

Connecting

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.

In churches, September is the month of (re)connecting. Although many of us have been present during the summer, we welcome the travelers, the sailors, the hikers, the vacationers, and the late sleepers to resume their attendance at worship, or downstairs with the children, or at committee meetings and programs. September carries the expectation that we are *all* together again. After time apart, we are reconnected...

... which invites us to ask whether "connecting" is really optional to our community, a choice we are each free to make when, where, and with whom we want. Is connecting any different, any deeper, than "friending" someone on social media where we interact through carefully curated photos and posts in a comfortable echo chamber?

Albert Schweitzer offers a different take entirely when he writes,

*Just as the wave cannot exist
for itself,*

*but is ever a part of the
heaving surface of the ocean,*

*so must I never live my life for
itself,*

*but always in the experience
which is going on around me.*

For Schweitzer, life is connected so inextricably that disconnecting is not even a possibility. Interdependence is a done deal in the universe. Nothing has existed, now exists, or ever will exist that does not affect the whole. Schweitzer would not understand the connecting as an abstract theory, or merely one of many options. He

experiences it as a universal law, as immutable as gravity. Choosing to ignore the task of connecting as a steady practice has brought us to this time when we can see, feel, hear, touch and taste the peril of any belief that our choice (individually, personally) does not matter to the thriving of the universe.

So which will it be? With which kind of connecting will you engage? Will I engage?

In a divided world it is profoundly tempting to retreat to our personal islands of comfort rather than wrestle fully with the messy business of relationship. It is far simpler to interface with media than it is to interface with real, complex human beings. Add that social media encourages us to be superficial, to mask our vulnerabilities. 160 key strokes on X (formerly Twitter) cannot capture my paradoxes or yours. In that arena, my true, complicated, humanity is carefully hidden from yours, and we are each left alone to face the events that rend the fabric of our very lives.

Spiritual connecting, as Schweitzer points out, is different not merely in degree, but in essence.

As a spiritual practice, we claim the interdependence that is captured in the simple statement, "Nothing supercedes 'we'." Buddhists carry that to its logical conclusion and say that our only permanence is in our interdependence which crosses generations, indeed eons, before and beyond time itself. We rise as wave, return to the whole, perhaps rise again, and return again.

Embodying "connecting" is not about finding a home or community to shelter us, but about living as home. *Mi casa es su casa* is a proclamation of open boundaries, a spiritual commitment to be vulnerable at the edges, to welcome what you offer whether I understand it, or agree with it, or find it convenient... or not. It affirms that when I am disappointed in how my community behaves, or how you, specifically, behave, I will continue to engage and to open my doors to your presence so that our legacy — ours together — may heal what has been broken and bind up what has been torn. Community is, in fact, that amazing space in which we practice this radical skill of being fully self *and* fully we.

So, perhaps September is not really about (re)connecting, but about recommitting to the daily, hourly discipline of connecting which is our vocation in community on behalf of all that was, is, will be.

May it be so.

*By Rev. Andrea La Sonde Anastos on
behalf of this month's theme team:
Drew Danielson, Rev. Karen Gustafson
Rev. KP Hong, and Nelson Moroukian*

Theme Resources

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

IN THE MEANTIME



Re-connecting

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, Interim Senior Minister

When the great plates slip and the earth shivers and the flaw is seen to lie in what you trusted most, look not to more solidity, to weighty slabs of concrete poured or strength of cantilevered beam to save the fractured order. Trust more the tensile strands of love that bend and stretch to hold you in the web of life that is often torn but always healing.

— Rev. Robert Walsh

I'm back! Are you? This summer many of us — myself included — took some time to travel and/or to be with family. My husband's large extended family gathers every year in Gimli, Manitoba, on the shores of Lake Winnipeg. We see some family members only at this time each year, but it's a chance to connect with one another. Some of those connections are deeper than others, but still I appreciate the chance to strengthen these tensile strands of our shared history.

I'm back — are you? It's not unusual for some church members to take a break from church during the interim time. They are concerned about changes to staff. They may be disappointed about some aspects of church life, so they adopt a "wait and see" approach. But — wait! There's so much to see and to experience at Unity Church this year! This is the year *not* to step back, but to lean in! This is the year to explore who you are *now* so that when it comes time for your 2024 Ministerial Search Team to interview candidates for the senior minister position, they can honestly and fairly represent you. This is the year to connect more deeply with your own spiritual longings and learning, with those in the church you may know and those you don't, and with the mission and vision of Unity Church in the wider community. If you're a wait and see-er — then consider this your personal invitation to come and see me. Let's talk about it. I'd love to hear your story.

In the second year as your interim minister, my focus shifts a bit. Last year, I intentionally focused on helping you to interpret your distant and more recent history in light of how that informs your identity. I helped to create opportunities for you to make connections with denominational partners, such as Regional Lead Rev. David Pyle and the congregants of White Bear and First Universalist. In the year ahead, my work as your interim will be to support you — the congregation and the search team in this year of discernment, and to explore leadership structures to make way for new leaders — new ideas — and fresh perspectives. It will be to assist with the transitions — with our new Minister of Congregational Care, Rev. Lara Cowtan, and the retirement of Barbara Hubbard, our Executive Director, and to support the work of Unity's fantastic staff.

