

Capacity

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 faith and strengthen our bonds with one another in religious community.

"I am at... capacity!" How many times have you heard that phrase since March 2020? Looking back at that time, many of us wondered how we survived not only the dreaded Covid-19 virus, but the extraordinary demands placed on all of our institutions. Parents became full-time teachers; nurses and physicians worked overtime to the breaking point, all of our front-line workers were asked to work overtime; the pastoral needs of church members escalated. Everyone, it seemed, was "at capacity."

Knowing the etymology of words can provide clues to a word's deeper meaning. Capacity is drawn from *capere* + *capax* to take hold and that can contain. In other words, capacity is the maximum that something can contain. "The world is too much with us; late and soon, getting and spending, we lay waste our powers," wrote William Wordsworth. Indeed, we feel overwhelmed by the weight of the world's dysfunction, we can feel that we can't hold any more grief, or anger or fear or despair.

Although not a traditionally "theological" word, capacity is one with which religion, and religious life, continues to grapple. Religion asks the question, "What is at the edge of our capacity? Can you go beyond that edge?" In that sense, being a religious and spiritual person asks us not to hold onto the world's dysfunction but to enlarge our capacity to hold more. Capacity also means, paradoxically, emptying oneself out enough to expand the threshold of our abilities. It means building capacity for more love, more hope and more faith. But — how do we do that, exactly? How do we build capacity?



A lesson from electronics might be useful here. A capacitor is an electrical component that draws energy from a battery and stores the energy. Inside, the terminals connect to two metal plates separated by a non-conducting substance. When activated, they release electricity. Their main job is to guard the circuit against current spikes, so they are used to maintain stable potential in a circuit. We humans aren't much different! We draw energy from sources which empower us. It may be from worship or music, reading or volunteering. It may be from community organizing groups or changing minds or hearts with legislation. These things can recharge our batteries. However, we also know that when we are at capacity — we have to guard against the spikes in expending too much energy. The circuits can get overloaded (see the picture above) and we fry ourselves out. The purpose of religious life — and spiritual practice — is, as we often say: *to help you find and keep your balance.*

The opposite of capacity is "incapacity," a word which can have fearful implications. No one *wants* to be incapacitated, yet the truth of the matter is, that all of us — at some point

in our lives — *will* be incapacitated; either temporarily or permanently. How do we deepen in our capacity to face that truth as well? How do we live within the limitations of time, space and gravity with honesty, grace, and with "curiosity and courage?" Once again, this is where developing a practice; and engaging with others can be helpful, because none of us can do this alone. We need to hear the stories from one another of, "this is how I survived, this is how I made it to the other side." This is the purpose of religious community and of small group conversations. How we find and build capacity for the demands of life, will be our focus for the month of November.

*Written by Rev. Kathleen Rolenz
with contributions from
Rev. Lara Cowtan, Drew Danielson,
Rev. KP Hong, Rev. Andrea La Sonde
Anastos, and Nelson Moroukian*

Theme Resources

For further reflection on the theme of confession, please see this month's Spiritual Practice Packet, available online at unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html.

IN THE MEANTIME



Reflections on Interim Ministry

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, Interim Senior Minister

In a recent conversation with colleagues, we were asked: "What did your family teach you about how to handle conflict?" In my own family, my siblings and I never talked directly to one another about our disagreements. We went to Mom. Mom was the arbiter, the negotiator, the conciliator, the comforter. She was good at it! It was great because then my brothers and I didn't have to talk to each other about our feelings. What wasn't good about it was that it didn't help any of us to learn about healthy ways of engaging with conflict.

One of the tasks of interim ministry is to help congregations build capacity for all the ups and downs that accompany times of transition — and that includes navigating irritations, disagreements and conflict. Our conflict style is determined in part by our family of origin, but also by the culture in which we were raised and our current situation. Last month, I talked about the reality of Minnesota nice. Now don't get me wrong — I like nice! Nice is — well, nice! But when things aren't nice — when irritations and disagreements arise, how does Minnesota nice help us to deal with conflict?

There are very few things I'm absolutely adamant and dogmatic about but one of them is the necessity of direct communication, unless the conflict involves allegations of abuse. How do we do that? Here's an adaptation of a column I read — now over twenty years ago — from then UUA President John Buehrens, who described a practice that I have followed ever since.

Q: What do I do if I have an issue/concern/conflict with someone?

A: Ask to arrange an in-person meeting with that individual.

Q: I'm not very good at one-on-ones. What should I do next?

A: Ask for an in-person meeting and if someone can be with you. Then, ask a minister or support person to go with you.

Q: Can I just write my concerns in an email?

A: Yes, but it needs to be followed up by a one-on-one, in-person meeting. Trying to process emotional content via email is open to misinterpretation. It can't convey tone, facial expressions or body language. Write it out, but also plan to meet.

Q: I still have concerns, but I don't want to meet in-person, don't want to write a letter. Perhaps I can find some other people who feel the way I do. And then — could you (the minister, trustee, etc.) bring up those concerns anonymously (i.e., "Some people/a lot of people... feel the way I do)?

A: No.

Anonymous concerns don't foster relationships or help with healing broken ones. They don't create Beloved Community. As a minister, I am willing to help people talk to one another; however, I'm not willing to carry someone else's anonymous concerns. That's the work that we do with and for one another — in community.

So, I'll be preaching this and teaching this and asking you to practice this with me. I will continue to work on how Unity Church might develop both a congregational covenant and a Healthy Congregations Team in the year ahead. Stay tuned and keep posted — but more importantly, try practicing these steps the next time you find yourself uncertain about how to communicate your feelings.

In Martin Buber's classic work *I and Thou* he wrote, "All real living is meeting." For Buber, a true "meeting" with others involves what he calls "inclusion" — that is, seeing both sides of a relationship, yours and mine, simultaneously. The relationships we form, both deep and fleeting, are all spiritual opportunities. This is the way in which we practice being in healthy relationship — together.

Keeping the Faith,
Rev. Kathleen

The Wheel of Life

In Memoriam

Jean Baker

December 6, 1925–

September 20, 2023

Gene Bard

December 29, 1935 –

October 18, 2023

Flowers for Worship

If you would like to provide flowers for a Sunday worship service, please contact Suki Sun at sunflowerselflove@gmail.com.

Mark your calendar!

Engaging Awareness, Disrupting Dominance



Facilitated by Alfonso Tomás Wenker
alfonsowenker.com

Saturday, December 2

9:00 a.m. – Noon | Sanctuary

You've shared your hopes and dreams at cottage meetings, through the congregational survey, in emails and informally at coffee hour in Parish Hall. Now, your Ministerial Search Team is excited to offer this workshop as the next step in the search process. Through deep discussion we'll delve into the truths about ourselves and the congregation, in the context of the search. We'll create space for meaningful reflection on the implications of these truths, and how we can take action. See page five for further details.

