

TRUST

The life of a congregation is a rich community tapestry of people, programs, ministries and worship. We lift up the patterns of this tapestry at Unity Church with the threads of monthly themes woven through our worship and programming. These themes deepen our understanding of our own faith and strengthen our bonds with one another in religious community.

Years ago, visiting Lake Superior with a college friend, we walked out on the glassy landscape of that frozen Great Lake. Enjoying the March sunlight already warm on our faces, we stood still, taking in the scene with appreciation and wonder until a loud crack thundered through the ice beneath our feet. My friend Tom, possibly drawing from old boy scout training or engineering concepts he was then studying in college, swiftly and gently spread his body flat across the ice, distributing his weight. I, on the other hand, could not have tried harder to crack the ice myself, jumping straight up in the air and coming down hard with all my weight focused on two feet tightly held together as if to pack a greater punch.

Fortunately, the ice held. We slithered safely back to shore. But the unnerving experience comes back to me now in this time when so much of the ground beneath our feet is thunderously cracking and shifting dramatically, impacted by a worldwide pandemic as well as the significant effects of both climate change and long-term systemic racism. Where do we find a trustworthy place to perch and shelter when so many foundations are deeply cracked and unreliable?

I find wisdom in Tom's approach — the inclination to widen what we trust, to increase our points of contact, to distribute our awareness beyond the smallest sense of self to a larger wholeness. This is, isn't it, the wisdom of the safety net, tied and stretched

across space to catch and hold us when we fall? Each of us — across all time — is born into a net of relationship and connection, an ecology of being, that will not let us go. Can we remember this, in the throes of upheaval we are experiencing now? Can we widen what we trust to include others, whose wellbeing is — always — inextricably bound up with our own?

J. Ruth Gendler, offering a personification of Trust, begins with its lineage: "Trust is the daughter of Truth," she notes. To which one might well ask: how do we trust the many truths being delivered today that are uncomfortable or painful, rife with uncertainty and loss, both anticipated and already experienced? What do we trust when, now and historically, our systems and institutions fail to deliver justice, when our society fails to preserve peace, when our communities fail to offer shelter, when our best efforts fail to extinguish the flames raging both literally and metaphorically?

Some will answer by mistrusting truth itself; but we've seen where that leads. Undermining truth, also known as denial, creates the most untrustworthy ground of all. What if, instead, we look compassionately into the painful truths of history and the present day to notice another truth embedded with them in the nature of life itself — the truth of connectedness and the promises offered by countless efforts by many people, years ago and again today, mending the nets of relationship so long and badly torn?

Fittingly, Gendler's brief passage personifying Trust ends by looking forward. Following its lineage into the future, she notices what Trust begets. And this is why trust matters, not just for us, but for the longer arc of time and life. Trust, Gendler writes, "is the mother of Love."

If we each pick up one torn thread in the net that holds us all, our work of mending can reconnect us to the larger truths of love. And so we find our place in the longest lineage of Trust that both supports and depends on us.

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

Trust Theme Resources

For further reflection on this theme, a variety of resources including books, poems, video, and audio, are listed in this month's Chalice Circle packet, online at www.unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html.

JUST WORDS

Just Words



Trust like justice has both intimate and public dimensions. As adrienne marie brown so powerfully points out in her pivotal book *Emergent Strategies: Shaping Change, Shaping Worlds*: “the whole is a mirror of the parts. fractal — the health of the cell is the health of the species and the planet.” If I do not trust myself to do or hold my part, then larger work with which I am involved becomes inherently less trustworthy.

Among the things that I miss most in these Covid-haunted days is singing with others. I have loved to sing for as long as I remember. Choral singing is a vivid and simple example of fractal reality. The quality of the singer is the quality of the choir is the quality of the sound.

I have a confession to make. Much as I love to sing in groups, I do not entirely trust my skills. In fact, I have always gone out of my way to stand close-by someone with better pitch and tone control than I so that I can tune and time my sound to his. I cannot help but think that listening carefully to your section leader or another singer stronger than yourself is common practice. Only the most skillful choirs can break down the sections and mix everyone up.

Those of us for whom singing together is truly a spiritual practice are dismayed that the pandemic has cut us off from that key source of nourishment and inspiration. The most common question church leaders are asked these days is, “when will we be able to sing together again?” We have no idea.

All that we can really trust is now. I share your grief that we are unable to gather in person to sing. That said, I have a strong sense that one of the hidden blessings of the present reality is that it pushes us to learn to sing alone. It teaches us to learn to trust our voices. As we learn to trust our voices we will learn in turn to trust ourselves and even one another. May trust in ourselves, in each other, in our church, and in the Nation take hold and grow ever-stronger among us until we meet again.

As always,
Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs

The Wheel of Life

In Memoriam

Cathleen Fabian

November 30, 1950 –
August 5, 2020

JP Horan Kimsal

November 13, 1970 –
August 22, 2020

In Celebration

Elizabeth Shippe

celebrated her 100th birthday on
September 20, 2020

Pastoral Care

If you have a joy or sorrow, life-cycle event, or concern you would like to share with the ministers and Pastoral Care Team, or have shared in the embracing meditation during Sunday service, please complete the online form at www.unityunitarian.org/pastoral-care.html or send an email to janne@unityunitarian.org and a minister will contact you.

MANO A MANO POP-UP CRAFT SALES

Tuesday, October 13 and 27 • 9:00-6:00 PM

Tuesday, November 10 and 24 • 9:00-6:00 PM

Saturday, November 7 and 21 • 10:00 a.m.-2:00 PM

Mano a Mano office: 925 Pierce Butler Route, St. Paul
651-457-3141

Wear a mask and bring a checkbook or credit card!

This is your chance to get your holiday hats and scarves from one of your favorite vendors!

OCTOBER SUNDAY SERVICES

Sunday Worship and Coffee Hour

While our building remains closed, multigenerational Sunday Services are being live-streamed from the Sanctuary at 10:00 a.m. Religious Education programming is available for families, please see page 14. Details and links, including access to past services, are available online at www.unityunitarian.org.

Each Sunday, everyone is welcome to join a virtual Zoom coffee hour after the service. To participate in the coffee hour, please refer to the link in our weekly Sunday service email. If you would like to receive our congregational emails, visit www.unityunitarian.org and click on "Join our email list."