All of this is only possible with your help. What sustains us through times of transition and change are, as Rev. Robert Walsh wrote "the tensile strands of love that bend and stretch to hold you..." As we start up this new church year, I hope you will feel the same love that I am feeling about Unity's present and future.

See you in church!

Love,
Kathleen

Remember to bring water for our annual Merging of Waters service of reunion on Sunday, September 10!

Sunday Services at 9:00 and 11:15 a.m.

Dear Unity Church,

Last spring, the question was posed to the executive team and staff requesting that we consider moving the time of the second service to 11:15 a.m. instead of 11:00 a.m. The reason for this request came from several areas of church life. For choirs that rehearse between services, the rush to finish rehearsal and be ready for the 11:00 service proved challenging. Weekly conversations in Finding Yourself at Unity felt the pressure of needing to conclude before 11:00. Certain Sundays and special observances, with a greater number of liturgical elements or communal rituals that extend the length of worship, regularly came up against the constraints of the present timeframe. Still others have wished for more breathing space between services, to nurture a deeper connection.

As part of our inquiry, our Minister of Faith Formation and Director of Music Ministries consulted with religious education and our various choirs to see if changing the start time of the second service would be a hardship for them. In general, they agreed that changing the service by 15 minutes would relieve some of the pressure experienced between the services.

So, beginning with our Ingathering Sunday on September 10, we will return to two services, one at 9:00 which will continue to be livestreamed, and one at 11:15.

We are aware that this time change moves the second service into lunchtime for many. If you are interested in serving as a food ministry volunteer on Sundays to help provide a simple lunch after the service, please contact Rev. Kathleen Rolenz.

Unity Church Executive Team

SEPTEMBER SERVICES

Sunday Worship Services

Beginning Sunday, September 10, we will return to two in-person services at 9:00 and 11:15 a.m. The 9:00 a.m. service will be offered via livestream. Religious Education programs for children and youth begin September 17.

September 3: To Boldly Go Where...

Rev. George Anastos

Livestream at 10:00 a.m.: [youtube.com/watch?v=V45QP4a3J4U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V45QP4a3J4U)

Over the years we have developed myriad ways to navigate this world. We learn how to make our way from place to place. We learn habits to accomplish routine tasks. We learn problem solving techniques to tackle difficult situations. There are times, however, when we have no maps or when a problem surpasses our knowledge base. There are even those times when we know what we need to do, but don't know if we can muster the strength and resolve to move forward. This service probes the spiritual underpinnings of making our way through those wilderness times, those events and challenges when we find ourselves feeling lost, helpless and directionless.

September 10: Let the River Run!

Merging of Waters Family Sunday

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz | Rev. Lara Cowtan | Rev. KP Hong

Livestream at 9:00: [youtube.com/watch?v=C7Sp5NhoemM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7Sp5NhoemM)

Come one, come all to our Merging of the Waters ingathering Sunday! Bring a vial of water from a special place you've been this summer (or your backyard hose) and we'll reconnect after some time away. Rev. Rolenz will offer a reflection on how the various streams of our faith meet, merge, nourish and sustain us for the year ahead.

September 17:

In Celebration of Change: Learning to Hold More

Rev. Karen Gustafson

Livestream: [youtube.com/watch?v=Skml6sUOK6E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Skml6sUOK6E)

Though August 30 marks the conclusion of my year as Interim Minister of Pastoral Care, it seemed a bit anti-climatic for me to drift quietly off without a last word or two. Hope to see you in church!

Please join us in the Center Room, between services, for a celebration of Rev. Karen Gustafson's ministry.

Bring produce from your garden to church on Sunday, September 17, and we'll include it in our Stone Soup on Wellspring Wednesday September 20. We'll bring any extra produce to Hallie Q Brown food shelf. Share the bounty!

September 24

Rev. Lara Cowtan

Livestream: [youtube.com/watch?v=9dd53PrPI9Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dd53PrPI9Y)

Offering Recipients

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

September 3: Sarah's Oasis

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

September 10: Fresh Water Society

Fresh Water Society is a leading public non-profit organization dedicated to preserving freshwater resources and their surrounding watersheds. It educates people about the role of freshwater to all living things, and the crisis in the quality of accessible fresh water. This collection will support volunteer street and sewer clean up projects clearing away toxic nutrients which promote the growth of excessive algae that robs fresh water of needed oxygen. freshwater.org

September 17: Beyond Walls Urban Squash

Beyond Walls Urban Squash is an intensive program that combines the sport of squash, academic tutoring, and community service in a manner that successfully transforms the lives of underserved BIPOC youth. Trained tutors provide instruction with the goal of developing personal academic skills. Students play squash three times a week with the goal of competing in regional and national events. This collection will support fall programming. beyondwallsmn.org

September 24: Dispute Resolution Center

Dispute Resolution Center (DRC) is dedicated to energizing often underrepresented communities by promoting constructive conflict resolution through open communication and shared decision making. This collection will help underwrite tenant mediation, youth development, and restorative justice practices in the Rondo, Frogtown, and Dayton's Bluff neighborhoods. disputeresolutioncenter.org