NOVEMBER SERVICES

Sunday Worship Services

Sunday services are held at 9:00 and 11:15 a.m. (except where noted). The 9:00 a.m. service is offered via livestream. Religious Education programs for children and youth are held Sundays during our service times.

November 5: *A Capacity for Wings*

Daylight Saving Time ends — “fall back” one hour.

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz | Jim Mulvey, worship associate

Livestream: youtube.com/watch?v=ww57hdA-UgY

This sermon and service was inspired by Clover Earl, who purchased the topic at this year's service auction. Her interest was in how we build capacity for positive change. What inspires us? What inhibits us? How do roots hold us close and wings set us free — and to do what?

November 12: *Thanks for Staying*

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz | Lorelee Wederstrom, worship associate

Livestream: youtube.com/watch?v=ml2-P-TkupA

As we explore this month's theme of capacity, we're going to look at the times when we feel we have reached the limits of our capacity to live. This service and sermon will focus on the epidemic of suicide; the reasons, the resources, and the resilience needed to “stay.”

Thanksgiving Family Sunday, November 19 *What Happens Around the Table*

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz | Sara Ford, worship associate

Livestream: youtube.com/watch?v=rXRvJOoj8Oo

Many of us will be gathering around some kind of table on Thursday. What happens around that table is not predetermined. We can influence the discussions we have with those whom we love — and those with whom we differ.

On Family Sundays, children experience the entire worship together with their families in the Sanctuary. A story for all ages and activity books related to the stories and sermon help children to engage in the experience of worship. Regular religious education programming does not take place on Family Sundays; however, the nursery is open for children under three years of age.

November 26: *There Is More Love – Somewhere* **One service only at 10:00 a.m.**

Rev. Lara Cowtan

Livestream: youtube.com/watch?v=ySesD-IldT4

On building our capacity to offer love and gratitude when we feel depleted of both. Drawing on wisdom from our Unitarian Universalist ancestors and indigenous traditions we will explore our sources for renewing and giving thanks and love into the world.

Offering Recipients

Each week, seventy percent of our Sunday offering is given to a community non-profit and thirty percent supports the Community Outreach Ministry at Unity Church. Donations are gratefully accepted online at bit.ly/sundayoffering.

November 5: *Facilitating Racial Equity Collaborative*

Facilitating Racial Equity Collaborative (FREC) is individuals and organizations working towards just, equitable, antiracist communities throughout Minnesota. FREC works to expand awareness of local reparation projects as overdue payback. It works to drive racial equity and justice programs within community organizations. This collection will underwrite fees and expenses for community leaders who attend FREC conferences. Unity's Pauline Eichten, Jane Prince and Russ Balenger are FREC leaders. overcomingracism.org

November 12: *Face It Foundation*

Face It was founded in 2009 with the goal to help men understand and overcome depression, and reduce the rate of male suicide. Face It understands the social and emotional barriers to seeking help. In support groups, men find a community of shared understanding and experience with the disorder of depression. Together they tap into the oasis of collective healing through men's groups, one-on-one peer support, outreach events, public education, and training for mental health professionals. Unity Church member Steve Harper has been with Face It for five years, first as a participant and now as a group facilitator. faceitfoundation.org

November 19: *Homorodszentpeter School*

The Homorodszentpeter elementary school instructs children in kindergarten through fourth grades, and serves as a daycare center for preschoolers. The school enrolls about 20 students out of a village population of approximately 200. The school gives an identity to the village, but municipal funding is dwindling and funding from its Unitarian partners is now needed for extracurricular programs including English language instruction. unityunitarian.org/partner-church.html

November 26: *East Side Learning Center*

East Side Learning Center (ESLC) aims to unlock each child's potential through the foundation of reading. ESLC supports vulnerable children facing barriers to education, such as homelessness, poverty, language, trauma, disabilities, and racial bias. ESLC provides no cost relationship based literacy tutoring and literacy mentoring for students in kindergarten through third grade. ESLC is a caring environment with trained volunteer mentors providing age-appropriate literacy interventions aimed to shrink the reading gap impacting children of color. This collection will go toward student supplies. eastsidelearningcenter.org

BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Board Capacity Expands

Clover Earl, Trustee

A question from our board self-assessment: How do you balance the complexity of issues faced by the board and the time constraints of being a volunteer trustee?

Every year we spend time in conversation about our individual as well as full board capacity. I imagine it will be a discussion that carries into the future as trustees cycle off the board, and new ones join: how do we get the work done, and simultaneously maintain balance in our lives?

Twenty years ago, I was introduced to the concept of $1 + 1 = 3$ — *the whole is greater than the sum of its parts* — while at a leadership conference, and it transformed how I think about what it means to co-create something with others. If you Google $1 + 1 = 3$ you will find millions of links about whether it can be mathematically proven, but this is more of a spiritual concept. It is an attitude that embraces inclusion, perspective sharing, and learning from one another to co-create an outcome that is far more potent than anything I could do on my own.

A couple of years ago, a church member who applied to be on the board and was not on the slate was taken aback by our recruitment and selection process and brought their concerns to our attention. While there were multiple questions raised, the one that most resonated with me was, “Without congregational engagement in the recruitment process, does the board not risk replicating itself?”

With that question in mind, this year the board agreed to test what the impact might be of inviting two non-trustee members to support the work of our recruitment and capacity committee. We are grateful that Ari Giles and Kevin Ward graciously accepted our invitation, and their contributions changed the way we will approach recruitment.

They have influenced how we think about the application, interview and follow-up processes to make it less threatening to consider board engagement. The interview questions have been revamped to provide choices to the applicant and are made available to them in advance of the interview, so they have time to prepare. The actual interview has been redesigned to make it more conversational rather than trustees simply questioning the candidate. And the follow-up with those who applied but were not chosen for the slate includes honoring their willingness to make a commitment, and suggestions for leadership next steps.

The board has much work to do, and our experiment with inviting non-trustees to help in our committee work proved to be efficacious. It is an example of $1 + 1 = 3$ and has opened the door to the possibility of expanding our board capacity even further, by inviting congregants who are not board members to support the work of board committees.

Stay tuned!

Trustee Nominees

The election for the board of trustees will be held at the Annual Meeting of the Congregation on Saturday, November 18.

Claire Cooke grew up at Unity Church. Her grandparents, Denis and Carma Doege, joined the church in 1972 and her father, Charles Cooke, transplanted from First Unitarian Society after meeting her mother in their multi-congregation UU young adult group. Claire feels an immense sense of gratitude for this community that helped her find her spiritual truth. Part of living that truth is giving back both through her role as a COA facilitator and her service as a board member. Claire works for Climate Generation where she endeavors to help create a just and abundant world beyond climate crisis. In her free time, she gardens, swing dances, and enjoys the companionship of her two beautiful bunnies (Ziggy and Lavender).