October 4: *The Embodied Gospel: Listening to the Truth of Our Own Bodies*

Livestream link: <https://youtu.be/e5zx5yae-S8>

Inspired by the groundbreaking work of somatic research, Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs and worship associate Kara Younkin will explore the truth that is available to each and every one of us when we listen first to our bodies, which may be especially critical in these days of uncertainty and challenge.

October 11: *Brave Harbor*

Livestream link: <https://youtu.be/oeqHZWj9BNk>

Though our ministry now is largely online, Unity's financial obligations continue. Your support of the church is an expression of the promises we make to each other and to the world. Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs and worship associate Katrina Nichols will offer a service about bravery, trust, and the promises we make as we renew our financial commitments to the church and to the ministry we share.

October 18: *Moving at the Speed of Trust*

Livestream link: <https://youtu.be/vCzs9T0zUV0>

When trust has been broken, how do we begin the long, slow heart's work of restoring it? Join the challenging but healing work of holding hearts and possibilities open while exploring the broken trust between indigenous peoples and white settlers who claimed title of the land where Unity Church now stands. Rev. Karen Hering and worship associate Lia Rivamonte consider where we might start in rebuilding trust and what reparations might ask of us today.

October 25: *A More Perfect Union*

Livestream link: <https://youtu.be/NmMZJsmCXcQ>

On November 3, the United States will hold our 59th national presidential Election Day — and in the midst of pandemic, climate catastrophe, rising authoritarianism, and widespread uprising, this is perhaps the most significant election in our country's history. In the context of extreme polarization and threats to so many communities, what trust can we have in the traditional systems and structures of democracy in the United States? And if that trust has been eroded — or never existed — in what can we place our trust, and our hope? Join Rev. Ashley Horan and worship associate Jake Rueter for an exploration of our current moment, and what our faith offers and compels us to do in these times.



The Rev. Ashley Horan is the Organizing Strategy Director of the Unitarian Universalist Association, where she leads the team that holds the outward-facing justice ministries of the UUA, including UU the Vote, Side With Love, and Love Resists. Previously, Ashley was the Executive Director of MUUSJA, Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance, and the curriculum developer with Beloved Conversations. Ashley grew up at Unity Church, and was ordained here in 2015. She lives in Minneapolis with her partner the Rev. Karen Hutt, and their children.

October Touchstone

For as long our church building remains closed, we will be hosting a monthly "touchstone" event to offer the opportunity for connection in a carefully distanced setting.



Saturday, October 24

10:00 a.m.–noon

Portland Avenue Entrance

Bring the family and join us to honor those living and dead who have brought democracy to life. Plan to bring photographs and tributes to family members and historic figures who inspire us as we approach the most significant election of our lives.

If you are not able to attend, please send images to martha@unityunitarian.org.

Offering Recipients

October 4: MUUSJA

October 11: UUA Disaster Relief Fund

October 18: Indigenous Roots

October 25: Peace and Justice Scholarship Fund

Details on page 11.

Flowers for Worship

If you would like to provide flowers for Sunday worship, contact Martha Tilton at 651-228-1456 x105 or martha@unityunitarian.org.



White Silence Is Violence

Clover Earl, Trustee

Two years ago, or was it three, I attended a program in Unity's sanctuary — it may have been Robin DiAngelo, author of *White Fragility*, and Resmaa Menakem who wrote *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending our Hearts and Bodies*. What is forever indelibly etched in my mind's eye though, is the white woman about my age (and yes, I am making assumptions), sitting in the pew in front of me. She was wearing a black T-shirt that screamed in big white block letters "I AM A RECOVERING RASCIST."

That was the start of my journey to get to where I am today, which is proudly proclaiming — without guilt or shame — that I am a white supremacist and recovering racist. There have been and will continue to be moments of real discomfort as I walk this path, and there is way too much at stake for me to sit on the sidelines.

A number of months ago your Board of Trustees took the IDI (Intercultural Development Inventory), which is now available to anyone in the congregation who would like to take it. It came as no surprise to me that I am in minimization, and I am committed to moving along the continuum from a monocultural mindset (denial/polarization) to an intercultural one (acceptance/adaptation).

After the murder of George Floyd, my husband Tom and I attended a number of protests and saw many home-made signs with potent messages on them. One that stopped me in my tracks was, "White Silence is Violence." In that moment I knew I would play a role in amplifying the voices of people of color.

The video "How Can We Win" features a local black activist named Kimberly Jones and it has been seen well over two million times. There are a number of different versions of her "speech" and I have personally shared this one (link below) with more than twenty friends and family members. Some found it offensive, while others like me, found it incredibly moving and powerful. In six minutes and 46 seconds (two minutes less than Derek Chauvin had his knee on George Floyd's neck) Kimberly tells her story of racism in our country; she is angry, and I do not blame her.

I hope you will decide to take the leap and watch the video. If it resonates with you, and you feel moved by the phrase "White Silence is Violence," I invite you to join me in amplifying the voices of people of color. You could start by sharing this one with your family and friends.

Kimberly Jones Activist: "How Can We Win"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sb9_qGOa9Go

Brave Harbor

UNITY CHURCH 2021 PLEDGE DRIVE

A harbor is a refuge where boats and ships are protected from storms, a sanctuary for repair and restoration, a place to offload cargo and resupply for the journey ahead. It is a welcoming haven for the seaworthy and the weary.

Unity Church, likewise, is a trusted space — both physical and virtual, these days — where we travelers seek calm from the commotion of our lives. It's where we allow ourselves to drop anchor, turn down the volume of the outside world, share our burdens, and find our balance. It is a place where we chart our course together, side by side. It is our brave harbor.

October marks the beginning of Unity's annual pledge drive, when we ask each other to declare that we hold the church in trust through our financial support for the coming year. This year's canvass theme is "Brave Harbor." Just as a ship seeks harbor for rest and refueling, so too are we drawn to our beloved church for refuge, repair, and new resolve.

Soon, you will receive a mailing that includes a personalized pledge card and information about canvass related events. During Sunday services and through online channels, you will hear from fellow congregants about a time in their lives when Unity Church was a brave harbor. If you have a story to share, please send it by email to Martha Tilton at martha@unityunitarian.org.

