

Grace and Liberation

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.

Worship themes are set well in advance. In the case of this fall's themes, they were set in April, in the midst of the ministerial transition between Revs. Kathleen and Oscar. While some monthly themes come easily (welcome and the start of the year, change at the start of a new ministry), November 2024 presented a challenge. What will the congregation need to hear, and preachers need to say, on the Sundays before and after a presidential election? What are the tools that we will want at hand as a congregation in this moment?

Liberation and Grace are both powerful tools in our tradition. Liberation we know well: the primary purpose of the Unitarian Universalist Association, in new language adopted this summer at General Assembly, is to "actively engage its members in the transformation of the world through liberating love." Love is what liberates us, and the tool we use for liberation. By participating in liberation, through the work of love, we begin to break free from structures and systems that perpetuate privilege.

Grace is more complicated for Unitarian Universalists. Our theological ancestors rejected a negative view of humanity that saw grace as a necessary antidote for a fundamentally broken nature (Amazing grace! How sweet the sound/ That saved a wretch like me). We are not wretched. And: we still receive, and give, grace. Rev. Karen Hering talks about how grace is a hard concept to grasp in English, because it does not exist in the active or the passive voice: it is not something that we do, or that is done to us, but it is "something that happens to us but requires our participation in order to be real."

There is a lot of uncertainty in the month ahead. We do not know when or what we will find out about the results of the election. We do not know yet which tools will be most important to our work going forward. There is some certainty though: our work as a congregation will be the same on November 10, regardless of what happens on November 5. Elections have consequences, often far-reaching ones. But our work, and the commitments we have now as a congregation do not change based on who is in the White House. When the sun rises the morning after the election results are announced, we will still be working for liberation, and participating with grace in the world.

Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair with this month's Theme Team

Fellowship Groups

Email Philippa Anastos at philippa@unityunitarian.org to get connected.

Afterthoughts meets at 10:15 a.m. to discuss the service.

Caregivers Support Group meets on the third Thursday of the month at noon.

Evergreen Quilters meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-9:00 p.m. and fourth Saturday of the month, 10:00 a.m.-noon.

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

Living With Grief Group meets on the third Tuesday of the month, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

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

Men's Conversation Group meets on Zoom November 11 and 25, 7:00-9:00 p.m., to discuss a range of topics, offer support, and develop a deeper connections.

Men's Retirement Circle meets Monday, November 4 and 18, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

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

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

Textile Arts Group meets the first and third Wednesday of the month, 9:30-11:00 a.m. Bring your knitting, stitching, etc.

Unity Book Club meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m. November 12: *Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World* by Katherine

Women in Retirement meets on the second and fourth Thursday of each month, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Young Adult Group (ages 18-35) meets every other Wednesday at 7:10 p.m.

Theme Resources

For further reflection on the theme, see this month's spiritual practice packet, available online at unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.

JUST WORDS



Just Words

Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair, Senior Minister

On election night in 2012 I broke my front door. 2012 feels like a throwback to a gentler election cycle, without the explicit bigotry and hatred that we've seen over the three election cycles since. But in addition to a presidential election that was more anxious than we often remember, 2012 was the year marriage equality was on the ballot in Maryland.

Stacie and I were watching the returns with two friends of ours whose short-term marriage plans were dependent on several million Marylanders voting for their essential humanity. It was an anxious night, and I thought I was doing fine until I picked up the pizza and, without meaning to, closed our antique front door hard enough to shatter the glass in it.

That story was on my mind as, in October, Unity's Board set aside some time to check in with each other about the state of our hearts and souls this fall. So many of us were carrying anxiety about the state of the world, the election, war, and climate change, and in each, it was expressed differently.

The weeks leading up to an election (and likely this year, the weeks following an election) are a time when the national becomes personalized: we are often asked, implicitly and explicitly, to imagine the worst possible outcome *and what it would mean for us personally*. There are ways that this is important work. It helps to motivate us to work for change in the world, to participate in the democratic process and to imagine what a good outcome might look like. But it is also an invitation to catastrophize before we know the outcome.

As part of membership, we ask each person that joins Unity Church to develop a personal spiritual practice that helps you find and keep your balance. The practices vary: for some it is prayer, others meditation or intentional activity. Cooking, exercise, or reading can all be spiritual practices, if done with intention. This coming month is a time to lean into those practices, not as a way to avoid the world around us but to keep our balance in it.

The same expectations of membership ask us to go beyond personal practice, to go forth and bless the world. There will be plenty of opportunity to do that through Unity Church in the weeks to come, regardless of the outcome on November 5. In the meantime, attend to your practices, keep your balance, and reach out to each other and to the church.

— Oscar

The Wheel of Life

In Memoriam

Dorothea Gumbrell

September 26, 1938 –
October 2, 2024

In Celebration

Estelle Brouwer and Ralph

McQuarter were married
September 29, 2024

Ruth MacKenzie and Rebecca

Flood celebrated their 40th wedding
anniversary September 29, 2024

Congregational Care

Do you have a concern or celebration you wish to have shared in the Embracing Meditation during Sunday worship? Would you like to request a call from a minister or a helping hand or listening ear of a Care Team member? Complete the online congregational care request form at unityunitarian.org/congregational-care or send an email to pastoralcare@unityunitarian.org. If you are experiencing an urgent need for pastoral support, call 651-300-9123.

