunteering, kayaking, biking, quilting, and being a grandma. She lives in Fridley with her husband, John.



Patsy Egan is a life-long Unitarian Universalist. After moving from the suburbs to St. Paul a few years ago, she is excited to call Unity Church her new spiritual home. Patsy works in the field of adult education at Hamline University and is a single mother to two children, ages 16 and 19.



Pamela McInnes is a science teacher to students who are learning English. Tennis, traveling, and cooking are some of the activities she enjoys. In addition, she spends a lot of time working for peace and justice for people living in Palestine and Israel.



Nancy and Paul Kerestes are excited to be joining this faith community where they have felt very welcomed. After a time of "drifting" they feel they have landed in safe harbor where future endeavors can be launched. Nancy and Paul live near Hastings where they raised three children. They enjoy time with their two grandsons, gardening, biking, and traveling whenever possible.



Mary Ashmore is thrilled to be back at Unity Church after spending 20+ years in Chicago. Coming back has felt like coming home. Despite Covid-19, she has been taking advantage of many programs and is looking forward to increased involvement.



ART TEAM / COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

November Parish Hall Artist: Jeanne Ross

Jeanne Ross grew up in the Macalester-Groveland neighborhood and now lives in the Highwood Hills area of Saint Paul.

She worked at 3M as a designer and eventually in Software Engineering. She also trained at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design.

Ross has a small business and makes hand made products. She describes painting in many forms as her highest skill. She describes her artwork this way, "When I start to paint, I hope to have the ability to paint a picture so that others can see the beauty that I see. It might be color, symmetry, reflection, subtlety, light, or drama. Every work is an exercise for me because I am working to develop the skills that lead to mastery. Sometimes the painting insists on being what it wants to be in spite of what I do. When a painting is done, I am always in awe that something new exists that did not exist before."

Many of her captivating paintings depict familiar scenes and moods of urban settings in St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Honoring Water Protectors

Photo and Story Exhibit in the Elliot Wing by John Kaul

John Kaul became aware of efforts by Indigenous peoples to protect the accessible Earth's fresh water, to warn us of the consequences of exploitation of the Earth's resources. **His inspiration came from two indigenous women:**

Sharon Day, Executive Director of The Indigenous Peoples Taskforce and leader of the Nibi Walk movement, a spiritual effort. She organizes walks along major and many minor North American rivers. She says, "each step is a prayer." Her life's work of serving others has been done with optimism and only with love.

Tania Aubid, a human fireball, believes in direct action and has been deeply involved in pipeline protests. She and others put their lives on the line through civil disobedience to block progress on pipelines through Native Land.

Tania's fire comes from her legitimate outrage at the abrogation of treaties, broken in the past and today. She believes, "There are two sets of laws in the United States. Laws protecting white Americans which are honored and enforced and laws protecting people of color which are ignored."

The twenty portraits in this exhibition show protectors and their stories.

Photographer John Kaul is well known in Minnesota government circles where his many associations go back years due to his work as political staff, lobbyist, and government relations. He established a photography avocation including candid photos of political leaders and others. He has created documentaries on the Mississippi National Park and St. Croix River and co-produced "Girl from Birch Creek" featured on Twin Cities Public Television.



Changes Proposed for Obama School

Obama School Outreach Ministry Team

Recently, we've learned about a new proposal which would affect the future of Obama Elementary School. Saint Paul Public Schools has been engaged in a city-wide planning process called Envision SPPS. The proposal is broad and complex and would affect nine percent of the children currently enrolled. Due to declining enrollment, a total of eight schools in Saint Paul will be closing, with some programs merging, combining, or moving. The current school buildings could house 8,000 more students than are now enrolled. This is not sustainable and has led to smaller schools being unable to provide full-service programming and staffing for their students.