The devastating fires on Maui will require billions of dollars and many years to rebuild. The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee has published a link with vetted organizations which will provide direct support and service to the survivors. Please take a moment to review the link on their website and give as generously as you are able. Our hearts go out to the people of Lahaina and the island of Maui as they continue to grieve, to heal and to recover.

uusc.org/press/uusc-statement-on-the-wildfires-in-maui/

BOARD OF TRUSTEES / MINISTERIAL SEARCH TEAM



By The Bylaws

LauraSue Schlatter, Trustee

As I write in early August, thoughts turn from the playfulness of summer to the more serious tones of fall and winter. Time to can, freeze, store the harvest, energy, and light of summer for the winter to come. This summer, the board has been preparing a small offering of proposed bylaw changes for you to consider. We'll have four listening sessions in September

to hear your feedback. We anticipate presenting them for a vote at the annual meeting in November.

Why changes to Unity's Bylaws? Most of these proposed changes come from suggestions you made following the May 2022 congregational meeting. In response to your comments, and a concern raised by the executive team, we are proposing the following four changes (bit.ly/ucubylaws):

- Changing the 75% minimum percentage of voting members in attendance at a congregational meeting for the selection of a called minister required to vote yes for the call to succeed to 85%. The reason for this change is 85% would bring the congregational vote requirement much closer to the 90-95% minimum virtually all Unitarian Universalist ministers require. The feeling among ministers is that, if 90% or more of the quorum assembled for the vote cannot agree on the call, the ministry is unlikely to succeed. We chose 85% because it allows room for something less than 90% (for example, Rob and Janne Eller-Isaacs received 89%, but were convinced to accept the call).
- Making "Roberts Rules Simplified" (RRS) (bit.ly/robsrulesimple) the official rules governing congregational meetings. The purpose of procedural rules is to ensure that everyone has a chance to speak, and all voices are fairly heard. Many people find that Roberts Rules of Order are complex, inaccessible, and have been used to silence already-oppressed voices. RRS are much easier to understand and use. They are explained on a two-page, easy to read handout that can be distributed with every meeting packet. We hope they will help ensure that everyone who wants to be heard at a meeting is heard!
- Allowing voting by proxy at congregational meetings to call or remove a called minister. A number of people were unable to stay until the vote occurred in May 2022. Others may not be able to attend in person or have access to online participation. The proxy voting mechanism, which has several strict conditions attached to it, will enable people in those circumstances to have their votes counted.
- Adding a 60-day waiting period after a person signs the membership book and makes a pledge before they are eligible to vote in any congregational meeting. In May 2022, a number of people joined the church just days before the meeting, and, unhappy with the result, immediately quit after the meeting. The waiting requirement is not uncommon with other churches and ensures that important decisions of all sorts are made by people with a true commitment to the church and the church community.

We invite you to join us at one of the upcoming listening sessions where we will discuss these bylaw changes:

- Wednesday, September 13 • 7:10 p.m. • Robbins Parlor
- Wednesday, September 20 • 1:00-2:30 p.m. • Robbins Parlor
- Sunday, September 24 • 10:15 a.m. • Center Room
- Tuesday, September 26 • 7:00 p.m. • Online via Zoom (watch for the link)

Greetings from the Ministerial Search Team

Your Ministerial Search Team (MST) looks forward to providing updates about the search process as well as information about how you can share your feedback. Please stay connected to the search process by visiting our webpage (unityunitarian.org/ministerial-transition.html), checking out the bulletin board (near the kitchen), and watching for church emails as well as weekly updates in our Sunday insert, *This Week at Unity*.

Our Work-to-Date

- The MST held a retreat on July 29, and we are meeting weekly this fall
- Angela Wilcox will serve as Chair of the MST (see transitions webpage for additional MST roles)
- The MST is planning cottage meetings for September and October as opportunities for the congregation to voice their ideas and listen to others. We will gather to share about our needs and wants for the future of our church community. There will be ample opportunity to participate: in-person, online, in the evening, and during the day. Child care will be provided. There are cottage meetings planned for Wellspring Wednesday, September 20 and 27, with more to be scheduled — watch for dates and times!

We're excited for our charge and thankful for your support!

Rebecca Flood
Richard Lau
Tara Romanov Messana
Kat Sherman-Hoehn
Jennie Smith
Ray Wiedmeyer
Angela Wilcox, Chair

BELOVED COMMUNITY STAFF TEAM

Small Group, Small Steps, Big Potential: Unity Church Antiracism Literacy Partners

By Suki Sun, Beloved Community News Guest Writer, and Shelley Butler, Beloved Community News Team

Sometimes two but more often four to five people make a commitment to read, listen, or view a resource vetted by a small committee at Unity dedicated to expanding the understanding of racism for the purpose of dismantling it. The pairs or groups gather over two-three months and then come to a larger meeting to report what surprised them about what they learned, what questions arose, and what they are called to do next. This is the Unity Church Antiracism Literacy Partners (ALP) program, which arose out of Justice for George/Next Right Action discussions in the summer of 2020.

Suki Sun is a participant in the program with a story to tell. She was born in Shanghai, China, and lived in Manhattan for ten years before moving to Minnesota two years ago. She has been involved in two ALP groups this year, and in that short time has impressed us with her dedication to the program and her wisdom.