UU the Vote: Thank You

Many thanks to all of you who helped Get Out the Vote over the past weeks and months. A special thanks to Unity's UU the Vote coordinator, Priscilla Morton! Priscilla shared a few numbers to help the congregation understand the tremendous amount of work and generosity that went into this year's Get Out the Vote campaign:



- By Election Day, members and friends of Unity Church will have made contact with approximately 12,000 potential voters through UU the Vote and Reclaim our Vote postcards and Vote Forward letters.
- There are 226 people on Unity's UU the Vote mailing list — half of them new to the project this year. Nearly all have participated by preparing letters and postcards.
- The cost for stamps alone is \$7500, mostly donated by our own congregation.



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.

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES | OFFERING RECIPIENTS

Sunday Worship Services

Sunday services are held at 9:00 and 11:15 a.m. The 9:00 a.m. service is also offered via livestream. Find the livestream links, sermon podcasts, and a selection of transcripts at unityunitarian.org/sunday-services.

November 3: *If You Can Keep It*

Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair

“Well, Doctor, what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?”

“A republic, if you can keep it.”

Benjamin’s Franklin’s words at the conclusion of the Constitutional Convention in September 1787 have obvious relevance in 2024. The first Unitarians and Universalists in the United States came from the first generation after the American Revolution, and from that first generation, our tradition has been actively involved in the democratic process. How does that legacy speak to us today?

November 10: *What's Next?*

Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair

What can we say, in the aftermath of an election? How have the church’s commitments changed, or have they? How do we balance the uncertainty of this moment with the certainty of faith?

November 17: *Anchored Over the Horizon*

Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair

Vaclav Havel, the Czech statesman and literary figure, wrote that hope “...is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons.” How do we anchor ourselves to hope, even when it exists beyond our vision, on the other side of the horizon?

November 24: *Let Us Say, Grace*

Rev. Lara Cowtan

On this Thanksgiving weekend, we consider the traditions from around the world and at our own tables of offering words of gratitude. How do these rituals provide opportunities for deepening and growing in our spiritual and personal relationships. What is grace? How can we give and receive it in our lives and the larger world?

Flowers for Worship

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

Offering Recipients

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

November 3

[Braver Angels](#), launched in 2016, is a national movement to bring liberals and conservatives together at the grassroots level, not to find centrist compromise, but to meet one another as citizens. Braver Angels helps Americans understand each other beyond stereotypes, form community alliances, and reduce the vitriol that is poisoning our civic culture. This collection will support Braver Angels 2024, a campaign focused on healing the wounds between left and right, building community together, and discovering what it means to be American in our time. Unity Church friend Bill Doherty is a co-founder of Braver Angels.

November 10

The [Council on American-Islamic Relations \(CAIR\)](#), is America's largest Islamic civil liberties and advocacy group. CAIR-MN actively engages with the media to ensure that a fair and accurate portrayal of Islam and Muslims is presented to the Minnesota public. CAIR works vigorously on behalf of community members experiencing discrimination and to help remedy cases through in-person negotiations that include filing charges of discrimination, letter writing, and referrals to the Minnesota attorney network. Protecting the rights of Minnesota Muslims is at the core of CAIR-Minnesota's mission.

November 17

Unity's [Partner Church Outreach Ministry Team](#) has been dedicated to fostering and maintaining the relationship with our Transylvanian partner church in Homoródszentpéter for over thirty years. This collection will contribute to the ongoing support of the village's pre-school and elementary school. In response to the recent threat of closure the school has introduced cultural programming, including folk dancing and language instruction and an after school program, while continuing to provide midday meals for students. Contributions will help keep the school competitive and operational, allowing families to choose to stay or return and raise their children in the village.

November 24

Unity's [Mano a Mano Outreach Ministry Team](#) supports Mano a Mano International by collecting, sorting, packing, and shipping medical, construction, and school supplies to Bolivia. The team also organizes community information forums, providing advocacy for Mano a Mano's many projects on the ground in Bolivia. This collection will specifically support Unity's community outreach team in engaging the local community and promoting the work of Mano a Mano.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Swirling Leaves of Autumn

LauraSue Schlatter, Trustee

Sometimes life around Unity Church feels like autumn leaves let loose. So much going on, so many points of focus, all of it important and worthwhile.

Passion in the art on the walls, in the food we eat, in our writing, our music, our Get Out the Vote, Act for the Earth work, and more.

The Board's work reflects this energy. We are looking at the results of the congregational survey, preparing for the Ends renewal process, and focusing more deeply on how to accomplish the first steps of reparations. Meanwhile, we are carrying out the more "routine" tasks of preparing for the annual meeting, including bylaws revisions, discussing the 2025 budget, and electing new trustees.