If Envision SPPS is approved by the School Board at a meeting scheduled for November 16, a major change would be coming for Obama Elementary. The school would close temporarily next June and remain closed while renovations are taking place. When those are complete, two current Montessori elementary schools (JJ Hill and Cherokee Heights) would merge and move into the east tower and a new middle school would be opened in the west tower. The school's name would remain — Obama Montessori Elementary and Obama Middle School. The SPPS administration said that retaining the school's name is a reflection of their commitment to Saint Paul's diverse population.

For years our volunteers have been working in support of the scholars and staff at Obama Elementary. We've formed a good working relationship with the school, and we will be sorry to lose the friends we've made there. (When a school closes, staff are invited to apply for positions elsewhere in the system.) If the proposal passes, we will be doing what we can to support the school through this transitional year and look forward to a new future serving many more students.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE / FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

Crossing and Blessing Our Thresholds 2022 Series Open for Registration

We are all living in threshold times, on the cusp of significant changes nationally, globally and environmentally. If this wasn't abundantly clear before, the pandemic and widespread uprisings over centuries-old racial injustices have underscored the truth of this in the past year and a half.

For some of us, however, these large-scale changes are compounded by personal thresholds (some caused by the pandemic and uprisings, others not). These include changes in our relationships, work, home, roles, identity or abilities creating a significant turning point in our lives and bringing heightened awareness as well as both risk and possibility. Whether we've chosen these changes or not, they are places of great vitality and exchange, where new greets old and the familiar gives way to the unknown.

If this describes your own life now, you are invited to join the 2022 Thresholds series, a facilitated small group inviting participants to explore the changes occurring in their personal lives with the support and company of others on their own thresholds. (NOTE: Group size is limited; registration is required.)

In a supportive small group facilitated by Rev. Karen Hering, we'll use conversation, guided writing, and a variety of creative activities both playful and serious, as we consider the meaning, risks and possibilities present on the cusp of change.

"The series helped me let go of fear and realize that moving forward meant leaving some things behind," said Pam Sheen of her Thresholds experience. "The group process is perfect for threshold crossing, a 'safety net' of like-spirited individuals."

Lisa Burke, another participant said, "We each had a threshold we identified, and we each came to the group wanting to do work around them, and did. But who could have imagined how much the world would change even as we walked this path together?! I love the idea of our future selves beckoning us and giving us the courage to keep moving forward."

The group meets in person, following Covid-19 protocols for masking or other precautions, on four Saturdays, January 8–February 26, and participants are asked to commit to attending all four sessions. (If Covid-19 protocols no longer permit in-person meetings, we will shift online, with the length of meetings shortened. The dates include a longer first session, January 8, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. (lunch provided), and three additional Saturday mornings, 9:00 a.m.-noon: January 22, February 12 and 26). At the end of the series, on Sunday, February 27, the group will be blessed by the congregation in worship, honoring the role of community in giving us all safe passage across the many thresholds of our lives.

The series is free to church members; a fee of \$100 will be charged nonmembers, who are registered on a space available basis. Register early to reserve your place: www.unityunitarian.org/thresholds.html. Questions? E-mail Karen Hering at karen@unityunitarian.org.

Fellowship Group Meetings

Please contact the person listed for information about meeting locations. For more conversation about getting connected at Unity Church, contact Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org.

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

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

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

Families Living with Mental Health Challenges meets the first Saturday of each month, 9:30-11:30 a.m. Contact: Karen Hering, karen@unityunitarian.org

Five Animal Kung Fu meets Saturdays, 11:00 a.m.-noon. Contact Barney Kujawski, barney.kujawski@gmail.com

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

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

Men's Coffee Group meets every other Wednesday, November 3 and 17, at 10:00 a.m. for light-hearted conversation. Contact Tom Zell, tomzell@me.com

Men's Conversation Group meets Mondays, November 7, 15, 29, 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, November 8 and 22, 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 meets Wednesdays, 6:00-7:00 p.m. Contact Dayna Kennedy, daynamelissa@icloud.com