As we work our way through the church calendar, the annual pledge drive is yet one more way we are adapting. While we can't gather in large groups to celebrate what we have and what we hope for our future, we can still ensure that Unity Church continues to be a beacon in our brave harbor. Your generosity and annual pledges help make that possible.

Still time to make a 2020 pledge!

If you have not yet made a pledge for 2020 and would like to do so, contact Barbara Hubbard at barbara@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x116.

Pledge payments and donations can be made online at <https://secure.acceptiva.com/?cst=1aadb6>.

BELOVED COMMUNITY STAFF TEAM



Fall Brings Two New Artists In Residence to Unity Church

Lia Rivamonte, Artist in Residence Team

Purpose Statement:
The Artist in Residence program at Unity Church seeks to cultivate generative

relationships between the church and creatives across diverse art forms, to undertake a period of focused work that amplifies the congregation's vision of becoming a multicultural, antiracist Beloved Community. Through the exchange between the artists and church community, presenting and sharing both the creative work and process, the program seeks to activate our imagination, foster relationships among and beyond our church walls, inspire spiritual and emotional growth, and open the church community to larger dimensions in the work of making culture change.

Recently, I listened to a panel discussion of self-identified queer and trans Latinx artists on the topic of anti-blackness in the Latinx community. Black Lives Matter has forced conscientious individuals and communities from every background to look into the mirror — eyes wide open — and take stock of the anti-black bias in our own histories, cultures, and traditions. The painful truth is that none of us gets a free pass; one of the burdens wrought by the legacy of colonization is the lingering hatred of our own dark skin color, a perverse yearning for whiteness. That this exchange of truth telling was instigated by theater artists was no surprise to me.

Theater-makers, actors in particular, have long been subjected to a narrow idea of what constitutes physical attractiveness or suitability in terms of skin color, race, and ethnicity. Their conversation ran the gamut from how they view their intersectionality regarding their work in theater, to what they have lost and/or gained in owning their identities as Latinx or Black or both, to their renewed hope for a more

equitable, inclusive theater world where they would not be penalized for being Black, queer, trans, Latinx or all of the above. Where their stories would be told truthfully, and where their work would not be judged solely by historically white definitions of excellence. It struck me that these exchanges are important, and that having artists around to activate them is just what we hunger for at Unity Church.

Now, I know there are plenty of us who prefer nonfiction to fiction, a scientific paper to a poem, or a documentary to a scripted movie. No matter. Each of these modalities trade in truth, and all are driven by a powerful sense of curiosity and the imagination. Imagination is the key to the multicultural beloved community we profess to want to live in. Imagination is what allows us to envision a more generous, kind, safe, viable, and loving existence. Imagination is the language of art. With the Artist in Residence program at Unity Church, we have an opportunity to grow as individuals and as a community, and to become more articulate in the language of imagination. We are thrilled to have had the pleasure and privilege of hearing Rebekah Crisanta de Ybarra's singular blend of Latin American Nueva Cancion and American Blues, and to learn about the making and meaning of the Dia de los Muertos ofrenda. We were fortunate to be able to immerse ourselves in Andean folk culture, and the rich harmonies of the mother and son duo, Ina Yukka. We were transported by their intricate knowledge and understanding of Andean-rooted music, instruments, and dance, and a concert that got us up out of our early pandemic couches to sway to the tuneful rhythms.

This fall the Artist in Residence Team is ecstatic to introduce two new artists to the Unity community: **Donte Collins** (www.dontecollins.com) is an award-winning poet, and spoken word artist who "...uses language and their body

(the marriage between the archive and the repertoire) to reimagine how poetry can offer necessary rupture and refrain." Their first book of poems, "Autopsy," was a finalist for a Minnesota Book Award. **Marcus Young** (<https://youtu.be/xbY80eFOBIM>) is a behavioral and social practice artist making work for the concert stage, museums, and the public realm. As City Artist in St. Paul from 2006 to 2015, Marcus created the ongoing public works project *Everyday Poems for City Sidewalk*. In 2008, he established *Don't You Feel It Too?* a participatory street dance project that continues to serve as a means of self-liberation and of protest. Both artists are excited to explore the possibilities offered in their creative work with the Unity Church community.

Especially in this time of social distancing, our emotional and spiritual selves require close tending. We encourage everyone to become acquainted with Donte and Marcus and learn about their work, what they choose to focus on in their work, and why. Witness how an idea is transformed into something wholly unexpected, something truthful that stretches the imagination. Experience your own growth by participating in these artists' work at Unity Church. The Artist in Residence program promises to help us strengthen our connection to our deeper selves, to one another, and to the larger world. Please watch for forthcoming information and program details.

The Artist in Residence Team includes Ahmed Anzaldúa, KP Hong, Lia Rivamonte, Amanda Rueter, and Maura Williams.



WELCOME NEWCOMERS



Welcome Words

Laura Park, Acting Director of Membership and Hospitality

What does trust look like in religious community when it is practiced intentionally? In his book *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*, Parker Palmer describes the circle of trust that welcomes the shy soul into discernment about life's meaning and purpose. He says, ". . . we cannot embrace that challenge [of living an undivided, whole life] all alone, at

least, not for long: we need trustworthy relationships, tenacious communities of support, if we are to sustain the journey toward an undivided life . . . a circle of trust holds us in a space where we can make our own discernments, in our own way and time, in the encouraging and challenging presence of other people."

We hope Unity Church can be a place where you can find and build multiple circles of trust, where you're held in your discernments, whether from near or far in these times of online ministry. We want this to be a place where you learn how to be present to and trust your own inner voice and, with that self-knowledge, learn to go deep quickly with others.

My virtual door is always open for conversation, information, and exploration of your pathway into deeper meaning in our religious community. The best way to contact me right now is email, if possible, laura@unityunitarian.org. Or call the church office and leave a message: 651-228-1456 x110. 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. If you have questions or would like one-on-one conversation about getting connected or about membership, please contact Laura Park, Acting Director of Membership and Hospitality, laura@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x110.

Finding Yourself at Unity

Sundays Online • 1:00-2:00 p.m.

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

October 4: Membership 101

October 11: Religious Education for Children, Youth, and Adults

October 18: Q&A with the Ministers

October 25: Pastoral Care

Committing to Unity

Tuesday, November 24 • 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Are you ready to make the membership commitment? This class explores the deeper meanings and expectations of membership and shared ministry. It offers time to reflect on the meaning of generosity and how you can discover the places in your life where the world's need meets the gifts and joy you have to offer. The class concludes with a ceremony as participants sign the membership book (virtually if necessary) and officially join the church! RSVP by email to Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org.