There will be three proposed bylaws revisions presented at the annual meeting. You can find these proposed bylaws changes, and an explanatory grid, on the [Board page of Unity's website](#). First, a proposal to revise Art. I, sec. 2, clarifying that the Executive Team of the church has authority to develop a policy for granting pledge waivers. Second, a proposal to revise Art. I, sec. 4, changing the amount time from one year to six months for a member to respond to an inquiry from the church about whether they wish to remain a member. Third, changes to Art. V, sec. 2 to clarify that all votes — including absentee and remote votes — count as part of the total votes cast when calculating whether a candidate for a called minister has received 85 percent of the total vote. However, only votes which are actually cast are counted. In other words, if a person is present (in the Sanctuary or online) but does not vote using their ballot, that person will not be counted as having voted yes or no, or in the total number of people who voted.

There is one more proposed bylaw change which will allow the Executive Team more time, now and in the future, to prepare an accurate budget and the congregation more time to review it. The Board is proposing to change the date of the annual meeting from November 16, 2024, to December 7, 2024. The bylaws currently require the annual meeting be held in November. The Board has called a Special Congregational Meeting on October 27, 2024, to amend the bylaws to allow the annual meeting to be held instead on a date before the end of the fiscal year.

In mid-August, I stood in front of the congregation and pleaded for people to apply to serve as trustees. The Board was overjoyed when we received a total of 12 applications! We were only able to recommend three for the final slate, but we want to thank all of you who applied — you were a joy for us to meet and the selection was difficult. We encourage every member of the congregation to consider Board service in the future — it's a wonderful opportunity to serve this passionate, swirling community in a deeply meaningful way!

4

Integrity, service, and joy.

Trustee Nominees

At the annual meeting, the congregation will be asked to elect three trustees. We are grateful for this year's nominees!



Molly Flattum started attending Unity Church in 2010 seeking a community focused on social justice. Since then she has been a part of the Welcome Team, Generosity Ministry Team, Teaching Associates and Religious Education

Ministry Team, and she truly loves her role as a Spirit Play teacher. Molly is especially grateful that her children have a safe, supportive, loving space where they are encouraged to be their authentic selves. Outside of Unity Church, she works in healthcare supply chain supporting a large trauma hospital in Minneapolis. She lives in Falcon Heights with her husband, Jordan, three children (India, Beckham, and Raleigh) and their dog Huck. In her spare time, Molly enjoys reading, playing volleyball, and trying out new sushi restaurants with her family.



Richard Lau lives with his wife, Heather, and their two daughters in Woodbury, alongside two cats and two dogs, all of whom think they are in charge. Since 2002, Rich has been a member of

Unity Church where he taught religious education, participated in the food ministry, served as a worship associate, was a mentor in the Coming of Age (COA) program, had many meaningful and fun conversations as part of the multicultural conversation partners program, and loved contributing to the Ministerial Search Team. From the moment he stepped inside its doors, Unity Church felt like his spiritual home and still does every Sunday. Professionally, Rich practices real estate law and mostly advises family-owned businesses. Outside of his professional life, he finds joy in cooking and eating, exploring the art of photography, reading mystery novels, and, not least of all, delighting in embarrassing his children.



Derived from two generations of New England Unitarian Universalists, **Jane Prince** grew up in Brockton, Massachusetts. She majored in English Lit and minored in Russian at the University of New Hampshire. On a whim, Jane

moved to Minnesota in 1976 with a UU pal from UNH and worked in municipal government, at the Minneapolis Housing and Redevelopment Authority, the Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development, and the Saint Paul City Council. With a zest for community and solving problems, Jane earned her JD in her mid-50s, leading her to seek two terms on the Saint Paul City Council ending in 2023. Jane is married to Dave Murphy and she and her son Sam have been part of Unity Church since 1984. They live on Saint Paul's East Side.

Wonder, open-hearted engagement, courageous action



Welcome Words

Philippa Anastos, Membership Coordinator and Program Assistant

Often, we focus as a community on extending grace to others — and neglect the work of accepting the grace we are given. Those who give us grace are embracing us as we are, not as we

should be. In order to accept that love, we must step through deep-rooted shame, guilt, and fear. Just as we strive to extend grace and welcome to those who are new to Unity, I hope we will strive this month to extend the themes of grace and liberation to ourselves, as well.

Pathway to Membership Classes

The offerings below invite you to explore a deeper connection to Unity Church and the commitments and opportunities of membership. Contact Philippa Anastos, Membership Coordinator and Program Assistant, philippa@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x110.

Finding Yourself at Unity

Sundays 10:15 a.m. | Center Room | Childcare available

For visitors and newcomers. Join the repeating eight-session cycle at any time. Attend the sessions in any order!

November 3: Building Tour

November 10: Congregational Care

November 17: Worship and the Liturgical Year

November 24: Membership 101

Unity Church Name Tag Project

Instead of reshelving your name tag before you leave church, please return it to the marked basket in the main lobby.

Volunteers are continuing the work of clearing out name tags that are no longer being used and greatly appreciate your help (and don't worry, we'll keep the ones that aren't being used so you can easily retrieve it upon your return!)