Jackie Duffus Boyd (they/she)

I am a nonbinary person, mother of two amazing kids and committed partner to my husband Mike. I have spent 20 years working in advertising and marketing; five years as a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) practitioner; and am currently pursuing my Masters in Organization Development and Knowledge Management at George Mason University. I experience the sacred in nature and community. My husband and I have lived in the Summit-University neighborhood for nine years. We became members of Unity earlier this year. When we are not working and going to school, we enjoy renovating our 1908 home, entertaining, traveling, cooking and camping.



Marcia Hayes has lived in St. Paul with her wife, Elizabeth, their young son, and adorable dog since 2019. She joined Unity Church in April 2023 after attending online and in person services. She's been a UU for over 15 years. In her spare time, she enjoys gardening veggies that her son will eat, finding adventures with her family, and a good non-fiction book. She works in healthcare IT in her professional life. She's honored to serve on Unity's Board of Trustees.



BOARD OF TRUSTEES / MINISTERIAL SEARCH TEAM

CALL TO MEETING

Annual Meeting of the Congregation



Unity Church will hold its Annual Meeting of the Congregation on Saturday, November 18, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. Please plan to participate either in-person in the Sanctuary or online via Zoom (watch for the link). Join us for a pancake breakfast beginning at 8:30 a.m.

The annual meeting packet, including an agenda, will be sent by email to eligible voting members in early November. This year the annual meeting business will include a vote on Unity's bylaws, the election of new trustees, and a vote to approve the 2024 budget (if you haven't made your 2024 pledge, please do so today: unityunitarian.org/annual-pledge.html).

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.



Ministerial Search Team: What's Next?

Jennie Smith, on behalf of the Ministerial Search Team

Engaging Awareness, Disrupting Dominance

Facilitated by Alfonso Tomás Wenker, alfonsowenker.com

Saturday, December 2 | 9:00 a.m. – Noon | Sanctuary

You've shared your hopes and dreams at cottage meetings, through the congregational survey, in emails and informally at coffee hour in Parish Hall.

This workshop represents the next step in the search process. Alfonso will guide us through deep discussions to help us in our preparations for a new minister. During the workshop we'll delve into the truths about ourselves and the congregation, in the context of the search. We'll create space for meaningful reflection on the implications of these truths, and how we can take action.

This is an opportunity to deepen into more rigorous practice of noticing how our preferences show up when we care deeply. We'll practice moving from our individual wants, into how to make choices in service of the collective "we."

Gratitude for this Important Work

The work of finding our next settled senior minister is not solely the responsibility of seven volunteers elected by the congregation. As a community, your support is sacred and invaluable. The Ministerial Search Team (MST) sincerely appreciates your engagement as we navigate this process, together. We know it stems from a deep sense of caring and community to Unity, and to one another.

We extend our gratitude to:

- Each of you who attended cottage meetings and completed the congregational survey, you shared your aspirations and took time to listen to others.
- The Unity staff and Executive Team for their support and patience in communications, meeting arrangements, insights into operations, and assisting the MST in various ways in this work.
- Reverend Kathleen, for her dedication to the congregation and MST, providing us with invaluable guidance and wisdom.
- The Board of Trustees for a warm welcome, ongoing support, and extensive knowledge of Unity's mission and ends.
- The 2000 and the 2022 search teams. We have greatly benefited from your experience, diligent efforts (including your documentation) and of course, your unwavering care and commitment to our congregation.
- Our own families and friends for their patience and flexibility as we invest significant time to Unity.
- Lastly, as one person writing on behalf of seven — I express gratitude to my search colleagues. I am constantly inspired by your insight, compassion, commitment, and humor. Each time we meet, I leave with renewed excitement for Unity's future!

Thank you, all, for being in covenant and relationship with us as we continue this transformative work.

To connect with the MST, please visit the ministerial transitions webpage at unityunitarian.org/ministerial-transition.html, stop by our table in Parish Hall on Sundays, check out the MST bulletin board (near the kitchen), or send an email to mst24@unityunitarian.org.

BELOVED COMMUNITY STAFF TEAM

Beyond Land Acknowledgment

Rebecca Gonzalez-Campoy, Beloved Community Communications Team and Indigenous Justice Ministry Team

We stand on the homelands of the Dakota Nation. We honor with gratitude the people who have stewarded the land throughout the generations and their ongoing contributions to this region. We acknowledge the ongoing injustices that we have committed against the Dakota and Ojibwe Nations, and we wish to interrupt this legacy, beginning with acts of healing and honest storytelling about this place.

This is Unity's land acknowledgment. Ministers used to proclaim it each Sunday. Now it's printed in the order of service. No less important in written form, this land acknowledgment calls us to move beyond words to action. But what does this mean?

Often conversation about repair and reparations to Indigenous peoples centers around land back proposals. One example is the University of Minnesota's efforts to address its violent history with Minnesota's Indigenous people. At the recommendation of the Towards Recognition and University-Tribal Healing Project (mn.gov/indian-affairs/truth-project), the University of Minnesota is in the process of returning 3,400 acres of land to the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. This is but a small portion of the 94,631 acres the federal government gave to the University of Minnesota as part of the Morrill Act in 1862 to set up "land grant" colleges for which they paid the tribes \$2309.

However, congregations and individuals can participate in land back efforts in other ways. The Mni Sota Makoce Honor Tax is a fund to which people and groups can voluntarily contribute to the Lower Sioux Community. According to the mnhonortax.org website, "The tax is a voluntary payment made directly to the tribe by those who live in, work on, and visit traditionally Dakota land within Minnesota." One can

think of this tax as "rent," "repair," or something else.

In Minnesota, a bill will be re-introduced that would establish tax tied to real estate sales and the creation of a Council on Native Programs and a Native Recovery Fund. A tiny surcharge on real estate sale transactions would be part of closing costs and have almost no impact on the buyer but has the potential to raise millions for Native American-driven programs. Doe Hoyer is an organizer and songwriter with the Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery (dismantlediscovery.org), and coordinates the Repair Network (dismantlediscovery.org). At the January 24, 2024, Wellspring Wednesday, they will be talking more about this bill and the upcoming session of the Minnesota Legislature.

The Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery has its roots in the Mennonite Church and calls on Christian congregations to address the "extinction, enslavement, and extraction done in the name of Christ on Indigenous lands." However, that doesn't mean UUs cannot take part. Our ancestry is based in Christianity and while we don't necessarily identify as Christian today, we do have a responsibility to disrupt the culture our ancestors helped create.

Consider that our Unitarian ancestors have complex histories, landing on both sides of oppression. Unitarians held leadership positions in the creation and building of the United States. And several played prominent roles in promoting American exceptionalism, specifically white Anglo-Saxon supremacy that laid the foundation for the "Stand Your Ground" culture of today. Even our UU ancestor Theodore Parker — leading abolitionist and one of the "secret six" financial supporters of John Brown and the raid on Harpers Ferry — could not entirely escape the racial



prejudice of his time and place and the racialized interpretation of history.