Sunday Coffee Hour

After the service, whether this is your first time with us or you've been here all your life, you're invited to participate in a virtual Zoom coffee hour, where we share a bit of our lives with each other and get to know one another more deeply. Stay for a few minutes or stay up to 45 minutes to connect in smaller break-out rooms.

Unity Church staff and volunteers lead the sessions, and will suggest questions both light-hearted and deep for discussion. To participate in the Zoom coffee hour, please refer to the link in our weekly Sunday service email. If you do not currently receive our Sunday service emails please sign up here: <https://bit.ly/sundayservicemail>.

Mentoring at Unity

A Path to Deeper Connection

Would you welcome having a guide to congregational life at Unity Church? Request a mentor! Your mentor will meet with you at least once a month face-to-face and be available for ongoing questions and advice. You can decide together what connection would be most helpful. You might attend Sunday services together or meet to discuss Unitarian Universalism and your spiritual journeys, or attend a church event together, or find another way to connect. Each pair makes a commitment to work together for at least six months.

If you have questions, or would like to request a mentor, please email Laura Park, Acting Director of Membership and Hospitality, laura@unityunitarian.org.

Just Because You Haven't Seen Us Lately Doesn't Mean We're Not Still Here

Shelley Butler, Unity Library and Bookstall Team

Your Unity Library and Bookstall Team has been busy this summer and fall even though we haven't been in our physical spaces at the church for six months now. We've partnered with the Racial and Restorative Justice Team to produce the Justice Database (bit.ly/UnityJusticeDatabase), and we've worked with the Beloved Community Team on antiracism efforts. We've been reading, watching videos, and listening to podcasts, and have a lot to share with you.

In her new 2020 book **Caste: The Origins of Our**

Discontents, Isabel Wilkerson defines the underlying social structure in the

United States as a caste system similar to that found in India and past Nazi

Germany. A caste system is one in which everyone has their place or level in the social structure. In her

words, "A caste system uses rigid, often arbitrary boundaries to keep

the ranked groupings apart, distinct from one another and in their assigned places" A caste system defines

who has power, and for the United States it has been Caucasians since the beginning of our country 400

years ago. For Americans, this system creates horrible costs for everyone in terms of health, squelched human

developed and gifts, life expectancy, empathy for each other, education and living standards. With the

information provided in this book, the reader has the opportunity to share in making changes necessary to

eliminate the current system. — Jan Gestner, Bookstall

How to Be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi offers big ideas about racism and antiracism. Racism is easy and

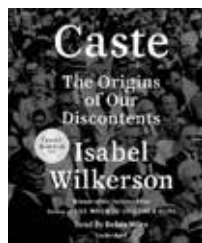
like breathing the air of our history; being an antiracist requires constant self-examination and self-awareness. To

support this point, he begins each chapter with a story from his own life that describes the racist ideas he only

gradually discarded. Each chapter includes the historical and legal context of the issue in question. Kendi's

personal stories, definitions, historical context, excellent footnotes, and lively writing make the book accessible.

It is a must-read for anyone seeking to understand how racism became embedded in U.S. law and culture and what could be done about it. — Louise Merriam, Library



Sustainable Living Film Discussion



Slay the Dragon

Friday, October 2 • Discussion at 8:00 p.m.

Register: <http://bit.ly/slaythedragons1>

Watch this important documentary available via [Amazon Prime](https://www.amazon.com) and [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mCCLmLwpE) and then join the discussion.

This is a census year, as well as an election year. Does it matter? You bet! In keeping with our fall theme of Get Out the Vote, watch this important documentary about gerrymandering and then join the conversation.

Racial Justice Movie Discussion



A Class Divided

Friday, October 9 • Discussion at 7:00 p.m.

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

Watch this documentary from Frontline online at <https://youtu.be/1mCCLmLwpE> and then join the discussion.

A Class Divided is a 1985 PBS documentary featuring Iowa educator Jane Elliott reuniting with her class of third graders to discuss their participation in her 1970 exercise on discrimination and privilege. This documentary focuses on their reflections of having been divided into two distinct groups: the children with blue eyes and the children with brown.

Book Reading: Wednesday, October 7 • 7:00 p.m.

Shelter by Margaret Hasse and Sharon DeMark

Please join us for a special evening of poetry and art via Zoom. Registration required; please sign up online at <http://bit.ly/shelterbookreading>.



WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

Wellspring Wednesday at Unity Church has long been a multi-generational opportunity to gather midweek at church for food, fellowship, and fun. While the church building remains closed due to the pandemic, we are unable to share a meal together but we continue to gather online for programming. Multi-generational chapel services are prerecorded and posted on the church's YouTube channel (<http://bit.ly/wwchapel>) each Wednesday for viewing anytime that afternoon or later; and Unity's Religious Education program offers Our Whole Lives (OWL) classes for youth and periodic Tweens gatherings.

For adults, one or two live online programs each Wednesday will begin at 7:00 p.m., offering enrichment, spiritual practice and fellowship. We hope you'll join us. If you haven't yet participated in an online program using Zoom, church staff can help you get started. Descriptions and registration links for September's programs are listed below. (Unless otherwise noted, you can use the registration link right up until the program starts to participate.) Also watch your daily email from the church for additional program options that may be announced as the month unfolds.

October 7 • 7:00-8:30 PM

Shelter: An Evening with Poet Margaret Hasse and Painter Sharon DeMark

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

Please join us for a reading of poetry and viewing of images from the new book, *Shelter*, by poet Margaret Hasse and painter Sharon DeMark. Creative collaborators Margaret and Sharon will discuss how they worked together during the time of Covid-19 to better understand what it means to shelter and to create the book. Audience members will be invited to describe what has sheltered them during this perilous time.