444 Pounds donated to Hallie Q. Brown

Wow! During the month of September we donated 444 pounds of food and supplies to Hallie Q. Brown. That is the most we have ever donated. Thank you so much!

For November and December the food shelf is collecting holiday food including canned beans, corn, sweet potatoes, and cranberry sauce, as well as boxed mashed potatoes, rice and dressing mix. Paper products are always appreciated.

If you would like to donate money so Hallie Q. Brown can buy hams and turkeys please visit hallieqbrown.charityproud.org/donate.



November Parish Hall Artist

Ekaterina Kazachenko

Meet the Artist | Sunday, November 10 | After services



Apple Orchard at Dusk by Ekaterina Kazachenko

Kazachenko is a Minnesota artist born in Russia. Her formal education ended in 2013 with the completion of the PhD program in Fine Art through the Russian Academy of Arts where she also worked for eight years as an assistant in the art department. She received two fellowships through the Union of Russian Artists and had her work on display in the National Moscow Manege Art Exhibitions as well as many other shows.

After that she relocated to Minnesota and began making connections in her chosen field. She has participated in multiple local, national and international juried art shows, averaging three to four exhibitions each year. She has received "Best In Show" and "Award Of Excellence" honors for her work and has had her paintings selected for display three times in the highly competitive Minnesota State Fair Fine Art Exhibition. In addition to the juried shows she has had three solo exhibits which included public discussions of her work along with Q&A sessions. Since her days at the Academy, Ekaterina has viewed collaboration as an important aspect of being involved in the art community. In light of this she is now serving as a review panelist for the Minnesota State Arts Board for the Creative Support for Individuals Grant Program. Also, several of her works are on exhibit at the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport as a part of the Arts@msp collaborative program. She participated in Studio:HERE which is a residency program for artists at the Minnesota State Fair. Each day of the fair featured one practicing Minnesota artist working live in the gallery.

She says, "In my work I strive to touch on emotions which are real and meaningful to myself and hopefully the viewer. With the help of the musicality and lyricism of the landscape I attempt to convey feelings, thoughts, memories and sometimes forebodings. Through the shrill, piercing moods of the landscape — inspired by changes of season, the instant state of nature and its mild sadness and nostalgic pensiveness — I find it easiest to manifest myself."

WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

Wellspring Wednesday November Offerings

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 is held at 6:40 p.m., and programs begin at 7:10 p.m. Childcare is available and advance registration is not required. Details about dinner, programs, and the Zoom links are online at unityunitarian.org/wellspring-wednesday.html.

November 6

Dinner: Lasagne bolognese, tricolore salad, olive oil cake

Prayer in Ames Chapel

Join us for a vigil the day after the election. Revs. Oscar, Lara, and KP will provide space to gather, reflect, and process the emotions of this pivotal moment. Whether you feel hope, uncertainty, or concern, we welcome all to come together in unity and peace as we collectively navigate the aftermath of the election.

Religious Education New Family

Orientation | Gannett Room

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. Email Nelson one week in advance if you plan to attend: nelson@unityunitarian.org.

Beginner Violin | Choir Room

Join Mayra Mendoza for beginning violin lessons appropriate for all ages. Learn basic violin posture, note reading, and more! Contact Mayra at mayraquitzia@hotmail.com by 3:00 p.m. on Wednesdays to ensure a lesson.

Young Adults Group (ages 18-35) | Center Room

A fun, reflective group of people working to build multifaith and multicultural community, exploring questions of life and faith, and practicing sharing what is sacred as they navigate the complexity of being an adult.

Help prepare a Wellspring Wednesday meal!

bit.ly/wwfood2425

Have fun in the kitchen together!
Kids are welcome with their adults!
Questions? Contact Heidi Birkholz at heidi@unityunitarian.org.

November 13

Dinner: Cabbage and sausage on rice, kale salad, cider-glazed apple cake

Indigenous Justice:

Dakota Elder Chris Mato Nunpa Parish Hall and Zoom

Honor National Native American Heritage Month with this presentation by Dr. Chris Mato Nunpa, a Wahpeton Dakota from the Upper Sioux Community near Granite Falls. Dr. Mato Nunpa ("Two Bear") is a Retired Associate Professor in Indigenous Nations and Dakota Studies at Southwest Minnesota State University. In addition to Dakota history and culture, Indigenous Nations history, and U.S. history, his research interests include Genocide Studies and Bible Studies, and he attended Seabury-Western Theological Seminary. Dr. Mato Nunpa is the author of *The Great Evil—Christianity, the Bible and Native American Genocide*, which details life on the "rez" and the influence that three Christian mission churches had on the reservation community. The book is available in Anderson Library and at the Bookstall. You are encouraged to read it prior to this presentation.

Considering Five Theological Questions Robbins Parlor

This session explores the question: *What is the nature of the higher power?* Come prepared to engage in personal reflection and share your responses. Future sessions will be held December 4, January 29, and February 26.

Lectio Divina | Zoom (Gannett Room)

Join a sacred experience of listening, contemplating, and responding to inspirational texts and contemporary poetry. Participants report that Lectio Divina is "rejuvenating" and "insightful." Zoom from the Gannett Room on Wednesdays.