So we UUs have our own confessing, lament, and truth-telling to do. We also have a variety of opportunities to respond to calls for solidarity with Indigenous neighbors.

Unity's Indigenous Justice (IJ) Team collaborates with the Coalition for Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery and its Repair Network, which provides opportunities to work alongside Indigenous groups to strengthen their culture and reclaim land. Makoce Ikikcupi (Land Recovery, makoceikikcupi.com) is one example. This is a project of reparative justice on Dakota land in Minnesota Makoce (Minnesota) that seeks to bring some Dakota people home, re-establish their spiritual and physical relationship with their homeland, and ensure the ongoing existence of Dakota People. Two villages of earth lodges are currently under construction in Mountain Lake and Granite Falls where Dakota people can live following traditional practices. More villages are planned as additional land is reacquired. IJ member Helen Pohlig has helped with the Mountain Lake site.

If we truly wish to interrupt the doctrine of domination legacy, consider one or more of these ways to begin acts of healing and honest storytelling about this place.



CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

The Long View: Building a Healthy Financial Future

An Opportunity for Service, Integrity and Joy

Are you a “values into action” person? Are you a “numbers person?” Would you love to explore the values and the stories behind the numbers, and then put both to work in service of Unity Church? We are assembling a Development Ministry Team (DMT) to work with the Executive Director and advise the Executive Team on how we gather and manage our resources at Unity Church. We are looking for five to seven members of Unity Church to be part of the newly forming DMT.

This is an opportunity for you if you are committed to the mission and ends of Unity Church, and have skills, experience and gifts in the following areas:

- Investments / endowment / reparations
- Planned giving
- Stewardship drives — operating and capital
- Capital campaigns and long-term debt
- Special fundraising events

If you're interested, please fill out this brief DMT Expression of Interest Form: bit.ly/dmtinterest, or contact Barbara Hubbard, Executive Director, with questions at barbara@unityunitarian.org.

Offer Your Gifts of Hospitality

You: a friendly, caring person looking for an easy, accessible way to give back.

Unity Church: a community with several opportunities for hospitality!

We are currently recruiting folks for:

- **Sunday coffee hour hospitality.** Sign up (bit.ly/coffeehosp) to keep the coffee flowing and the dishes clean. Provide a warm welcome as people get their coffee after service. Training provided and the dishwasher is *fun*!
- **Welcome Team service.** Help nurture mutual belonging as you and your team welcome people to the service, help newcomers find their way, and greet people in Parish Hall during coffee hour. Collect and count the offering, count attendance, and tidy the Sanctuary too. Training provided. Let Laura Park (laura@unityunitarian.org) know you're interested!
- **Wellspring Wednesday kitchen support.** Sign up (bit.ly/wwhosp) for Monday grocery shopping, Tuesday night prep from 4:00-6:00 p.m., Wednesday support (cook, serve, clean up) from 4:00-5:30 or 5:00-7:30 p.m. We have such a good time in the kitchen together!

One time, a few times, or many times, we could use your help! Many of these opportunities are perfect for families too. Questions? Contact Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org for more specifics.

Lectio Divina

Second Wednesday and Fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:10 p.m.

Online via Zoom: bit.ly/Lectio2023-24

Register once, at any time, to attend any or all sessions

Participate in a centuries-old monastic practice of listening, contemplating, and responding to sacred texts; modified with poetry for UU small group spiritual practice. Led by Lisa Wersal or Shelley Butler. A different poem at each session.

On Wednesdays, you may join the Zoom from the Gannett Room at church.

Questions? Contact Shelley at library@unityunitarian.org.

Unity Christmas Pageant

Registration for Unity's Christmas pageant will take place this month. Please watch for an email with a link to sign up to participate! Whether you are new to Unity Church or you have been around for many years, we hope that your family will want to be part of this cherished tradition.

Key dates:

- Registration: November 12-December 3, watch for a link
 - Costume fittings: A Sunday in December (TBD), between services
 - Rehearsal: December 23, 12:30-4:00 p.m.*
 - Pageant: December 24, 4:00 and 5:30 p.m. (3:00-6:30 p.m.*)
- *approximate times

Questions? Contact Kelley Loughrey at 763-607-7520 or kelleyloughrey@comcast.net.

Unity Youth Musical

The Unity Youth musical for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders is a unique production created each year for Unity Church.

All junior high kids (grades 6, 7 and 8) are invited, and everyone who auditions will get a part in the play. Auditions will be held January 7, 2024.

Rehearsals are Sundays, 1:30-3:30 p.m., and Tuesdays and Thursdays, 7:00-8:30 p.m. Performances are March 7, 8, 9, 2024.

Come learn more at an optional information meeting on Sunday, December 3, at 10:15 a.m., or Wednesday, December 6, at 7:10 p.m., in the Science Room (lower level). Questions? Contact Gabby Mead at gabrielledmead@gmail.com or Theresa Nelson at theresanelson820@gmail.com.

WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

Wellspring Wednesday gathers a multigenerational church community to nourish right and holy relationship among us and deepen our life of faith, grounded in spiritual practice and antiracist multicultural work. Dinner begins at 5:45 p.m. in Parish Hall, a short chapel service begins at 6:40 p.m. in Ames Chapel, and programs begin at 7:10 p.m. Child care is available.

Menus are posted with the programming for each week. The cost for dinner is \$8/adults, \$4/child (ages 5-12), \$2/child (ages 2-4), and \$20/family. If you need financial assistance to help cover the cost of dinner, or if you plan to join us and need a special dietary preparation (vegetarian, vegan, dairy-free options are available), please email Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org.

November 1

Dinner: Roasted chicken, ratatouille, gingerbread with lemon curd

Part 3 Dying for Beginners: Dealing with the Body with Anne Murphy, A Thousand Hands

In-person, Robbins Parlor

Most of us are familiar with conventional ways of caring for a body after death. In this session we will hear about ways to care for your loved one through family-directed after-death care, and the choices and resources available to you. Learn about disposition options that extend beyond conventional burial and cremation.

Anne Murphy, an experienced death educator, celebrant and home vigil guide, will review the options. Rev. Kathleen Rolenz will also talk about the function of a memorial service and how service planning is approached at Unity Church. You can attend any Dying for Beginners session without attending previous sessions.

Beginner Violin with Mayra Mendoza

In-person, Choir Room

Beginning violin lessons appropriate for all ages. Learn basic violin posture, note reading, and more!

Religious Education New Family Orientation

In-person, Gannett Room

Are you a new or visiting family, interested in learning more about Unity's religious education programs for children and youth? We offer Religious Education New Family Orientation on the first Wednesday of every month. Let Nelson Moroukian (nelson@unityunitarian.org) know a week in advance that you plan to attend.