The Great College Search

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

Can't tell the SAT from the ACT? Got your Wheatons mixed up? Experiencing FAFSA freak-out? For high school families, finding a college can be a stressful for the whole family. Learn how to optimize the process and become a critical consumer of colleges. The four weeks will cover these topics:

- October 7: Getting ready for the college quest. Conducting a search.
- October 14: Creating a list of schools. Applying to the schools you select.
- October 21: Financial aid basics.
- October 28: Competitive Colleges: What, Why (or Why Not), and How

Sessions will consist of presentations (up to 75 minutes) followed by question and answer sessions and are for high school students and/or parents who are currently in or interested in starting a college search and application process. We'll also try to raise up topics that might be of special interest to Unitarian Universalist searchers. Unity Church member Craig Allen is a certified college admissions counselor and a member of the Higher Education Consultants Association (HECA) and the Minnesota Association for College Admission Counseling (MACAC).

October 14 • 7:00-8:30 PM

Open Page Writing: Moving at the Speed of Trust

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

What does it mean to move — or live — at the speed of trust? It is even possible when mistrust has been so widely sown across the ground beneath our feet? Can a spiritual practice of writing help us find and foster trust? This session, for writers and nonwriters alike, will explore the challenges and importance of building trust in our lives and the world.

The Great College Search: Creating a List of Schools

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

October 21 • 7:00-8:30 PM

Restoring Broken Trust: Congregational Approaches to Reparations with Indigenous Peoples

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

An evening of learning and conversation with presenter Jim Bear Jacobs, a member of the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican Nation and cultural facilitator working to raise public awareness of American Indian causes and injustices. He is founder/convener of "Healing Minnesota Stories" and its Sacred Sites Tours (see page 9) and serves as parish associate at Church of All Nations Presbyterian Church.

The Great College Search: Financial Aid Basics

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

October 28 • 7:00-8:30 PM

Housing for All: A Justice Issue

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

Join Rev. Rob Eller-Isaac and Beacon Organizer Elizabeth Tannen for a discussion about faith-based housing justice and the work that Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative is doing to address the escalating catastrophe of unhoused and unsheltered people in our communities. Learn about opportunities to support more permanent supportive housing as well as to advance statewide solutions. You'll be offered space for dialogue and listening on how housing intersects with racial justice and land justice in Minnesota.

The Great College Search: Competitive Colleges

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

Connecting with Ourselves and Others: Relationships and Sexuality

This new monthly series offers a candid look at gender identity, sexuality, and relationships, connecting our personal experience to the experiences of others and the forces of society at large. Each time we meet, we will discuss short articles or videos on the monthly topics and hold small group conversations reflecting on personal experiences. We will learn about ourselves while identifying actions we can take in our church community to make it more welcoming for all.

The class, led by Unity Church member Mike Huber, will critique the heteronormative expectations of dominant culture. All adults are welcome. Members of the LGBTQ+ community are encouraged to register. Please invite friends who might want to join you in attending.

This is an eight-part series held on Zoom, Thursday evenings, 7:00-8:30 p.m., October 29 – May 27, 2021. Registration is free and a single registration will apply to all monthly programs you are able to attend. The hope is to build a community that will create a group understanding.

Register online at <http://bit.ly/connectingselfandother>. For more information, email mikehuberece@gmail.com.

Sessions Overview

- October 29: Explicit & Implicit Consent
- November 19: Facing Change Throughout Our Lives
- December 17: Relationships in the Age of COVID
- January 28: Power Dynamics and Relationships
- February 25: Expanding Our Desires
- March 25: The Charmed Circle
- April 29: Compassion in Our Everyday Interactions
- May 27: Moving Past Us and Them

Repairing Broken Trust

Repairing any trust that's been broken presents great challenges, both in our personal lives and in our communities and nations. In the United States, a long and still continuing national history of broken trust between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples calls us today into the difficult but healing work of reparations on the path toward right relationship. In considering this month's theme of trust, please join us for worship and programming exploring these searching questions and the healing possibilities present when we take time to ask them.

Moving at the Speed of Trust (see page 3)

Sunday Worship, October 18 • 10:00 a.m.

Livestream link: <https://youtu.be/vCzs9T0zUV0>

Restoring Broken Trust: Congregational Approaches to Reparations with Indigenous Peoples (see page 10)

Wellspring Wednesday, October 21 • 700-8:30 p.m.

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

Sacred Sites Tour

Sunday, October 25 • 1:00-5:00 p.m.

As the last of several programs this month seeking to increase understanding of local history that continues to play out today, Unity Church will sponsor a Sacred Sites Tour, offered by Healing Minnesota Stories. The tour will visit three sacred sites of the Dakota, the original people of this area including many still in the Twin Cities today. These tours are led by Jim Bear Jacobs (Mohican) and Bob Klanderud (Dakota). They provide an opportunity to learn about Minnesota history from a Native perspective through storytelling and by reverently experiencing the sacred sites in silence, meditation, and reflection.



To honor Covid-safe precautions, the October 25 outdoor tour is limited to 15 participants, each driving themselves consecutively to the three sites at or near the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers. Details will be sent upon registration. Cost of the tour is \$60/participant, or any amount you can afford. To register (sign up early to assure participation) or for more information, contact Karen Hering at karen@unityunitarian.org.

A Movement Meditation to Calm Anxieties

In the last week of October and the end of this fall's stressful election season, Tai ji teacher Lisa Schlingerman offers a brief recorded meditation for centering and renewal.

Find the quiet space in your body and mind with this moving meditation. Join Lisa for 15 minutes of a healthy, renewing, and relaxing practice of Qigong and deep breathing. Stand or sit, let go, release, and bring in the moment.

This asynchronous program will be posted on Unity's YouTube channel on Wednesday, October 28, available for your viewing anytime thereafter. To receive an email when it's posted, please complete the form found here: www.unityunitarian.org/adult-learning-spiritual-practice.html.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Can We Stop Climate Change, Stop Extinction, and Ensure Justice?

Anna Newton, Sustainable Living Team

The sky in the photo on my phone was an other-worldly shade of reddish-orange, framed by trees silhouetted along the street where our son lives south of San Francisco. Our daughter on the Olympic Peninsula texted that the dusk-like smoke made the birds act weird: the Pacific coast was burning. With two of my children living on the west coast, climate change was getting personal. Later my eyes caught this headline: "When Sea Otters Vanished Everything Else Started to Crumble." (Katherine J. Wu, NYTimes September 10, 2020) Sea otters love sea urchins for dinner, and without the otters the spiny echinoderms "mow down entire forests of kelp" that an entire ecosystem depends on. Why were sea otters down 90%? They are eaten by orcas, hungry because their preferred whale prey have been overharvested by humans. Warming seas have exacerbated the problem.