Textile Arts Group meets every other Wednesday, November 3 and 17, from 7:00-8:30 p.m. Bring your knitting, embroidery, etc. Contact Johanna Stammeier-Toole, johanna2le@gmail.com

Unity Book Club meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m. Contact Jack Hawthorne, jack.hawthorne@centurylink.net. Upcoming discussions include: November 9: *Main Street* by Sinclair Lewis

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

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

WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

In-person multi-generational Wellspring Wednesday chapel is now held 6:00-6:30 p.m. each week in the Ames Chapel. Wellspring Wednesday programming, including opportunities for fellowship, learning, and spiritual deepening, are offered online. Unless otherwise noted, you can use the registration link right up until the program starts to participate. There are no programs on November 24 due to the Thanksgiving holiday. Please join us – and invite a friend!

November 3 • 7:00-8:30 PM

Pilgrimage to Transylvania: Visit the Unitarian Homeland, Past and Future

Register: <https://bit.ly/NovPartnerChurch>

Unitarianism is alive and well in Transylvania, Romania, where it has been an active faith for more than 450 years. Unity Church has had a partnership with the Unitarian Church in the village of Homorodszentpeter for more than two decades. Unity pilgrims who have visited the village in Transylvania will share stories and photos of past visits, and those interested in a future pilgrimage are invited to start dreaming of travel in summer 2023. Youth and families especially encouraged to consider this journey! Email unitypartnerchurch@gmail.com with questions.

Open Page: Writing as Pilgrimage into the Unknown

Register: <https://bit.ly/NovOpenPage>

It has been said that a pilgrimage is “a transformative journey to a sacred center.” This online guided writing session explores the inner and outer aspects of pilgrimage, in the world and on the page, as well as the new navigational skills often discovered on a pilgrimage. Log on with something to write with and on; Open Page leader Rev. Karen Hering will provide the rest.

Designing Your Faith at Unity • Information Session

Register: <https://bit.ly/DesignFaithSeries>

Come learn about Designing Your Faith at Unity, a five-part exploration into your personal faith using the human-centered approach of design thinking. This 90-minute information session is about the course in which participants take cues from the world of innovation and design to answer how they might more fully live into their faith values, including the call to be antiracist. The course will run on Monday evenings from 7:00-9:00 p.m., November 15, 22, 29, and December 6 and 13. If you are unable to make the info session and would like more information, please contact Barney Kujawski at barney.kujawski@gmail.com.

November 10 • 7:00-8:30 PM

A Spiritual Practice to Feed Your Soul: Lectio Divina

Register: <https://bit.ly/Lectio21-22>

Following a centuries-old Benedictine spiritual practice of contemplative reading, meet online to share in Lectio Divina. Led by Shelley Butler, this invitation to receive the wisdom and gifts of poetry engages the group in hearing a particular poem read aloud multiple times, listening for “what is found there.” Rather than analyzing the poem, group members lift up what they heard and how the poem spoke to them. Drop-in attendance is welcome.

Pilgrimage: May 2022 • Walk the Walk!

Register: <https://bit.ly/ARPilgrim>

At what moment did *you* know that there must be something more you can do in the name of living an antiracist life? Join Clover Earl and Danette McCarthy as they share their stories of commitment in establishing a pilgrimage route from the Minnesota State Capitol to George Floyd Square. Each will reflect upon past pilgrimage experiences, both formal and informal, and together they will create space for dialogue about the possibilities and pitfalls of navigating the public exploration of systemic racism.