Suki's Story

Being a person of color myself doesn't automatically make me immune from racial bias — this is the biggest lesson I have learned since joining the Unity Antiracism Literacy Partners program.

I learned that the hard way during a conversation at Recovery Cafe Frogtown with a recovery coach and motivational speaker who is a middle-aged African American gentleman. I mentioned to him that since I got sober, I picked up the violin again after a 30-year pause and recently joined an orchestra in Saint Paul.

"Which orchestra?" I could see his interest twinkling in his eyes.

"East Metro Symphony Orchestra and it used to be called 3M Symphony Orchestra," I replied.

"Oh! 3M Symphony!" Now his eyes were totally lit up, "I had been to many of their concerts before they changed

the name. What a great orchestra you have joined! Congratulations!"

On top of the excitement whenever I meet someone who enjoys classical music, I also noticed that this time, it included a tone of uneasy surprise, or I could even call it a mind shock based on his race; he was the first African American I ever talked with about classical music. I was struggling with some racing thoughts. I wanted to tell him how unique it was for me to talk with an African American who supports live classical music concerts, which was a fact to me, but sounded *wrong*, so I didn't say it. I also wanted to mention that I wish there were more African American musicians in our orchestra (we have zero), which was also a fact to me but also sounded *wrong*, so I didn't say it. And the loudest question echoing in my mind at that moment was, "Why do you think we don't see more African Americans in the classical music scene?" And of course, I didn't say that either.

My racial bias acted like an automatic yet dysfunctional machine, vacuuming the air from my mind, suffocating the natural flow of an otherwise delightful chat about classical music, one of my favorite topics. In the end, I didn't have the mental capacity to extend and deepen our conversation about classical music by asking him, "Who are your favorite composers and conductors? What is your favorite piece? Do you play any instruments?"

In the end, I was the one hurt by my racial bias because I ruined the chance to connect with another person in a more profound and meaningful way. After all, in recovery connection is the opposite of addiction. I also lost the opportunity to hear more details of his story as an avid classical music supporter to uproot my bias. **New wisdom always plants more healthy seeds when we learn from a powerful story instead of abstract statements.**

But I didn't value the personal stories from BIPOC as a tool to wither my racial bias until I was in the Unity Antiracism Literacy Partners (ALP) group this spring. In an intimate setting of five members, we listened to ten episodes of the podcast "The Sum of Us," which included personal stories from Memphis to Orlando, from Kansas City to Manhattan Beach, California; and then met weekly to digest these stories. During our meetings, I find that as long as I keep my eyes and mind open, even just one person's story is powerful enough to change my years-long, or even decades-long wrong assumptions.

That's why I am so grateful to be part of the Antiracism Literacy Partners. Small group, small steps, but big potential. Evolution always will feel charming.

Note: The League of American Orchestras, in "Racial/Ethnic and Gender Diversity in the Orchestra Field in 2023," reports that while the U.S. Population of Blacks is 12.6%, the percentage of Black people in orchestra is only 2.4%. Read the report for their analysis and recommendations for correcting the inequities: bit.ly/orchestradiversity.

Anyone can join Unity's Antiracism Literacy Partners program. Come to the next meeting on Wednesday, October 4, at 7:10 p.m., on Zoom (please register here: bit.ly/ALPoct423). Questions? Contact Becky Gonzalez-Campoy at beckygc83@gmail.com. If you plan to attend Wellspring dinner and chapel first, talk to Laura Park about joining the meeting from Unity Church.



WELCOME NEWCOMERS



Welcome Words

Laura Park
Director of Membership and Hospitality

If you've been visiting Unity Church in the summer, you'll see several changes in church programming in September. Here are a few highlights to keep you connected.

- We return to two services at 9:00 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. on Sunday, September 10. Note the slight shift to the time of the second service; more information about that change on page 2.
- Sunday, September 10, will include a beautiful ritual we call the Merging of the Waters, with children and families in the Sanctuary for this Family Sunday. Bring water to church that you've collected during the summer, whether from travels afar or the tap in your kitchen, and we will merge them in celebration of coming together again in community. After the service, we boil and filter the water and use it to bless our babies and in other rituals.
- Finding Yourself at Unity goes back to 10:15 a.m. on September 10, between the two services.
- We return to our regular children's Religious Education programming, with classes beginning September 17. Please contact Nelson Moroukian (nelson@unityunitarian.org) for more information on how to register your children.
- Wellspring Wednesday (see page 8) returns to its weekly schedule on September 13. Join us for fellowship and to deepen our life of faith together.
- Choir rehearsals begin again. See page 15 for more information about our music ministry and how to get involved.
- Chalice Circles return. See page 9 for more information on how to register for this meaningful exploration of our monthly worship themes.
- You'll see more people at church! Many people tell me the change of energy this brings surprises them—it often feels like a completely different church. Know that we're still the same at core, just more of us together.

Need more information to navigate the shift into fall? I'm here to help answer your questions about congregational life and the pathways you might explore to deepen your life of faith and antiracist multicultural practice. Contact me at laura@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x110.

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.

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

For visitors and inquirers: Sundays 11:15 a.m. Gannett Room or on Zoom: bit.ly/fyuonline

Drop-ins welcome; childcare in the nursery.