Yesterday morning the sun I saw was red: dust from the fires had reached Minnesota. I wish I could close my eyes to these troubles, to people, animals, and marginalized communities bearing the brunt of pollution and climate damage. Our faith teaches us to honor "the interdependent web of all existence **of which we are a part.**" We must discern our place in the web. We must ask how our actions affect other life, other people. We hold both the responsibility and the potential remedy for this crisis in our hands. It is time to put the ideas generated at Unity's Gathering for the Earth event into action.

Join the Sustainable Living Team on **Saturday, November 7**, as we dig in together to create Unity's **Green Sanctuary Action Plan**. You will have an opportunity to join an action team to move toward our vision of a more just world for all people, where climate change and species extinction is halted. Action teams will recommend practical solutions, systemic policy changes, and ways to build relationships and explore the spiritual foundation of this work.

Together we can do this. If you feel the urgency of this moment and share our sense of responsibility to enact change, please join us November 7! Find your place in this work, as big or as small as the time and resources you have. Watch church communications or subscribe to Sustainable Living Team emails: unitysustainabilityteam@gmail.com.

Sustainable Living Team October Film: *Slay the Dragon*
Friday, October 2 • 8:00 p.m. • Zoom Discussion
Register: <http://bit.ly/slaythedragonslt>

This is a census year, as well as an election year. Does it matter? You bet! In keeping with our fall theme of **Get Out the Vote**, watch this important documentary about gerrymandering on your own time, in the comfort of your home (available via [Amazon Prime](#) or [YouTube](#)). Then join the conversation!

Gun Sense Ministry Team Update

Sue Conner, Gun Sense Ministry Team

Unity's Gun Sense Ministry Team is now beginning its fourth year. Together with our community partner Protect Minnesota, our mission has been to empower Unity Church members to be active citizens in the process of dialogue and creation of policies that reduce gun violence and related fear and anxiety in Minnesota. Many in our congregation became quite active in the lobbying of their state representatives and senators. (This is not an easy thing to do. Most of us shy away from such things and it is torture for an introvert; we need lots of support.) For more about Protect Minnesota's work and current position, please visit their website, protectmn.org.



As all of you who are concerned about gun violence in our country and in our state know, it has been a rough four years. We realize that fear and anxiety have probably increased and that none of the policies that we supported passed into law in our state. But last year the Minnesota House did succeed in passing an extended risk protection order (red flag law) bill and an expanded background check bill. Neither was taken up by our Minnesota Senate, however.

We believe that the societal transformation that we need now is deeply intertwined with the issue of gun violence. With the election season upon us and with this issue in mind, we look at the platform of the Minnesota DFL and GOP:

The DFL platform, under the section of "Public Safety and Crime Protection," supports:

- Reasonable firearm policies that promote public safety and crime prevention without infringing on the rights of hunters and other sports enthusiasts.

The GOP platform, under the section of "Other Rights," states:

- We believe that the Second Amendment protects an individual citizen's right to keep and bear arms.
- We believe all law-abiding citizens have the right to purchase and possess firearms, free from any gun registration system — without needing a government-issued permit.
- We urge all state lawmakers to pass a "Constitutional Carry" law and a Concealed Carry Reciprocity law.
- We urge state legislators to remove restrictions on and liability for self-defense, including: use of deadly force anyplace one has a legal right to be, without having a duty to flee.

So, there you see it, in black and white, your choices for your policy makers. Think about it. Please call or write your Minnesota State Representative and Minnesota State Senator and ask their positions on these issues. And then, **GO VOTE**.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

One of Our Next Right Actions...



www.unityunitarian.org/uuthevote.html

Everyone can be a messenger to turn out the vote in this crucial election. We don't want to leave any vote on the floor — and know the extraordinary circumstances we're living through means even reliable voters need a nudge.

Visit www.unityunitarian.org/uuthevote.html, a resource for voter engagement and encouragement with voting and election information provided by MUUSJA, the Unitarian Universalist Association UU the Vote campaign, the Minnesota Secretary of State, and the League of Women Voters.

Here are some ways to get started:

- A letter writing campaign to under-represented voters through Vote Forward. Email Karen Wills at kwmuusja@gmail.com to get the materials.
- Check out the MUUSJA calendar for up to date opportunities for phone banking, text banking, and letter writing campaigns: www.muusja.org/events-calendar/
- Vote Love in 2020. Text VOTELove to 51555 for updates.
- Text bank with When We All Vote: www.muusja.org/events/tuesday-text-bank-with-when-we-all-vote-2/
- Choose action items from the UU the Vote opportunities menu: <http://bit.ly/uuthevoteopportunities>
- Serve as an election judge: <http://bit.ly/electjudgemn>

Offering Recipients

Each Sunday, thirty percent of the offering goes to support the Community Outreach Ministry at Unity Church and seventy percent is given to a chosen community non-profit recipient. Donations are gratefully accepted online at <https://bit.ly/sundayoffering>. Offering checks, payable to Unity Church, should be sent "Attn. Song Thao."

October 4: MUUSJA

The mission of the Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance (MUUSJA) is to unleash courageous leadership and collective power to build a just and loving world. Its primary goal is to grow the capacity of Minnesota UU individuals and congregations. To that end, MUUSJA provides a variety of presentations and trainings along with online justice webinars and covenant groups, all of which give MUUSJA a statewide reach. This collection will help fuel MUUSJA's final thrust in the 2020 Get Out The Vote campaign. Unity Church members Sherri Knuth and Lia Rivamonte serve on the MUUSJA board.

October 11: UUA Disaster Relief Fund

The UUA Disaster Relief Fund disburses grants to UU congregations and recognized UU non-profit entities nationwide. The Disaster Relief Fund is part of a covenant between the UUA and congregations, between congregations who give generously and those in need, and with the UUA's greater community partners. Through this work, the UUA is able to embody its faith and values. Recent hurricanes, raging fires on the west coast, and flood emergencies throughout the country have severely drained the UUA Disaster Fund. This collection will help replenish it.