Beginner Violin (see November 6)

November 20

Dinner: Chicken tagine, lemon couscous, mixed greens, lemon bars

Life Changing Journeys Parish Hall and Zoom

This event is a collaboration of Unity's Partner Church Team and Mano a Mano Teams. Together with people who have traveled to Transylvania with the Partner Church Team and/or to Bolivia with the Mano a Mano Team, we will discuss why these trips are life changing experiences. Through viewing photos of the trip, singing, and small group discussions, we will learn how we see the world with new eyes when we engage in these journeys. We will touch on issues of working with international partners when there is a power differential, and how to build relationships with people with different life circumstances. We will discuss how we come to a better understanding of our role in the world because of our relationship with others.

Hymn Sing | Robbins Parlor and Zoom

In 2021 Unity Choir members started meeting with Ahmed every few weeks on Zoom to sing and discuss the hymns in the Unitarian hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*. The group started with the first hymn, and is now nearly 200 hymns in! At each session group members sing the hymn, discuss its music, text, history, and theology, while also sharing personal reflections on the music and its meaning.

Beginner Violin (see November 6)

Young Adults Group (ages 18-35) (see November 6)

*There is no Wellspring Wednesday on November 27.
Happy Thanksgiving!*

LIBRARY-BOOKSTALL



Library-Bookstall Team

Shelley Butler, Library-Bookstall Team

In 1918, Ulrich B Phillips was considered the leading expert on the history of slavery after his publication of *American Negro Slavery*. Yet, he discounted the many slave narratives that were available then, and instead espoused the pre-Civil War justifications for slavery. No surprise that he was a Southern white man.

This was not the only reason that a rise in authoritative Black scholarship arose in the 1920s and 30s — W.E.B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, *Journal of Negro History* — but it was a factor. If the prevailing dominant culture is telling a story about you that is false (and it often is), tell your own story. Perhaps the slave narrative was the first American story that proved the power of the word by debunking long-held myths, and all Black scholarship, story, and writing that came after flowed from it.

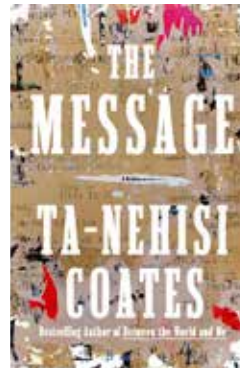
You can see this progression of history and storytelling in Ta-Nehisi Coates's controversial new book, *The Message* (One World, 2024). He writes:

...There has to be something that hungers in you, hungers for clarity. ... the standards of enslavers, colonizers, and villains simply will not do. We require another standard — one that sees the sharpening of our writing as the sharpening of our quality of light. And with that light we are charged with examining the stories we have been told, and how they undergird the politics we have accepted, and then telling new stories ourselves.

Of the three places for which he offers first-person witness, it is the stories of Israel and Palestine that occupy the largest portion of the book and have generated the most push-back. Written prior to the October 7, 2023, massacre, it offers an historical perspective not skewed by our emotional reactions to the war crimes of Hamas and Israel, and the horrific loss of life. But neither does it present a balanced view of both sides of the conflict — that is not his intent.

Instead, it is to show us perspectives about the area, people, and history that he says are lacking in most mainstream media. Among them:

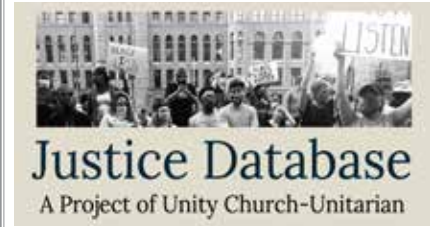
- victims of history can and do become victimizers;
- the “elevation of complexity over justice” and the “elevation of complexity over self-evident morality” is used to promote one story, the only one “tolerated,” leading to the vast under-telling of the Palestinian story;
- writers like himself and journalists see through a lens of their own experience, but if a people is to be seen and understood, it must be from their own stories.



I don't agree with everything in *The Message* but that is exactly why I, and perhaps you, should read this book, but read it critically: consider what is wise and why; consider what doesn't make sense to you and figure out what does; and if something doesn't seem quite right, take another look and don't overlook the wisdom found there, too. *The Message* by Ta-Nehisi Coates is available in the Unity Bookstall and Anderson Library (921 C).

In The Justice Database

Nobel Peace Prize Recipient
Nihon Hidankyo



Recent 2024 Nobel Peace Prize recipient Nihon Hidankyo is the only nation-wide organization of A-bomb survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Hibakusha). The total number of the surviving Hibakusha living in Japan is 174,080, as of March 2016, and several thousands in other parts of the world.

Hidankya works for the defense of the living and rights of these people.

bit.ly/JusticeData

Lectio Divina

Join us for a sacred experience of listening, contemplating, and responding to inspirational texts. Though the spiritual practice of Lectio Divina is centuries-old, typically utilizing Scripture, Unitarian Universalists use contemporary poetry. Participants report that Lectio Divina is “rejuvenating” and “insightful.” Each second Wednesday and fourth Tuesday of the month at 7:10 p.m. on Zoom; or Zoom from the Gannett Room at Unity on Wednesdays. All are welcome!