Join the repeating eight-session cycle at any time. Attend the sessions in any order, which include Unitarian Universalist History; Faith Formation for Children, Youth, and Adults; Congregational and Pastoral Care; Q & A with a Minister; Worship & the Liturgical Year; Social Justice & Community Outreach; Membership 101 & Congregational Life, and a Building Tour. This month's offerings:

September 3: No class (Labor Day weekend)

September 10: Membership 101

September 17: Unitarian Universalist History

September 24: Building Tour

Weekly church emails include the session topic, or find the session schedule at the Welcome Table in the main lobby or in Parish Hall, or email Laura Park to receive Saturday morning email reminders.

Committing to Unity: Joining Unity Church

Tuesday, October 3

Develop personal practice to help you find and keep your balance.

Develop the skills of intimacy that let you go deep quickly with strangers.

Take the compassion that rises from doing the first two and use it to bless the world.

This is how Unity Church talks about its expectations of membership. Does the invitation into this ongoing work resonate with you? Are you ready to make the membership commitment? This session, for people ready to become members, 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 and officially join the church. Let Laura Park know you're interested in participating or to ask questions. She can also arrange a private signing ceremony.

WELCOME NEW STAFF

Hello, Unity Church!

Rev. Lara Cowtan, Minister of Congregational Care

I am delighted to be joining this vibrant community as your new Minister of Congregational Care, and am looking forward to settling in and getting to know you. I have just arrived in St. Paul from Canada, having served the past three years as the interim minister in Vancouver, British Columbia. Prior to that I served as a hospital chaplain and also as a community minister working with many of our international communities and organizations while living in Switzerland.

My earlier career in nursing showed me the value and power of empathy and making human connections, taught me about prioritizing and about healing, and about how things sometimes don't heal, and yet to move forward. I learned how, in spite of loss, people may find a new way of being and living in the world. I have come to understand how being in community with ourselves and others despite one's brokenness, and even maybe because of it, allows us to simply "be" in a different way.

Raised by a UU minister, I have observed throughout my life different ways of doing church; the challenges, the blessings and the complicated systems, so dependent upon one another, so rich in giving and also needing love and support. I've seen what it takes to bring health and hope into community and individual lives, and how fragile it all is. All of this has been integrated into my ministry and leadership with many congregations and faith communities around the world.

I have lived in five different countries, studied four languages and spent the past ten years steeped in international Unitarian Universalists leadership, reveling in the glorious and complicated tapestry of our faith tradition. What I have learned above all is that everyone and every living thing is worthy of love.

My family is based in Winnipeg (relatively close!), and my travels have often led me through the Twin Cities, so I already feel connected to this place and culture, and know I will quickly feel at home here with you all.

Please feel free to reach out and say hello or to let me know how I might be helpful or present for you as your Minister of Congregational Care.

This photo was taken at this year's General Assembly in Pittsburg, as I received Full Fellowship.

In faith and with brightest blessings,
Rev. Lara Cowtan



By Way of Introduction

Nelson Moroukian, Coordinator of Children & Family Ministries

I remember emerging from my Coming of Age ceremony to speak with my mentor, Dave Hage. As a way of wrapping up our wonderful mentor-mentee experience, he handed me three books: *East of Eden*, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*. I thanked him for the gifts, and for the time he had spent helping me learn and grow into my understanding of what it means to be UU. He warned me that these books were not to be taken lightly. Even with this warning I still dove into *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trying to make sense of Camus's absurd, joyful take on a meaningless life. It took me many years to find my way through these books, reading and re-reading, examining the difficult and courageous stories and philosophies that these authors gave to the world. The understandings I built during my time in religious education gave me permission to read them without fully understanding what they meant. Reading them with curiosity gave me a pathway to continue wondering what it means to be human and alive, to find happiness and meaning, and to appreciate the beautiful, cruel, at times incomprehensible world around us. When I look back now, I can see that the gift was not the books themselves, but the challenge they posed. A challenge to never sit in my own certainty, even as I had just created the language to describe what I believed at the time. That challenge to keep learning and questioning is still with me today, and I still read those books with wonder at the complexity of making meaning from our lives.

I spent four years living in Scotland studying at the University of Glasgow, and my degree in Public Policy and Theology was eye-opening. It brought me to the question of how religious life impacts us all beyond the walls of our churches. Our culture and values, shaping and coloring the actions we take when we step outside the walls of Unity, are deeply rooted in a fundamental understanding of what is true and meaningful. We continue to grapple with the question of how to define and create meaning from our reality. For me, our collective goal to create a community that holds us all in our search for meaning extends with heightened emphasis to our religious education programs. These questions that drive us are not less important or present in children. They may even be more present when our lives are less complicated by the necessities of everyday "adulthood." When we give children permission, language, and the connections that are woven through beloved community, they can start asking and wondering with genuine curiosity about their place in the world. In my new role as Coordinator of Children and Family Ministries, I hope to extend to them the same challenge that Dave brought to me as I emerged from Coming of Age: to never settle in our understanding of what is true and meaningful, and to always strive to learn more.



WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

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

September 13

Dinner: Roasted chicken (veg option), brussels and squash, snickerdoodles

Spiritual Practice Series: Session One

In-person, Parish Hall
KP Hong, Laura Park, Angela Wilcox
What are spiritual practices? What form do they take? How do we incorporate spiritual practice into our lives? This series focuses on these questions and session one focuses on the what, the why, and the how of spiritual practice.

Listening Session: Bylaw Changes

In-person, Robbins Parlor
Hosted by the Board of Trustees
Come learn about the four bylaws changes the Board of Trustees plans to bring for a congregational vote at the annual meeting in November, and offer your opinions, questions, and concerns in feedback to the board. Most of these proposed changes come from suggestions congregants made following the May 2022 congregational meeting. See page 4 for more about the changes and additional listening sessions.

Beginner Violin

In-person, Choir Room
Join Mayra Mendoza for beginning violin lessons appropriate for all ages. Learn basic violin posture, note reading, and more! Questions? Email Mayra at mayraquitzia@hotmail.com.

Lectio Divina

Online via Zoom: bit.ly/Lectio2023-24
Register once, at any time, to attend any or all sessions
Participate in a centuries-old monastic practice of listening, contemplating, and responding to sacred texts; modified with poetry for UU small group spiritual practice. Led by Lisa Wersal or Shelley Butler. On Wednesdays, you may join the Zoom from the Gannett Room at church. Questions? Contact Shelley at library@unityunitarian.org.

September 20

Dinner: Stone Soup, bread, wild rice and squash salad, pumpkin bars

Spiritual Practice Series: Session Two

In-person, Parish Hall
KP Hong, Laura Park, Angela Wilcox
What are spiritual practices? What form do they take? How do we incorporate spiritual practice into our lives? This series focuses on these questions and session two will be experiential as participants "try on" various practices and reflect on the meaning of them.

Ministerial Search Team

Cottage Meeting
In-person, Anderson Library
Join the Ministerial Search Team for an opportunity to talk about the future of our congregation. Additional cottage meetings are being schedule — watch for dates!

Act for the Earth

Monthly Food Conversation
In-person, Robbins Parlor and online via Zoom: bit.ly/afefoodconvo
This session, part of a monthly series on food, will invite participants to take the first steps on a journey to explore our food systems, our food choices, and to think deeply about where our food comes from. Share your food stories and listen deeply to the perspectives of others on food.

Board Game Night

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

Textile Arts

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

Beginner Violin with Mayra Mendoza

In-person, Choir Room

September 27

Dinner: Barbacoa beef or bean tostadas with veggies, slaw, polvorones

Spiritual Practice Series: Session Three

In-person, Parish Hall
KP Hong, Laura Park, Angela Wilcox
What are spiritual practices? What form do they take? How do we incorporate spiritual practice into our lives? This series focuses on these questions and part three will connect spiritual practice and antiracist multiculturalism, exploring how they intertwine and inform our daily lives and social justice work.

Ministerial Search Team

Cottage Meeting
In-person, Robbins Parlor
Join the Ministerial Search Team for an opportunity to talk about the future of our congregation. Additional cottage meetings are being schedule — watch for dates!

Beginner Violin with Mayra Mendoza

In-person, Choir Room



Wellspring Wednesday Dinner

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

ADULT FAITH FORMATION

Dying for Beginners

A seven-part series on actions to take for a better death

Dying is not usually a part of daily conversations, but it's the focus of seven guided discussion sessions (beginning October 18) for Unity members and friends.

You're especially invited if: you're young and have children who are wondering about death; you're dealing with aging parents; you're an aging parent; you're thinking about death with dignity and choices you want to make.

The goals of these sessions are:

- To support one another and explore important issues that face us at the end of life, and,
- To develop a UU constituency for legislation to expand end-of-life options (EOLO), including medical aid in dying. (Unitarian Universalist Association policy has supported death with dignity since 1988!)

Our seven Wednesday evening sessions will each touch on different aspects of the end of life. Expert speakers will provide factual information to help us understand options at the end of life, as well as specifics on ways to take action.

The first five sessions (in October and November) will focus on spiritual and practical aspects of dying. Topics will include thinking about death, experiencing dying, dealing with the body, documenting wishes, and communicating those wishes. The final two (in January) will concentrate on how to support EOLO legislation in the 2024 Minnesota legislative session. Topics will include understanding your values about dying and body autonomy and acting on your values about dying and body autonomy.

Contact Marty Rossmann at rossm001@umn.edu to learn more or to reserve a spot in the series.

Lectio Divina

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

Online via Zoom: bit.ly/Lectio2023-24

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

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

Dine with Nine

Register by September 20!

Want to enjoy conversation, food, and fellowship with fellow Unity Church members and friends? Enjoy meeting new faces and/or renewing prior acquaintances? Like extending the hospitality of Unity's community in a personal way? Dine with Nine is for you!

Beginning in October, small groups (approximately nine per group) of Unity Church members and friends will gather once a month for food and fellowship. Each group is self-directed and will choose the dates, times, and locations for their gatherings. Often, these are potluck meals in group members' homes, but groups may also choose to mix in visits to restaurants, a picnic, or a catered/delivered meal. When you register, you can request a brunch, dinner, or family group, and let us know if you have other requests or requirements. Visit the Dine with Nine table in the Parish Hall on Sundays or sign up online at unityunitarian.org/dine-with-nine.html. Questions? Contact Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x110.