October 18: Indigenous Roots

Indigenous Roots began its work in 2007 and has become a vibrant collective of primarily East Side St. Paul artists dedicated to building, supporting, and cultivating opportunities for indigenous peoples and communities of color while promoting and practicing holistic well being through arts, culture, and tradition. This collection will help support Covid-modified programming focused on youth leadership and development skills through culturally relevant academic opportunities and partnerships. Unity's Maggie Lorenz has served as a directing artist at Indigenous Roots.

October 25: Peace and Justice Scholarship Fund

This scholarship fund was created to honor the dedicated leadership of Pat Haff and her 12 years of coordinating Unity's Community Outreach Ministry. This fund is dedicated to supporting equal access to participation in Unity's pilgrimages and hands-on workshops that serve as an important cornerstone of Unity's community outreach programs. This collection will support scholarships for Unity's social and racial justice programming.

To nominate an organization to receive the offering, please visit www.unityunitarian.org/generosity-ministry.html.

STAYING CONNECTED

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Congregational Database

Sign in today!

Members are invited to log in to ShelbyNext, the online congregational database that includes the ability to update and review your own membership and giving account, access the membership directory, and view the calendar.

To access from your PC:

- Open a browser (Chrome works best) and navigate to this URL: <https://unityunitarian.shelbynextchms.com/>
- Choose "Forgot Password?"
- Enter the email address you use to communicate with Unity Church
- You should receive an email with your username and password
- Log in, **upload a photo to your account**, and explore!

To download the App:

- Go to your App store: Google Play for Droid and App Store for iPhone/iPad (iPad users make sure to choose iPhone app)
- Download ShelbyNext Membership
- Enter the domain: unityunitarian (full domain: unityunitarian.shelbynextchms.com)
- Choose "Forgot Password?" if it is your first time accessing ShelbyNext Membership (or just log in if you have already accessed it on your PC)
- Enter the email address you use to communicate with Unity Church
- You should receive an email with your username and password
- Log in and explore!

Questions? Contact Martha Tilton at martha@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x105.

Church Calendar

All church programming can be found on our calendar at www.unityunitarian.org/calendar1.html.

Social Media

Follow Unity Church!

Facebook: www.facebook.com/unityunitarian
YouTube: youtube.com/c/unitychurchunitarian
Instagram: www.instagram.com/unityunitarian
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/UnityUnitarian>

STAYING CONNECTED

Online Group Meetings

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

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

Caregivers Group: An informal support group for caregivers. Meets on the third Thursday of the month from noon–2:00 p.m. Contact: Janne Eller-Isaacs, janne@unityunitarian.org

Children's Choir: For youth in grades 1-5. Contact choir director Kathleen Radspinner, kathleenr395@gmail.com

Evergreen Quilters: The group meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-9:00 p.m. and fourth Saturday of the month, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Contact Peggy Wright, 651-698-2760

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

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

Living With Grief Group: A group for people living with grief and loss. Meets on the third Tuesday of the month, from 7:00-9:00 p.m. Contact: Janne Eller-Isaacs, janne@unityunitarian.org

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

Men's Conversation Group meets Monday, October 5 and 19, from 7:00-9:00 p.m., to discuss a wide range of topics. Contact Terry McDanel, tmcdanel@gmail.com

Men's Retirement Group: Monday, October 12 and 26, 1:00-3:00 p.m., and informally for coffee on Wednesdays, 10:00-11:00 a.m. Contact Tom Zell, tomzell@me.com

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

New Look at the Bible: Meets the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. Contact: Paul Gade, 651-253-1493

Recovery from White Conditioning: Wednesdays, 6:00-7:00 p.m. Contact Dayna Kennedy, daynamelissa@icloud.com

Single Parenthood Support Group: A single parents group building community together. Meets every other Wednesday, October 14 and 28, from 7:00-8:00 p.m. Contact Laura Park, laura@unityunitarian.org

Sustainable Living Team: Meets every other Sunday (October 4 and 18), from 8:30-9:45 a.m. Contact the team, unitysustainabilityteam@gmail.com

Textile Arts Group meets every other Wednesday, October 7 and 21, from 7:15-8:30 p.m. Bring your knitting, embroidery, etc. Contact Johanna Stammeier-Toole, johanna21e@gmail.com

Unity Book Club: Second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m. Contact Jack Hawthorne, jack.hawthorne@centurylink.net

October 13: *The Happiness Hypothesis* by Jonathan Haidt
November 10: *The Water Dancer* by Ta-Nehisi Coates

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

Young Adult Group (ages 18-25): Watch for details about meetings. To join the YA email list, please email kp@unityunitarian.org.

Brave Harbor
OCTOBER IS PLEDGE DRIVE MONTH!



Trust Me, I Dare You

Drew Danielson, Coordinator of Youth and Campus Ministries

As a parent I've been blessed with two kids, who in their early years, as most kids do, gave me their complete and unconditional trust. Trust that I'd feed them reasonably good food, mostly at established times, that I'd protect them, that I'd get them where they needed to be, that I'd catch them as they gleefully stepped off the countertop without fear. I would hope

most of us have experienced that kind of unquestioning trust — it can be daunting, but it also feels so good to know someone has no doubt in your ability to take care of everything!

But then my son turned 13, and I'd say it was almost the day after his birthday that it all changed and suddenly it seemed that what he really trusted was the certainty that I was absolutely wrong about it all, and was capable of basically nothing. When I asked him about this he said "don't take it personal" which of course I couldn't do. Five years of this now, me trying to prove myself, looking for little signs of being trusted, generally failing, trying to have faith that one day when he's older he'll have a different perspective and then maybe a level of trust in me that lies appropriately somewhere between the extremes he showed in infancy and his teens.

Nowadays I know that his trust lies with his friends. They are infallible paragons of truth and good sense. Theirs is a love that is total and good and unconditional! My wife is utterly baffled by the apparent truth of this, especially when what we witness between these boys and girls usually feels like mean spirited "capping" sessions, mixed with physical activities that for all purposes look to be solely intended to brutally injure each other!

Thinking back to my own youth, I do get this. I remember distancing myself from my parents who I still trusted to care for me, but not to lead me forward. I too had best friends I was *horrible* to, who I mercilessly insulted and beat up, even as they pushed me down steps and squirted me with ketchup packets, and stayed up with me late into the night as we shared our greatest hopes and biggest fears — all of which we would go on to tease each other about for years.