November 17 • 7:00-8:30 PM

Giving Is Receiving presented by Mano A Mano

Register: <https://bit.ly/ManoAManoNov>

People who go to Bolivia with Mano a Mano often go more than once, and usually come back committed to doing volunteer work at Mano a Mano headquarters in St. Paul. In this session you will hear tales of the Bolivian experience that Unity Church members of different ages treasure, and why they remain devoted to Mano a Mano. We tie the experiences with Mano a Mano to Unity’s 6th principle: the goal of world community, with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

Antiracism Literacy Partners: A Next Right Action

Register: <https://bit.ly/ALP17nov21>

What does it take to be racially literate and engaged in antiracism in a day-to-day way? Where do we find resources and support in our ongoing learning about systemic racism and the work of dismantling it? Whether you attended previous sessions or are just checking it out now, this program is an easy entry into finding antiracism books, podcasts, and videos, as well as discussion partners for talking about them. Come to choose a resource, sign up for a buddy or small group, and receive discussion guidelines. This program is part of Unity's Finding Our Next Right Action efforts. Questions? Contact Becky Gonzalez-Campoy beckygc83@gmail.com.

December 1 • 7:00-8:30 PM

Honoring Water Protectors In-Person • Sanctuary

Photographer John Kaul (see page 7), along with Water Protectors Sharon Day and Tania Aubid, will discuss the ongoing efforts to protect the waters of North America. Particular attention will be given to the protests against the Dakota Access Line at Standing Rock and Line 3 in Minnesota. Kaul’s photo exhibit in the Elliot Wing documents these efforts and will be highlighted during the program.



The Mysterious Process of Publishing an Arts Journal (not really)

Shelley Butler and Marcia Franklin, co-editors of *Cairns*

We're putting to bed the 2021 issue of *Cairns: The Unity Church Journal of the Arts*, a project of the Library-Bookstall Team. As of now, we've published over 1300 pages of art and text from over 200 writers and artists that run the gamut from ministers to first-time writers and artists to professionals. This is the beauty of it: we approach each contributor equally, not requiring prior experience, nor even asking because everyone has something to say, a story to tell in art or in words.

We're not perfect by a long shot, but our well-honed system helps us do our best. We read and discuss each submission before selecting pieces for publication. We ask: Does the art speak to us in some way? Do we have a true-to-life photograph and strong image? Is the text clear? Will the reader understand the writer's intention? Often this means suggesting some changes, which we offer carefully and thoughtfully with the intention of helping the work shine as brightly as possible because we know that people pour their hearts into what they share.

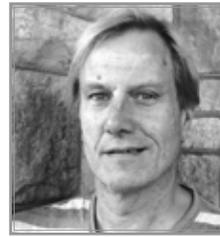
Always, we consider: is the piece in keeping with the mission, ends, and values of Unity Church? We don't shy away from controversial topics, but every now and then, we have questions and ask for a ministerial consult. Once even the ministers disagreed about whether to publish something. Ultimately, the responsibility for the content in *Cairns* is ours.

At Unity, we value integrity, service, and joy, which describes our approach to *Cairns*. Our personal integrity helps us guard the integrity of the publication. Hundreds of service hours go into each issue. And we decided long ago that if any one person was not approaching this work with joy, then something needed to be addressed. We hope our love for this ministry comes across in what you see in each issue.

Coming December 2021: *Cairns* "Lucky 13." You submitted. We published. Now get ready to be enriched.

New in the Justice Database

"Don't Call the Police: Community Based Alternatives to Police in Your Community" is an online directory of local resources in cities across the country that can be called upon for help as alternatives to calling the police or 911. Learn more: <https://bit.ly/JusticeData>.



Boston: A Unitarian Universalist Pilgrimage

Drew Danielson, Coordinator of Youth and Campus Ministries

By the time you are reading this, I and most of, if not all 18 youth and four chaperones will have returned from

Unity's high school Boston pilgrimage in late October. That "most" part is my oft-repeated joke to parents and kids that we hardly ever lose anyone. OK, probably not all that hilarious but I keep saying it because it reminds me that many of us feel like part of us gets left in Boston — that we sense some significant part of who we are remains rooted in that New England Unitarian Universalist homeland.