Register once and attend as often as you are able:

bit.ly/UnityLectio24-25.

Led by Lisa Wersal or Shelley Butler. Questions? Contact Shelley at library@unityunitarian.org.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

Housing Justice Team

Project Home: Be a Weekend Warrior!

We're looking for groups of 3-6 adults to participate in weekend meal teams at Provincial House in Saint Paul. Volunteers assist with serving meals, visiting with guests, and clean up. Sign up for a shift: bit.ly/ucuph! Questions? Reach out to Donna Franklin at dfranklin@interfaithaction.org or 651-363-7294. Or contact Unity Church member, Janice Gestner at janicemgg@comcast.net.

Asylum & Faithful Hospitality

Families seeking asylum in our community face an overflow in emergency shelters. Born out of this need, the Faithful Hospitality initiative partners with local houses of worship to provide shelter for these families. Interested in volunteering with us? Want to learn more? Please contact Annessa Ihde at aihde@interfaithaction.org or give her a call at (651) 364-7489. Or contact Unity Church member, Janice Gestner at janicemgg@comcast.net.

Another Habitat Success:

2024 Jimmy & Rosalyn Carter Work Project

Unity's Habitat for Humanity Team joined thousands of Habitat volunteers and began construction on 30 new, affordable homes at The Heights, a major redevelopment of the 112-acre former Hillcrest Golf Course on St. Paul's East Side. Ultimately, 1,000 homes will be built there. From September 29-October 4, for just the 30 homes that were begun, 4,000 volunteers used:

- 5.5 tons of nails and other fasteners
- 20,000 tools

For more information about how Unity's Housing Justice Team partners with Habitat for Humanity, please contact Chuck Griggs at griggscb@msn.com.



Unity Church volunteers working hard and having fun at the 2024 Habitat for Humanity Carter Work Project.

Gun Violence Prevention Team

On Monday, November 4, Unity Church will host a Red Cross Blood Drive. What does this have to do with gun violence?

According to author Elizabeth Van Brocklin writing for [The Trace](#), a study, published in the September 2018 issue of [Transfusion Journal](#) found that "...gunshot patients required ten times more blood than survivors of other traumas, including car accidents, falls and stabbing assaults. That blood comes at a price: The authors calculated the average cost of transfusion per gunshot patient to be \$11,327. For any other type of trauma patient, the price is about half that: \$5,716."

The perennial shortage of blood in our health care settings, especially in urban settings, is yet another reason to pay attention to how we think about and attend to guns, gun violence, and gun safety.

Please consider donating to the blood drive on Monday, November 4, and voting for candidates who support reasonable gun laws on Tuesday, November 5.

Act for the Earth Team

Yoga and Active Hope

**Saturday and Sunday, November 23 and 24
1:00-5:00 p.m., each day | Unity Church**

Register by email to: bethclearyawake@gmail.com

In this two afternoon workshop, we will travel through the Spiral of Active Hope, supported by gentle yoga, breathwork and seated contemplation. No yoga experience is necessary, all postures will be simple, demonstrated, and with adaptations offered. Workshop facilitator Beth Cleary has been practicing and teaching yoga for 40 years. There will be time to experience each part of the Spiral of the Work That Reconnects — gratitude, grief, growth and going on — and bring this grounded, transformational work into our holiday devotions.

JJ Hill/Obama School Team

The school year is off to a great start. Several of our volunteers attended the staff orientation session in September and were warmly welcomed by the school staff. We are thrilled that we have enough volunteers this fall to meet all of the teachers' requests for assistance. There are seventeen Unity volunteers this year, with 11 returning from last year and six more who are either new to volunteering or returning after more than a year. Some are working in classrooms and some assisting with books in the library.

Thanks to all of you for your generous contributions to the September offering that will benefit the school. Please continue to watch the progress this fall as the renovation continues at the Obama School building across the street from the church. We'll be eager to welcome the children and staff from JJ Hill next fall, as they move from their current building into Obama School.

Partner Church Team

Help The Homoródszentpéter School Thrive

Unity's partner church relationship with Homoródszentpéter in Transylvania has been ongoing for more than 30 years and getting to know and supporting the children in the village has always been important. During the August 2024 pilgrimage we experienced the youth we met on past trips, who are now ministers, teachers, and university students serving as translators for the latest group of pilgrims.

On the first day in the village this year, the pilgrims spent time with the children. Organized primarily by Nelson Moroukian and Atlas Schultz, we made paper bag hand puppets, beaded bracelets and played a variety of games in front of the community hall which they call "House of Love". At the end of the day the kids left with hands wrapped firmly around their wrists, cherishing their new bracelets and eager to spend time with their new friends.