November 8

Dinner: Red beans and rice, fresh pepper salad, chocolate chip cookies

Food Conversations: Creativity with Your Cupboard

Parish Hall and online via Zoom: bit.ly/afecupboard

Join Unity Church's Act for the Earth team for a fun and interactive evening where:

- Members of First Universalist Church's "Food Solutions Initiative" share the tips and resources they've developed to store food and reduce waste, and
- Small groups try a version of "Stump the Chef," creating a recipe from a list of ingredients we give you (plus a few "freebies"). Which recipes will receive a hearty "thumbs up" and which will receive a "never would I ever?"



Part 4 Dying for Beginners: Documenting Your Wishes with Don Brunnquell, PhD, LP

In-person, Robbins Parlor

If you have made decisions about how you want to be treated while dying and how your body should be handled after death, those decisions need to be documented in advance. Documents such as advanced care directives, do not resuscitate orders or provider orders for life-sustaining treatment can seem complex. They are most likely to be followed if you have designated a survivor as your health care "surrogate." Psychologist Don Brunnquell brings decades of experience as a biomedical ethicist to a discussion of the conversations that will help ensure that your documented decisions are attended to. You can attend any Dying for Beginners session without attending previous sessions.

Queer Theology

In-person, Center Room

Queer Theology is a theological practice that attempts to erase boundaries that exist in religious traditions, to include rather than exclude more voices. This Queer Theology discussion group will use readings from Marcella Althaus-Reid, Judith Butler, Patrick Cheng, and others to help participants connect their personal experiences with the world beyond the self. Open to adults of all genders and sexual orientations. Contact Mike Huber for access to the readings (using Google Drive) or if you have any questions at mikehuberece@gmail.com. All subsequent meetings are 6:30-8:00 on the second Tuesday of the month starting December 12.



Lectio Divina

Online via Zoom: bit.ly/Lectio2023-24

Register once, at any time, to attend any or all sessions

Participate in a centuries-old monastic practice of listening, contemplating, and responding to sacred texts; modified with poetry for UU small group spiritual practice. Led by Lisa Wersal or Shelley Butler. On Wednesdays, you may join the Zoom from the Gannett Room at church. Questions? Contact Shelley at library@unityunitarian.org.

Beginner Violin with Mayra Mendoza

In-person, Choir Room

WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY / FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

November 15

Dinner: Tater tot hotdish, shredded Brussels sprouts salad, brownies

Part 5 Dying for Beginners: Communicating Your Wishes with Ted Bowman, educator on change and transition

In-person, Robbins Parlor

If something is unmentionable, it can also be unmanageable. If wishes of all kinds are not voiced, they may not happen. Fostering openness for broad consideration of difficult and desired subjects can lead to greater trust, stronger bonds and thought-filled choices. Ted Bowman will share perspectives about and ways to discuss tough subjects such as talking to children, when family members differ, and who should be present at the end of life. You can attend any Dying for Beginners session without attending previous sessions.

Board Game Night

In-person, Anderson Library

Open to everyone; kids are welcome with their adult(s)! We'll have a variety of board games available that are easy to learn, or bring a favorite board game.

Textile Arts

In-person, DeCramer Room

All ages and levels of experience are welcome! Join Textile Arts for creation and conversation — bring your knitting, crocheting, tatting, embroidery, needlepoint, and cross stitch!

Beginner Violin with Mayra Mendoza

In-person, Choir Room

There is no Wellspring Wednesday on November 22. Happy Thanksgiving!

November 29

Dinner: Rainbow roasted miso-glazed root vegetables, quinoa protein pilaf, mixed greens, butterscotch cookies

A Conversation about Unity's Order of Worship with Rev. Kathleen Rolenz

In-person Parish Hall and online via Zoom: bit.ly/owwliturg

The liturgy of any congregation reflects its history, traditions and theology. Unity Church has an established order of worship, which Interim Senior Minister Rev. Kathleen Rolenz has made some modest changes to. We'll review these changes, reflect on the reasons for them, hear *your* feedback, and together, we'll discuss how best to prepare yourselves for the changes that yet another minister may bring to your order of service.

Beginner Violin with Mayra Mendoza

In-person, Choir Room

Fellowship Groups

Visit unityunitarian.org/fellowship-groups.html or contact Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org.

Afterthoughts offers time following the 9:00 service to discuss the service.

Caregivers Group meets on the third Thursday of the month.

Evergreen Quilters: This quilting group meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-9:00 p.m. and fourth Saturday of the month.

Families Living with Mental Health Challenges meets the first Saturday of each month, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Kung Fu meets Saturday mornings, 9:00-10:00 a.m., online via Zoom. Email barney.kujawski@gmail.com to receive the link.

Living With Grief Group meets on the third Tuesday of the month.

Men's Coffee Group meets every Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. for light-hearted conversation.

Men's Conversation Group meets on Zoom Monday, November 13 and 27, from 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Men's Retirement Circle: Monday, November 6 and 20, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

New Look at the Bible meets the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m.

Recovery from White Conditioning meets Wednesdays, 6:00-7:00 p.m.

Textile Arts Group meets on the first Wednesday 1:00-2:30 p.m., and third Wednesday 7:10-8:00 p.m. of each month. Bring your knitting, embroidery, etc.

Unity Book Club meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

November 14: *South to America* by Imani Perry
December 12: *Howard's End* by E. M. Forster

Women in Retirement meets on the second and fourth Thursday of each month, from 1:00-3:00 p.m., in the Center Room. Social hour at noon!

Young Adult Group (ages 18-35) — all are welcome. Unity's Young Adult Group is a fun, reflective group of people working to build multi-faith and multi-cultural community. Email kp@unityunitarian.org

WELCOME NEWCOMERS



Welcome Words

Laura Park, Director of Membership and Hospitality

My kids were not always eager to go to church on Sunday. There were many mornings I would try to listen patiently, to explain rationally, to acknowledge their feelings carefully, and then, at the end of my rope, when I was going to be late to the religious education class I was teaching, simply bark, "Get in the minivan, we're going!"

I wound up being grateful for their complaining because it forced me to articulate why it mattered so much to me that my children have an ongoing relationship with Unity Church. What capacity did I want the church to develop in them that wasn't available elsewhere? I realized church offered two opportunities, not unique to church but powerfully present here:

- To know other adults they could turn to when I failed them as a parent. If there was something they couldn't talk with me about, I wanted them to have other people they could turn to.
- To engage with questions more important than answers. What does it mean to be human and alive? How should we live our lives, knowing at some point we will die? What's the nature of God, the sacred, the divine? What's our role in building Beloved Community?

My kids still occasionally resisted church after I could explain this to them, but it helped all of us engage with church not as a box to be checked, but as an experience to build together toward greater capacity to live fully in this world.