None of this talk of pilgrimage and roots is ever the reason Tower Club kids look forward to the annual Boston trip. It's a trip, an adventure shared with a group of friends, and we might get lobster! A fall weekend in New England! None of them are thinking about going on pilgrimage, being "pilgrims." But in a couple of pre-Boston gatherings, when asked, several of them with older siblings who had gone previously did admit those siblings did say "it was life changing, transformative." And though none of them could recall why their siblings said that, it was intriguing at least.

"What makes it a pilgrimage?" I asked. Mostly blank stares. But then some offered thoughts...

"It's done as a group. It's to a historic, important locale. It is religious or spiritual in nature. It's a journey to the beginning." Those are all true, and I don't have a more academic or correct or better definition. It's a good place to start.

I think that by the time we get on that plane, the juniors and seniors this year, and in past years, know they are doing this while looking for something, and not just great time. They've been alerted to the need for "pilgrim eyes" which I again don't have a great definition for beyond, "wide open, receptive, eagerly looking, observing, taking in."

This year's group shared what they were possibly hoping to find on the trip. Many said they loved history and learning about early Unitarians would be edifying. Others said they wanted to get to know and bond with this set of peers, and that they sensed being UU kids might mean something really significant in coming years.

I know they look at me with both skepticism and hope when I say yes. And, we are going to the source, looking for how we plug in to this thing that is bigger and greater than us but absolutely dependent on us. I tell them it is a trip to the "well" and we are seeking nothing less than life affirming inspiration, an influx of the divine, an unbreakable connection to awesome energy. We might find our purpose and our moral convictions.

Just that. And Lobstah.

MUSIC MINISTRY



Music Notes

Ahmed Anzaldúa, Director of Music Ministries

A piano has 88 strings, each of them tuned to a particular musical note. Each string has a hammer assigned to it; when you press a piano key, a hammer hits its string, making it ring. Each string also has a damper, a felt-lined piece of wood that stops the string from vibrating. The dampers are always resting on the strings, until you press the piano key. This lifts the damper off of the string, allowing it to ring after it is struck by the hammer. The right-side pedal on the piano, the “damper pedal,” lifts all the dampers at once, allowing the strings to vibrate freely.

I fell in love with the piano because of the damper pedal. In my mind, the damper pedal converted the piano from a sort of “music typewriter” to something mysterious, magical. Alive. An open string doesn’t just vibrate when you hit it with a hammer, it also vibrates when its neighboring strings ring. It resonates with its surrounding environment. If you play a single note while pressing the damper pedal, every other string in the piano vibrates in sympathy. If a car drives by the window while you’re practicing, and you’re holding down the damper pedal, you will hear and feel the open strings of the piano vibrating in response. If you speak or sing, the open strings in the piano will vibrate and echo your voice.

One of the aspects of performing that I love is that it makes me feel that I am more in tune and connected with the world and with the people around me. This is especially when I conduct or play with a group of singers. These days, though, that connection is pretty weak. In fact, I feel like a dampened piano string. When the hammer strikes, the damper comes off and I play my note, but as soon as it is done, the damper drops on the string again... might as well binge another TV show, bake something else, scroll social media and get angry at the world... The experience of singing and making music would usually continue to resonate with me well after we were finished performing or rehearsing. However, removed for so long from its essential element of sharing physical space with others, that resonance is hard to access. When the performance ends, it feels much too easy to just shrug and move on to something comfortable. I know I’m not the only one that’s feeling this way.

I’m coming to realize that after a year and a half, the damper is pretty stuck on the string. In the last few months of gradually returning to in-person performing and rehearsing, I’ve felt the damper come off only for a few minutes at a time, often in the middle of a rehearsal with other musicians... a chord balanced just right, a beautifully-shaped musical phrase, a groove that is right in the pocket: the sorts of magical things that only happen when musicians are in tune with each other and that are nearly impossible to pull off virtually. When it happens, following that moment of sudden inspiration where you can’t help but vibrate in response, I’m also overwhelmed by gratitude for my friends and colleagues.