Unity's support in years past ranged from funds for students to go to high school in the next bigger city, Udvarhely, to renovation of the kindergarten and school building with its single classroom and supplying a warm midday meal. The kindergarten has attracted children from the neighboring villages and, recognizing the need, the village started an after school daycare program. In 2022 when the mayor of the collective villages threatened to close the school, we supported the addition of folk dancing and language instruction to the afternoon programming. There are presently 24 students in the preschool, 20 students in grades 1-4 (see the mixed grade picture below), and 14 who stay after school. About half of them come from Homoródszentpéter and the other half come from the surrounding villages.



Please help keep the school competitive and operational, allowing families to choose to stay (rather than move abroad) and choose to raise their children in the village, by making a donation to the Sunday offering on November 17 (see page 3).

Red Cross Blood Drive: Donors Needed

Monday, November 4 | 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. | Parish Hall

For an appointment call 1-800-733-2767 or visit

RedCrossBlood.org.

Archives Team

A Room of Our Own



For more than a decade, the Archives Team has operated out of the back regions of the facilities storage room in the lower level of the church building. It was an area with poor lighting, no work space and sometimes racks of Christmas pageant costumes filling the aisle. But we persevered, occasionally raising the possibility of having a room dedicated to Unity's archives.

During her interim ministry, Rev. Kathleen Rolenz promised to help the team get such a room. This past June, she proposed to the Executive Team that one of the currently unused junior high rooms be reassigned. With the support of Laura Park and KP Hong, Room 24 in the basement is now dedicated to the Archives Team and its work.

Over the summer, facilities manager Robert Baker and his crew members, Mo and Marcos, removed unneeded furniture, painted the walls and replaced the carpet. Shelving units were purchased and installed, and we received a two-drawer lateral file cabinet (once in Rob Eller-Isaacs's office).

Over the next few months, we will finish equipping the room to support our work of identifying, sorting and cataloging material collected, both historic and current. With a dedicated space, we can determine the most appropriate home for documents and artifacts that help tell the story of Unity's history. That involves deciding what material can remain on site and what material is better transferred to the existing Unity collection at the Minnesota Historical Society. (We've been told that the Unity Church collection is the largest church collection at MNHS.)

Stay tuned for news about our progress and for the announcement of an open house in the next few months. We look forward to showing everyone our new digs.

Unity Archives Team: Pauline Eichten, Louise Merriam, Carol Miller, Betsy Moore, Deb Woodburn, and Fritz Hoehn.

MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH



That's Awkward

Drew Danielson, Coordinator of Youth and Campus Ministries

As the young people slowly start gathering for Tower Club on Sunday afternoons, I stick my head into the Center Room on my way to the kitchen to check on our lunch. The early arrivals sit dispersed around the room, mostly looking at their phones. Sophomores don't know if they can talk to seniors, the juniors arrive late in bunches, and the others wait nervously hoping friends will show up.

"Sitting around, feeling awkward, hoping more come. I see you are all doing exactly what you're supposed to be doing!" I say, hilariously.

This rarely gets much of a laugh, but that's OK, I'm just naming it for them, recognizing that for a teenager, or maybe for anyone, that awkwardness is painful and horrible. Tentativeness and whispered conversations go on like this, until one of us comes in and loudly says, "Let's say grace!" And just like that, after a repeat-after-me blessing, people get up, they start to chatter together loudly, some rush to the front of the food line, there is laughter and conversation, the group is relieved and at ease.

I admit I have yet to work out exactly why a pre meal blessing is called "grace." But in this context, that blessing serves to help release us from self-consciousness. It helps us to know this will all be OK, lovely even. We needn't feel awkward together.

Awkwardness really might be the biggest fear and discomfort most of us have. It's arguably the worst for teens and young adults because they know their peers will call it out and needle or pummel each other mercilessly over it. "Way to go, Grace!" Oh to be as effortless as the popular kids, the athletes, all those confident others moving smoothly through life — gracefully. I'm thinking now of grace in the sense of things that are decidedly not awkward. An eagle soaring majestically in swooping circles, an elegant dancer, a skilled brush stroke, an unforced, pleasurable laugh. We long to move through our circles smoothly, looking like we know what we are doing, comfortable with ourselves, comfortable with each other, free to be natural. Graceful.

Something in that sharing of grace at the beginning of these youth gatherings serves to pull everyone a little bit out of themselves and into the circle of others. We are gathered together, which is nice, and we are all famished, about to share a meal, which is awesome! And at the same time, Tower Club kids know that after a time they will be pulled back into a circle, and they'll be asked to speak to each other, to listen to each other, to have their opinions weighed, and quite possibly challenged. How awkward that might be. But maybe not — maybe we can enter into that freely and honestly and not with fear, but with care, with love. With grace.

That won't just happen. Grace takes practice, and missteps. The athlete wasn't graceful when they first tried out, nor was the dancer, the painter, the speaker, the politician. With practice comes confidence, and certainty that it will come together, it will work out. Maybe not easily, maybe not smoothly. We can bless each other for trying.

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 10-December 1, watch for an email with details and a link to register!
- 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.

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.

Religious Education New Family Orientation | Gannett Room

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. Email Nelson one week in advance if you plan to attend: nelson@unityunitarian.org.