What capacity do you hope to develop as a newcomer to Unity Church? The capacity for wonder, for love, for meaningful service? What capacity do you hope to bring to a faith community? The capacity for community connection, for caring for others, for leadership? As you explore, let me know what questions I can answer about congregational life and the pathways you might explore to deepen your life of faith and antiracist multicultural practice. Contact me at laura@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x110. I look forward to getting to know you!

Pathway to Membership Classes

The offerings below invite you to explore a deeper connection to Unity Church and the commitments and opportunities of membership. Questions? Please contact Laura Park, Director of Membership and Hospitality, laura@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x110.

Finding Yourself at Unity: For Visitors and Inquirers
Sundays 10:15 a.m. | Drop-ins welcome; childcare in the nursery.
Gannett Room or online via Zoom: bit.ly/fyonline

Join the repeating eight-session cycle at any time. This month's offerings:

- November 5: Building Tour
- November 12: Congregational and Pastoral Care
- November 19: Q&A with Minister
- November 26: No class (Thanksgiving weekend)

Committing to Unity: Joining Unity Church
Tuesday, January 9, 2024 | 6:30-8:30 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. Let Laura Park know you're interested in participating or to ask questions. She can also arrange a private signing ceremony.

Child Care for Church Events

Unity Church offers childcare for church-wide events, free of charge. Nursery care is consistently provided for every Sunday service and Wellspring Wednesday program — no reservation is needed.

Outside of the above times, reservations for childcare are required. Please request childcare one week ahead of time by completing the online form: unityunitarian.org/childcare-request-form.html. Katrina Nichols, Unity's Nursery Coordinator, will contact you to confirm the reservation.

Bond of Fellowship

*As those who believe in religion,
As those who lieve in freedom,
fellowship, and character in religion,
As those who believe that the
religious life means the thankful,
trustful, loyal and helpful life, and
As those who believe that a church
is a community of helpers, wherein
it is made easier to lead such a life;
We join ourselves together,
name, hand, and heart,
as members of Unity Church.*

— William Channing Gannett
March 9, 1879, adapted

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



Eve Johnson Brafford and Michael Brafford: Eve and Michael are very happy to become members at Unity Church! Eve grew up in the church and was excited when Michael agreed that their children (Oskar, 7, and Leif, 4) would thrive in this community as well. Their family has been enjoying meeting with other families for dinner once a month and the many friendships have blossomed since they began attending regularly. When they are not chasing their boys through daily activities they enjoying dancing, playing music, hiking, and canoeing.



Peter Berglund: I chose Unity for its "open" atmosphere, and acceptance of all faith beliefs. I started attending Unity in 2019 and am helping with the Act for the Earth Team. I'm a retired environmental engineer.

Mankato. A longing for community and reconciliation in my faith journey brought me to Unity. I am a bookworm; love exploring German, Nordic, and Latin American cultures; and taking road trips.



Bobby Schmitz: Bobby grew up in Hastings and moved to Saint Paul after stints in Northfield, American Samoa, and Tempe, AZ. He met his wife Tera through their shared love of Sustainability and The Simpsons and they now have Linus, their two-year-old son who might ask you, "What you talkin bout?" if you see him before or after service. Bobby is grateful to join an intentional community and looks forward to deepening connections.



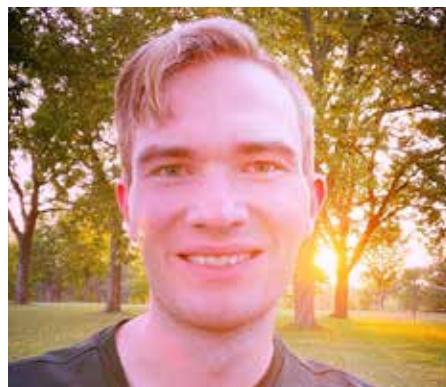
Linda Quammen (formerly Magdsick): Hello, Unity members and friends. As a few of you may remember, I was an active member of Unity in the 1980s and 1990s and taught Sunday school. Later I moved to southern Minnesota and married. We moved to Blaine last year to be close to my daughter Lisa and her family. I have signed the membership book for the second time, and am looking forward to becoming more involved in Unity again.



Ingrid Haugen: I'm excited to be joining Unity! I came in 2017 to sing in Unity Choir, and I've been dreaming of membership ever since. Health struggles slowed my path down, but now that I can handle in-person services again, I'm ready to be a member.



Ray Sinclair: I'm happy to have found this religious community between our downtown apartment and our daughter and her family in Mac-Groveland. Services with good sermons, lay speakers, and the inestimable Ahmed Anzaldúa coupled with engaging programs and groups have fed my soul. Unitarian and Presbyterian background. Preacher's kid. Worked in public health.



Chris Russert: I grew up in Lincoln, Nebraska, and moved to Saint Paul after graduating from Minnesota State

LIBRARY-BOOKSTALL TEAM



All About New Books!

Book Reading, Unity-UU Common Read, Book Review

Great things are happening with new books this month! Don't miss our own Susan Huehn's new book, *The Widow's Guide to Becoming a Handyman*, now available in the Bookstall! Have you read the Unity-UU Common Read *On Repentance and Repair* yet? Books are still available in the Bookstall and Anderson Library; facilitated discussions are coming up in early November — more info on the back cover.

Book Review: *The Odyssey of Phillis Wheatley: A Poet's Journey Through American Slavery and Independence*, by David Waldstreicher (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2023.)

By Louise Merriam, Library-Bookstall Team



This sprawling book about the 18th century Black poet Phillis Wheatley is a biography of the seven-year-old African child who was enslaved and transported to Boston in 1761; a closely-researched social and political history of the pre-revolutionary period in Boston during the 1760s and 1770s; and an adept analysis of Phillis Wheatley's poems.

The bare outlines of Wheatley's biography are well-known. Named after the slave ship "Phillis" that carried her from West Africa, she was given the surname of her purchasers, the prominent Wheatley family. Taught to read and write by the Wheatley women and publishing her first poem

in 1767 at age 14, she then met people who helped publish her poems in London in 1773, on a trip with enslaver John Wheatley. She became free in 1773, married John Peters in 1778, and died young at the age of 30 in 1784.

Waldstreicher examines a daunting number of printed and manuscript sources to construct a narrative about how Phillis felt, whom she knew, the events and people that inspired the individual poems, and the responses to her efforts. Although earlier writers portrayed Wheatley as too religious, too naïve, too much a creature of her white "family," and too attached to the neo-classical elegiac style of poetry, Waldstreicher gives her agency. He sees gentle sarcasm in her words, suggesting that she appreciated the irony of being an enslaved woman who wrote about current events. In his telling, Wheatley was not a house slave who wrote poetry in a vacuum, but a woman who had an established network of friends, admirers, and abolitionists on both sides of the Atlantic who corresponded with her about her poems, and the people and events that inspired them.

Within the growing anti-slavery movement before the American Revolution, some of Wheatley's contemporary critics did not negatively judge her work for its lack of merit but because they feared that her poems could give ammunition to those who believed Black slavery to be incompatible with the effort to free the Americans from Great Britain. Like so many aspects of American history, the response to Wheatley is complicated. In the Anderson Library: 811.1 W.