For me, this journey into making music together again in a pandemic world will involve remembering what it feels like to be an open string. I need to figure out how to access that damper pedal again. Do I call the piano technician and ask for expert help? Do I clean the mechanism and just give it some time to re-adjust? Do I stick a screwdriver in there and try to jam it open? Do I accept that it’s just not going to be the same going forward? ... we’ll find out. What I do know is that, for me, that return journey is going to be a lot slower and more complicated than I ever expected.

Make Music with Unity's Music Ministry

Email ahmed@unityunitarian.org to get connected.

Unity Choir is a large choral ensemble (typically between 60 and 80 voices) and is the strong component on which Unity's choral program is built; a vital and energetic presence in our community. Unity Choir rehearses Thursdays, from 7:30 to 9:15 p.m.

Women's Ensemble is a continually growing and evolving group. While this group emerged and continues to function as a space that supports and empowers women, all soprano and alto singers are encouraged to apply for Unity's Women's Ensemble, including transfeminine, transmasculine, and non-binary as well as cis male sopranos and altos. Women's Ensemble rehearses Sundays, from 10:15 to 10:50 a.m.

Unity Singers is our auditioned, chamber choral ensemble (typically between 20 and 28 voices). Each singer's involvement is built on a passion for singing and for ministry through music. Unity Singers rehearses Tuesdays, from 7:30 to 9:15 p.m. Membership in Unity Singers requires a yearly audition, scheduled individually with the director.

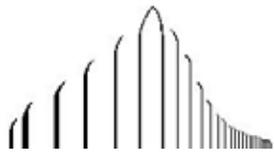
Unity's Children's Choir, led by Kathleen Radspinner, is a vibrant group of singers comprised of children in grades 1-5. The choir rehearses Sundays, from 10:15-10:55 a.m.

Unity's Youth Choir, led by Laura Potratz, is for youth in grades 6-9. Rehearsals take place Sundays, from 10:15-10:55 a.m., in the lower level Music Room.

Musicians are needed for Wellspring Wednesday chapel services!

Contribute two to six minutes of music to our multigenerational chapel services. Interested?

Complete the online form: forms.gle/XzbVDqfnMjtgXywF6.



UNITY CHURCH-UNITARIAN

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CALL TO MEETING Annual Meeting of the Congregation

Saturday, November 20, 2021 • 10:00 a.m.

Unity Church will hold its Annual Meeting of the Congregation on Saturday, November 20, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. Please watch for details about how to participate (in-person and online).

The annual meeting packet, including an agenda, will be sent by email to eligible voting members in early November. All are welcome to attend; only eligible voting members can vote. Eligible voting members include those who have signed the membership book and have made an identifiable pledge in the current or upcoming year and made a payment on that pledge. If you wish to become a voting member before the annual meeting, please contact Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org to arrange a private ceremony.

Go Solar in 2022

Last month, the nonprofit organization Solar United Neighbors launched the second Twin Cities Area Solar Co-op in collaboration Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light and other community partners. A solar co-op provides homeowners and small businesses with one-on-one support and group purchasing power to install solar. Membership is free and there is no obligation to go solar. Learn more and sign-up for the solar co-op at: <https://bit.ly/solarcoop22>.



Join Unity's Act for the Earth Team and Solar United Neighbors for the Minnesota Solar 101 Co-op Information Session on Thursday, November 18, at 6:30 p.m. to learn more about solar technology, the solar co-op process, and solar financing. This is also a great opportunity to ask the Minnesota Program Director, Bobby King, any questions you may have! Find details and registration here: <https://bit.ly/solarinfo22>.

"The support of the participants was amazing," said Jill van Koolwijk, a previous participant. "I connected with many congregants and made new friends. Most of all, the workshop confirmed that we are not alone in our struggles."

2022 Thresholds Series • See page 8 for details.