MUSIC MINISTRY



Music Notes

Dr. Shekela Wanyama

Youth Choir Directory, Unity Choir Soprano Section Leader

On October 14 our Youth Choir Director and Unity Choir soprano section leader Dr. Shekela Wanyama conducted a monumental choral program with Border CrosSing, the Minnesota Chorale, the South High School Choirs, and numerous partners from all over the community. The central theme of the concert was water conservation and it was presented in observance of Indigenous People's Day. In place of the November music column, I'm reprinting an excerpted portion of Shekela's remarks from this concert. I found them incredibly inspiring and hope they will encourage folks in our congregation to follow her amazing work. – Ahmed

My name is Shekela Wanyama, and I am a child of Water.

I have a faint memory of being very young and throwing a tantrum because I didn't want to get into the pool for swim lessons. Something must have changed pretty quickly though, because I've been drawn like a magnet to Water ever since. Whether swimming laps, floating in a lake, or watching an ocean tide, Water teaches me. That's all swimming lessons really are: an opportunity to understand the ways of Water, and how to work with it rather than against it — to literally swim in curiosity and faith, rather than fight and struggle out of fear.

For many of us, the life-giving nature of Water has been stolen from us through forced migration, enslavement, poisoning, and other forms of "collateral damage" under the auspices of economic progress. Maybe we fear Water because we have been pulled away from Nature, imagining that we are immune to its cycles. We have forgotten what it is like to work with Water rather than seek to control it.

There were a few moments this past summer when I thought it was misguided for us to come together on a project about the scarcity of Water because there was so much of it! We had so much rain! But then the signs started going up around the beaches at the lakes. It is summer tradition now to see signs warning of toxic algae. This summer is also when I learned that Water can be considered "biologically dead." Scientists declare this when Water becomes too low in oxygen to support living organisms. Low oxygen happens because of excess bacteria or pollution from algae blooms and other toxins. I looked at the Mississippi, and at the Creek, and realized we could one day experience "biologically dead" water in this place we so proudly call "the City of Lakes." And then remembered Water is an endangered resource all over our region already, from pipelines and PFAS, from copper mining and overuse. In moments like this, I turn to our Indigenous neighbors for knowledge that transcends the limitations of our current vision. We must think across generations, to learn what previous generations did so that we may live today. In the process of unlearning and relearning, we can find guidance on how to live in service of our own futures.

Today's program represents a variety of perspectives about Water and what it means for our future if we do not begin to take proactive and collective approaches toward protecting it. We are neighbors. We are writers, musicians, scientists, farmers, doctors, carers, students, artists, teachers, and elders — and we're sharing what angers us, what causes us grief. We're also sharing what brings us joy and ignites our hope. Every community gathering will have differences of experience and perspective, and in bringing those together, we are more informed. I don't know much, because the world is complex and I am frequently tired. But I do know, from decades of smelling rain on the breeze, listening for its patter on the ground, from swimming and floating and always finding my peace in its presence, that when we work with Water and learn her ways, she will keep us alive. Mni Wičóni: Water is Life.

Music Calendar

Upcoming Events

Sunday, November 10

Border CrosSing baritone Rodolfo Nieto and pianist Jared Mikach in recital at 1:00 p.m. at Church of the Ascension: 1723 Bryant Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN, 55411.

Saturday-Sunday, December 7 and 8

Border CrosSing continues its tradition of performing *Navidad Nuestra* by Argentine composer Ariel Ramírez. This year's concert pairs this powerful work with Latin-American Baroque villancicos in Spanish and Nahuatl. Saturday, December 7, at 7:00 p.m., at Academia Cesar Chavez Charter School in Saint Paul, and Sunday, December 8, at 4:00 p.m., at Church of the Ascension in Minneapolis.

Sunday, December 8

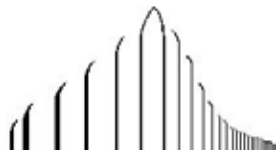
Join Mila Vocal Ensemble at 2:30 p.m., in the Sanctuary at Unity Church, for an afternoon of beautiful harmonies and festive cheer featuring the hauntingly beautiful folk music of Eastern Europe. Tickets on sale at bit.ly/mila1224. Unity Church members can use the code FRIEND to access discounted tickets or mention they are members at the door. Kids under 10: free!

Friday, December 13

Unity Church Music Ministry Holiday Concert and dessert buffet. Carol singing starts in the Sanctuary at 6:30 p.m., concert at 7:00 p.m. Dessert buffet to follow the concert in Parish Hall (bring a treat to share).

Sunday, January 12, 2025

One Voice Mixed Chorus will present *Time & (Trans)formation* at 3:00 p.m. at The O'Shaughnessy Auditorium (2004 Randolph Avenue, St. Paul). Tickets coming soon at onevoicemn.org.



UNITY CHURCH-UNITARIAN

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Rev. KP Hong, Minister of Faith Formation
Laura Park, Executive Director
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**TIME SENSITIVE
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Unity's 10th and 11th graders went on pilgrimage to Boston over MEA weekend in October. This group photo of the pilgrims was taken in front of Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House (where she wrote and set her novel *Little Women*).