Antiracism Literacy Partners



Tuesday, December 5 | 7:10 p.m.

Online via Zoom: bit.ly/ALPdec524

This program highlights useful books, podcasts, and videos in our ongoing practice of learning about systemic racism and the work of dismantling it. Participants report that their understanding of a resource increases exponentially when explored with a partner or a group. Come to choose a resource, sign up for a buddy or small group and make plans for your discussions. Resource/discussion guides provided.

In The Justice Database:

The Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery is a coalition that supports church communities in education, solidarity, and reparative action alongside Indigenous Peoples. bit.ly/JusticeData



PARISH HALL EXHIBIT / ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

November Parish Hall Artists

An Exciting Premier Exhibit: The Art of Rose and Melvin Smith

Rose and Melvin Smith, long-time residents of the Rondo neighborhood in St. Paul and esteemed elders of a long-line of area African American artists. They happily found each other decades ago at the University of Minnesota as young students and have been working artists ever since. Rose was studying art and developed into a fine painter using oils, acrylics and watercolors to express her vision. Melvin became an expert at collage work and large-scale metal sculptures. Their art has been shown at galleries across the U.S. including New York, Oklahoma, Chicago, and the Twin Cities. One of Melvin's sculptures is located in the Western Sculpture Park, 387 Marion Street, St. Paul. Their art is also included in the Minnesota History Center's collection of notable artists.

A selection of their artworks, "Journey of a Lost Tribe," was showcased in 2022 at a New York City gallery. The works display urban scenes and portraits of Black life throughout America. To honor the important legacy of the lost (and recovering) Rondo neighborhood, they created a series of works entitled, "Remembering Rondo," which has been exhibited at the Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis, and will soon be showing at the Fort Gansevoort Gallery in Manhattan. The Smiths travelled to New Orleans to meet people impacted by Hurricane Katrina and get to know their stories. From that they created another series devoted to the people of New Orleans.



The exhibit at Unity Church includes new works of art that Rose and Melvin have recently created for this showing. This premier will be an exciting opportunity to see the newest creative vision of these two exceptional artists and wonderful people. Rose will be showing a series of floral paintings inspired by Japanese *ikebana* forms, while Melvin has planned a collection of collages illustrating classic jitterbug dancing.

On Friday, November 10, from 5:00-7:30 p.m., an open reception will be held at Unity Church where visitors can view the art and meet the artists. Light refreshments will be served.

Artist in Residence

Call for Musician/Musical Group



During the 2023-2024 church year, Unity's Artist in Residence program is seeking one musician or one musical group. This artist or group will perform in worship services on select Sundays, and may also collaborate with Unity's choral program, religious education program, or other community programming. See the Artist in Residence page for details: unityunitarian.org/artist-in-residence.html. Please alert anyone you think might be interested in this opportunity. Application deadline is Friday, November 16.



commUNITY is the monthly newsletter of Unity Church. Deadlines are the 15th of each month. Subscriptions are free to those who make pledges to Unity Church and are available to others for \$30/year.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

Gun Sense Team

Join us in November!

Bob Albrecht, Gun Sense Team

Unity's Gun Sense Ministry Team has begun to think about "rebranding" our team as a means to creating stronger awareness surrounding what our work is truly about. We are not, as some might imagine, an anti-firearms group. Rather, our work is focused on awareness of issues and education that embraces the safe use of guns, and we advocate for gun legislation that might strengthen peace and safety in our communities. We will be considering alternative names for our team in the next month or two.

In this month of Thanksgiving, we are grateful for new gun violence prevention legislation that is moving Minnesota in a positive direction. But there is much more to be done. We will lend our voices to promote fruitful next steps during the 2024 legislative session. Watch for details about a mid-winter Wellspring Wednesday session lead by the Gun Sense Team. Additionally we are considering ways in which to thoughtfully and compassionately dialogue with children and youth and their parents and teachers about guns and gun safety, and to encourage outstate UU congregations to lend their voices in the quest for gun safety.

State Senator John Marty, who led an informative session at Unity last winter, reported recently to our team he is hearing that some legislative colleagues wish to work on safe gun storage, while in addition Sen. Marty would like to work toward crack-downs on gun trafficking. He is finding more advocates who are ready to push for a ban on semi-automatic assault rifles and large ammunition magazines.

Monthly Gun Sense meetings take place on the third Thursday of each month, 3:30-4:30 p.m. (next meeting is on November 16), in-person at church and online via Zoom. For more information and/or to be added to our email list, please contact us at unityunitarian.org/gun-sense.html.

Evergreen Quilters

Donate to the Food Shelf

During the month of September we donated 208 pounds of food to Hallie Q. Brown. Thank you for your support.

During November they would like stuffing mix, pumpkin pie filing, cornbread mix, cranberry sauce, gravy mix, and canned vegetables. They are also in need of paper grocery bags and financial donations to purchase turkeys and hams during the holiday season: hallieqbrown.org.



Connecting Unitarian Universalists and allies to help shape a just and loving world. muusja.org



Housing Justice Team

We Changed Our Name!

Dayna Kennedy, Housing Justice Team

Our new name is the Housing Justice Team. After much reflection, our team decided "Affordable Housing Team" did not encompass the complexity and scope of our purpose. And the intersection of safe, quality, equitable housing with racial and environmental justice is profound. If you're curious about our work, please check out our monthly online meeting (the second Tuesday of each month from 4:30-5:30 p.m.). Please contact Judy Miller for the Zoom link or with questions, jmkmam@comcast.net.

Hands On Ways to Help

Project Home is looking for volunteers to serve meals as part of their weekend meal teams. Chef Omar takes care of meal preparation! Serving shifts are available in Saint Paul at Provincial House for lunch or dinner on Saturdays and Sundays. Sign up to volunteer or create a team of 3-6 people. Supervised older children are welcome to sign up. Details at: tinyurl.com/PHMealTeams2023

Help is also needed with monthly birthday celebrations and maintenance. Questions? Contact Shelter Manager, Donna Franklin dfranklin@interfaithaction.org or Unity member Janice Gestner janicemgg@comcast.net.

Winter Gear Adopt-A-Family

Adopt a current Project Home family and provide winter gear, such as new coats, boots, hats and gloves/mittens. (New items only.) Questions? Contact Shelter Manager, Donna Franklin dfranklin@interfaithaction.org or Janice Gestner janicemgg@comcast.net. Details at <https://tinyurl.com/PHWinterGear>.