Sign up for a Chalice Circle

Chalice Circles offer a meaningful way to connect with a small group of Unity Church congregants through the spiritual practice of guided conversation.

Attend the participant retreat on Saturday, September 23, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., where we will explore the:

- Chalice Circle process and the skills of deep listening we'll engage with one another, and the
- Materials in each month's practice packet and how to best use the theme resources within them.

Beginning in October, you'll meet monthly with your ongoing circle at a time that works with your schedule. You do not have to commit to your circle until after the retreat. For details and registration visit unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html. Questions? Contact Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org.

Mindful Self-Compassion

8-Week Training Program for Emotional Resilience

Mondays, September 25-November 13 • 5:45-8:30 p.m. • In-person, Unity Church
Half-day silent retreat: Saturday morning, October 28

Facilitated by Unity Church member Jenny Wilson, MSW, LICSW

This is an evidence-based program developed by the Center for Mindful Self-Compassion. This course is a heart-centered, nurturing program that uses meditations, small and large group discussion and experiential exercises to help improve emotional well-being. All are welcome. No previous meditation experience required. The cost (sliding fee) is \$300-\$500. Register at jennywilsontherapy.com or contact Jenny at jennywilson1@yahoo.com. Early registration encouraged as class size is limited to 16 participants.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

Act for the Earth Team

Food Conversations

Anna Newton, Act for the Earth Team

We have strong feelings regarding the food we eat, our attitudes embedded in and informed by the culture we grow up in, the choices we make. Around the world people share food with family, with guests, with strangers. Food may be eaten with hands, sopping up rich broths with *chapatis* or *injeera*, or with chopsticks or forks. Some meals center meat, others grains, beans and vegetables. Regardless of what is on our plate, food is essential to our wellbeing. How often do we stop to express gratitude, to consider how food got to our plates?

When my son was in preschool, his teachers assembled a recipe collection as dictated by the kids. Most of them were brief: "Put macaroni in a pot, stir it and eat it." Some had warnings: "Children should not touch the stove or they might get hurt." My son chose his favorite food, spaghetti, and his recipe started with the words, "First you grow the tomatoes." What followed was a detailed description of how we made spaghetti sauce from fresh tomatoes. I was stunned, up until that moment I did not realize how much of an impression our backyard garden (and time together in the kitchen) had made on my four year old son. He had a clear understanding of where his food came from. Today he shares his love of gardening and cooking with his own children.

Several years ago I was staffing the Act for the Earth table in Parish Hall, and I had a conversation with a gentleman about food: "Isn't it great" he said, "that we are able to raise so much food so inexpensively?" On one level he was right, food costs as a percent of household income have dropped significantly over the last century. Yet food insecurity is rising, as are diet related obesity, heart disease and diabetes. There are hidden costs to our current food system, from concerns over treatment of livestock and farm workers, to environmental impacts and hollowed out rural towns.

Unity's Act for the Earth team is sponsoring a series of monthly food conversations starting September 20. Our children will know exactly where their dinner is coming from that evening, as they harvest our garden to make stone soup for the Wellspring Wednesday dinner (see page 8 for details). You are invited to bring produce from your own garden to help make the soup (bring items to church on September 17). Then, at 7:10 p.m. we invite everyone to take the first steps on a journey to explore our food systems, our food choices, and to think deeply about where our food comes from. We will begin with a short film clip, and allow ample time for participants to share their food stories in small groups. There will surely be many perspectives, and we will practice listening deeply, itself a spiritual practice worth cultivating.

Over the next months we will offer practical tips for reducing food waste, share recipes and rituals, look at food from Black and Indigenous perspectives, work toward a more equitable food system and learn how to live in better balance with our mother earth. It is a deeply spiritual journey, and we hope you will join us!



Gun Sense Team

Join us in September!

Unity's Gun Sense Team will be reconvening in September for what looks to be a most important Minnesota legislative push. With the Minnesota House and Senate, as well as the Governorship, all remaining in Democratic hands, the time is now for some significant sensible gun legislation.

We will be reaching out to our fellow Unitarian Universalists in outstate Minnesota to encourage friends and neighbors and families to speak with their representatives to help make this happen. We know the majority of folks in the state want safer gun laws; now we need to keep that message rolling, loud and clear, to those who can make it happen. Our team will be sharing concrete things *you* can do to help make that a reality, so stay tuned, and stay engaged!

Join us at our monthly Gun Sense Team meetings, the second Thursday of each month, at 3:30 p.m. at Unity Church and on Zoom. If you would like to be on the Gun Sense email list, please sign up online at unityunitarian.org/gun-sense.html.

Evergreen Quilters

Food Shelf

Wow! During the month of July, Unity Church donated 319 pounds of food to Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf. The children's garden has been donating fresh produce and it is greatly appreciated. Thank you, children and garden stewards!

This month the food shelf needs granola bars, fruit bars, cereal, soup, ramen, and mashed potatoes and gravy. Please continue to donate basic school supplies, too.

To donate money for perishable food items visit hallieqbrown.org.