This year on his birthday, Atticus had the dreaded "flax rejection" after dinner and was seized with headache and nausea. He was headed to bed until we told him we had his friends gathered at Grand Old Creamery to surprise him. He rallied, of course, and happily withstood their taunts and best wishes and jostling until he had to lay down on the side walk and wrestle with dry heaves, which they of course thought was hilarious. And he felt loved.

I'm not going to try to tie this in a neat little bow as to what it means. As I tell you all this I'm concerned about how we all find the trust we need to move forward, when we're not physically in each other's business like we need to be. I think we need to take giant leaps of faith with each other. We have to jostle each other, now more than ever.

Sing with a Unity Choir

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

Children's Choir is for youth in grades 1-5. Contact children's choir director Kathleen Radspinner, kathleenr395@gmail.com

Unity Choir is our non-auditioned ensemble of 60 to 75 voices. This singing community is the strong component on which our music program is built.

Unity Singers is Unity's auditioned, a cappella chamber choir.

Women's Ensemble is a continually growing and evolving group with members bringing tremendous creative energy, commitment, and joy!

Unity Church houses the Twin Cities chapter of **Threshold Choir**, an ensemble that sings for those at the thresholds of life. Small groups of singers bring music to the bedside of people as they die or endure illness or other suffering.

A Call for Music

Given the depth of musical talent in this congregation, Ahmed is extending an invitation to individuals and families to share their music making. Please send a video of your singing, playing a musical instrument, or doing anything else that's musical! The only request is that this is a video of you or your family making music — please do not send prerecorded music made by someone else. So, turn on your phone camera, record yourself singing a song or playing something, and send it to Ahmed at ahmed@unityunitarian.org.

Religious Education Enrollment

Religious Education classes began on September 20. Online registration is closed, but families can still enroll in most programs by emailing Michelle Mecey at michelle@unityunitarian.org.



Music Notes

Ahmed Anzaldúa Director of Music Ministries

Over the summer, Unity Singers created a virtual choir video of “Bridge Over Troubled Waters” which we shared with the congregation as part of the Merging of Waters service in September. Now the choirs are hard at work putting together additional virtual choir recordings. One of the most meaningful parts of singing in a choir at Unity Church is to contribute directly to the worship service; every musician becomes a minister. It can be a deeply fulfilling spiritual practice directly connected to one’s faith. While we all miss the experience making music together, it is this aspect of singing in the choirs that has accounted for much of the grief in our choristers. Virtual ensemble recordings help keep this ministry alive while we are all isolated.

I am immensely proud of the singers for what we created and of all of our choristers for embracing the learning process this fall to continue to minister to our congregation in this way. As we gear up for more of these virtual ensembles and I read enthusiastic feedback from everyone, I thought it worthwhile to demystify the virtual choir, especially since I’ve noticed that curiosity and an eagerness to understand things better seem to be traits shared by many in this congregation. So, the first thing to clarify is that virtual ensemble recordings are a huge pain in the butt to create. They’re a time and labor intensive process... so, no, this is not something that we can put together every Sunday. For example, Unity Singers’ virtual choir, where we were all learning the process together, took us about four months to create. Even outsourcing to a professional tech crew it would still take several weeks to put one together (in this case I did all the technical work myself).

While a virtual choir looks like a Zoom call, with everyone singing in a little box, Zoom or any sort of live

synchronous singing has very little relationship to how this process works. The first part of the process is common to all choral singing: everyone needs to learn their individual parts to the music. This typically takes a few weeks for the average five-minute piece when we are all rehearsing together... without the ability to rehearse together, it’s much more difficult. We rehearse, we practice, we give each other feedback, until everyone can confidently sing their parts.

Once everyone can sing their parts reasonably well, comes the next stage: recording. For this, I have to provide everyone with a guide track. This is a recording that everyone can listen to while singing to make sure that all the parts are synchronized with each other. Each individual singer had to learn how set up two devices, one to play the guide track into a headphone in their ear and one with a microphone to record themselves singing along to the guide track. Recording themselves singing was not easy, there are noisy family members that made it impossible for some to find a quiet time to record, there’s perfectionism that kept singers from being satisfied with any of dozens of takes, there’s dealing with constant tech problems interrupting the process, and there’s the intense vulnerability that comes from hearing your exposed voice in a close mic recording, not supported by the voices of fellow choral singers or the acoustics of a room. Once they get a usable recording of themselves, they then had to find a way to share it with me (a technological learning curve as well).

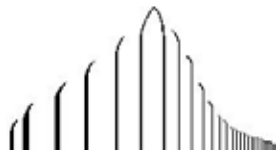
Next comes the audio editing. Using computer software, I took those twenty individual recordings synchronized them to each other, balanced the volume levels, pruned them for mistakes, and tried to make them sound similar to what we might hear in the Sanctuary during a worship service. Once these recordings have been merged together

into something resembling a choir, the result was sent back to all the singers, who then moved on to the next stage: video recording.

Each singer had to learn how to set up two devices, one to play the audio recording into their ear and one to record video of themselves singing together with the recording. The same problems apply to recording a passable video, and in my experience, people tend to be just as uncomfortable looking at a video close-up of their face as they are listening to their own voice on a recording. Once they had a usable video of themselves, they shared it with me so I could move on to the final assembly step. Taking everyone’s videos, our audio track, and using computer software to synchronize all of it, creating the little boxes with each musician.

Needless to say, I did not go to school for audio engineering or video production, so this was a slow, dumb process. It was also fun at times. I am sure the musicians that are participating in creating these would describe it in the same way: slow and dumb, but fun at times. However, when I showed a sneak preview of the final video to the Women’s Ensemble on a Zoom call and saw that so many were moved to tears, I realized that this would all be worth the work.

If the isolation of the pandemic has taught us anything it is to really appreciate just how precious human contact and connection really are. I am grateful that we found a way to provide a small part of that sense of connection through our music, and I am happy to say that right now all the choirs are working hard on making more of these virtual choir videos a reality until we are all back to singing together in person. If you would like to take part, the door into Unity’s choirs is always open, just as it is when we are in singing in person!



UNITY CHURCH-UNITARIAN

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REV. KP HONG, DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
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**TIME SENSITIVE
MATERIAL**

Brave Harbor

UNITY CHURCH 2021 PLEDGE DRIVE
October is pledge drive month! See page 4!

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UU the Vote! See page 11!