Wanted: Used Musical Instruments

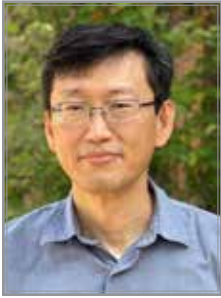
Unity's Mano a Mano Community Outreach Ministry Team is collecting used band instruments to share with children attending the schools they partner with in Bolivia. A longtime Mano a Mano volunteer is moving to Bolivia and his volunteer work will include repair of donated brass instruments (trumpets, trombones, and tubas, no woodwinds or strings) and training seminars in rural schools. Drop off instruments at Unity Church.

Save the date!

Community Outreach Ministry Team Summit

Saturday, January 20, 2024 | 9:30-11:30 a.m.

This gathering is for all members of the Community Outreach Ministry Teams (COMT) to hear about how the year is going so far, to listen to your needs and concerns, to coordinate programs and to strengthen our important ministries of justice and service.



Pitter-Pattering Questions

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

Rev. KP Hong, Minister of Faith Formation

Somehow, miraculously, in the din and commotion of modern fractured life, there is a distinctive way of moving through this world that our children still know as *church*. A radically relational and holistic way of being together, grounded in the truth that all the parts are extraordinarily interconnected and only fully realized in the embrace of the whole. That such

wholeness is (w)holiness. And that this way of being the church is practiced in a particular form that we call “shared ministry.”

Some have perceptively inquired about what shared *ministry* means, often begging the prior question about the meaning of *ministry* itself. Is it something clergy and religious professionals do while others volunteer support? Something the faith community participates in but really performed by the staff and religious professionals of the church, whatever the far-reaching consequences of Martin Luther’s remonstrative claim about the dignity of all activity, from the mundane to the sublime, from the remunerated to the volunteered, all belonging to one spiritual estate? Is there really a substantive difference between a youth *group* and a youth *ministry*, or a *program* in contrast to a *ministry*? If so, what registers the difference? And if ministry is the sacred work of the whole church, of every one of us, what is our actual capacity for such shared ministry? Attending more precisely to the question of ministry may provide a sharper frame to exploring our capacity for shared ministry in caring for the spiritual lives of children.

I have often imagined continuums along which to consider our work with children and youth, from volunteering and supporting programs to practicing ministry:

- Assigned to a program.....Called to a community of children
- Focused on the What (activity)Attentive to the Who (relationships)
- Commitment to task completionCommitment to lifelong faith journey
- Beginnings and endingsOngoing state of readiness
- Method of socializing children.....Practice of faith formation with children
- Mindset of ThereforeMindset of Nevertheless
- Purpose of meeting needsPurpose of loving children

Of course in practice there is rarely a neat demarcation between leading programs and sharing in ministry, as our work necessarily embraces the whole continuum. How could it be otherwise when it concerns the dignity of the whole person? Yet the distinction clarifies the yearning that pulses at the heart of our sacred practice: that each volunteer is a spiritual guide and teaching is a spiritual practice, all of us godparents who make real the radical claim that “there are no other people’s children.”

Often, capacity necessitates a quantitative inquiry into hours available, size of budget, number of volunteers, and multiple technical thresholds materially exposed to depletion and exhaustion. But what if at its difficult core, capacity is an epistemology underdeveloped in a world torn by *more* and *without*, an invitation to recalibrate context and conditions that can faithfully honor both limits and possibilities? A conversation, a collaboration, a fugue where the song is introduced by one and successively carried by other interweaving voices, and never a settled state finally achieved or accomplished? What if our capacity for shared ministry is by nature unpredictable, risky, and guilty of inefficiency but also punctuated by wonder and the surprise of fishes and loaves and *manna* that arrives and disappears beyond our rationing? A capacity that is only truly known when we stay awake to what is true and important in this moment, in our souls, and when we choose faithfully from that place of our own immeasurable being?

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



Music Notes

**Shekela Wanyama
Youth Choir
Director**

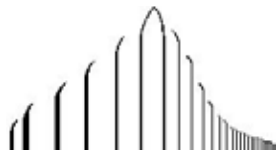
Musicking — the act of making music — has always been a

part of the human experience. Learning to make and share music as a form of service — ministry — requires us to consider others while we grow through and enjoy our musicking. This process is formative for young people, and I am excited to direct the Youth Choir as members explore making music in community with and for others.

I’ve directed youth choirs for over a decade, both as a choir teacher in middle and high schools as well as in churches. I was the choir director of a UU church in Tucson, AZ, and am happy to return to UU community. Currently, I am an adjunct faculty member at the University of Minnesota (music education) and Hamline University (director of the A Cappella Choir). When I’m not teaching, you can catch me as a section leader in the Unity Choir, singing with Border CrosSing and the Minnesota Chorale, and dreaming about the vegetables I’ll be planting next spring in the garden!

Youth Choir is open to interested musicians ages sixth grade and up. We rehearse on Sundays, from 10:20-11:05 a.m., in Ames Chapel. No audition or experience required — just a willingness to learn and have fun! We look forward to singing in services in November and December, as well as participating in the winter choir concert. Regular attendance is necessary to keep us all progressing as musicians and as a team, but we can work with occasional absences. Feel free to drop in on Sunday to meet us! Email me with questions at shekela@unityunitarian.org.

Photo cred: Irene Wesee



UNITY CHURCH—UNITARIAN

Sanctuary Entrance: 733 Portland Avenue • Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
Business Entrance: 732 Holly Avenue • Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
651-228-1456 • fax: 651-228-0927 • www.unityunitarian.org • unity@unityunitarian.org

Rev. KP Hong, Minister of Faith Formation
Barbara Hubbard, Executive Director
Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, Interim Senior Minister
Louise Livesay-Al, Chair, Board of Trustees

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**TIME SENSITIVE
MATERIAL**

Unity Church - UU Common Read

Read in September & October 2023

Join the Ministers for discussion in November

In the Unity Bookstall & Anderson Library

***On Repentance and Repair: Making Amends in an Unapologetic World* by Danya Ruttenberg (Beacon Press, 2022)**
A fresh, transformative perspective on how we make ourselves accountable to others. Copies are available at the Bookstall. If you aren't able to read the whole book, please read chapters 1, 2, 7, and 8, and then join Revs. Rolenz and Cowtan in practice and discussion.

Repentance and Repair in Our Lives and Relationships
Part 1 and 2: Saturday, November 4 • 9:00 a.m.-noon
In-person at Unity Church
Part 1 only: Tuesday, November 7 • 7:30–9:00 p.m.
Online via Zoom: bit.ly/CommonReadNov23

Gathering for those Impacted by Suicide

Saturday, November 18
1:00-3:00 p.m. | Robbins Parlor

Having a loved one die by suicide can be a unique grief experience. We plan to offer a time for people who have been impacted by the suicide of a family member or loved one to come together and offer each other support, understanding, and the opportunity to share what is perhaps difficult to share with those who haven't lived through this kind of grief. This gathering will be facilitated by Congregational Care Minister, Lara Cowtan, and Congregational Care Team member Angie Scott. Please email Angie at scot0232@umn.edu if you plan to attend.