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



COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

Indigenous Justice Team

Getting Involved in Indigenous Justice

Helen M. Pohlig, Indigenous Justice Team

This past spring I participated in a learning circle on Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery. During that program I learned about Makoce Ikikcupi (Land Recovery), an organization formed to reacquire traditional Dakota lands in Minnesota in order to bring Dakota people home and reestablish their spiritual and physical relationship with their homelands. As a “commitment to faithful action” at the end of the learning circle, I joined the Twin Cities Repair Community for Makoce Ikikcupi. The Repair Community is a group of primarily non-indigenous people who act as allies to Makoce Ikikcupi, seeking to repair the immense damage done by white people in stealing Dakota land, destroying Dakota culture and devastating the environment.

On August 5, as part of a group of 50+ members of the repair community, I participated in a work and learn day at Hohwoju Otuwe (Village of Vibrant Growth) in Mountain Lake, Minnesota, one of two villages currently being built by Makoce Ikikcupi. Activities of the day were all guided and directed by Luke and Linda Black Elk who, along with their children, are the designated stewards of the village. We were there to provide labor and support for work being done at the village. We participated on teams that did bark-stripping of building logs, tilling in the year-round greenhouse, weeding in the gardens, removing invasive trees and eradicating invasive weeds from native prairie. There were tasks for all ages and abilities, including the painting of small rocks to look like strawberries (to be used to distract birds away from the real thing). In sessions taught by indigenous people we also had opportunities to learn about edible and medicinal plants, food sovereignty and astronomy.

The day was a great opportunity to make a very small step toward repair (I personally was spraying vinegar solution on invasive thistle after it had been weed-whacked) and to start to build relationship with a group of indigenous people. This sort of relationship-building is part of the reparative justice work to which Unity’s Indigenous Justice Team is committed. It’s critically important that we go to where our partners are, that we extend ourselves rather than expecting them to come to us.

I look forward to participating in these work/learn days in the future and encourage other Unity Church members to join in. We will continue to post notices of these and similar opportunities for involvement in indigenous justice on Unity’s Indigenous Justice webpage: unityunitarian.org/indigenous-justice.html.



Linda Black Elk explains the edible and medicinal value of “plantain weed.” (You probably have it growing in the cracks of your driveway!) The seeds contain psyllium, a natural laxative, and the leaves have anti-inflammatory properties and can be added to salads or stews.



Bark stripping of building logs.

Obama School Team

Thank You! And a Look at the Future...

Now that Barack and Michelle Obama School has closed, we write to thank you, and to let you know about plans the outreach ministry team is making for the future.



First — thank you. Thank you for all the support the congregation has provided over the years for the scholars, staff, and volunteers at Obama School. From tutoring in classrooms, shelving books in the library, and providing support to the teachers, to congregants donating money through the church offerings for grocery store gift cards and special programs — we think it’s safe to say that the school wouldn’t have been the same without us!

And now we turn toward the future and a new relationship with J. J. Hill Magnet Montessori School which will move into the Obama School in two years, after the building renovation is complete. Currently located at the corner of Selby Avenue and Oxford Street, the school serves around 430 scholars (K-6), about half of whom are people of color. Several of us have met with the principal for a tour and conversation about how we might fit in with their program. We look forward to welcoming them in the future by creating a working relationship with them now, and we’re hoping for your help over the next two years.

Stay tuned and look for more information this fall. In the meantime, check out their website at <https://www.spps.org/jjhill> to see the many ways that students and families are engaged in learning and growth.



Is It a Terrier? A City in Australia?

A Philadelphia University?

No! It's the Unity's Journal of the Arts!

Shelley Butler, Library-Bookstall Team



Someone at Unity asked me once, "What's a Cairns?" In case you don't know or remember, it's our annual publication of the art and literary talent of Unity Church. If you are connected to Unity in a meaningful way — you are in Finding Yourself at Unity or in a chalice circle, for example — you can submit to *Cairns* even if you are not a member.

As we get ready to publish Volume 15 this year, I was thinking back to what Editor Lisa Burke wrote in the foreword of Vol. 14; she told the story of a little girl in art class drawing a picture of God. The teacher says that no one knows what God looks like, to which the girl replies, "They will in a minute."

This makes me want to ask: What does God look like to you? Or in other words: What is your story? As Isabel Allende says, "Everyone has a story, the air is full of stories." And each of you have a unique perspective and way to tell your story. So, send us your stories in art, photos, memoir, reflection, fiction, drawing, painting, sculpture, music, prayer, sermon, and poetry.

We on the *Cairns* staff get a lot of credit each year for the beautiful issue, and it is a lot of work to be sure, but the issue is only wonderful and meaningful because you all submit your original work to us. So, get busy people! Find more information and the link to submit on the Unity website, or go here: bit.ly/Cairns15. **Final Deadline: September 27, 2023.**

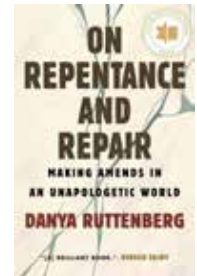
And be sure to check out the **Library and Bookstall** this month. Lots, I mean *lots* of great new books! In fact, if you can't find something you want to read there, let me know!

While in the library, say hello to our wonderful, hardworking, new Library-Bookstall Team co-leader, Lizabeth Bougie, and to the rest of our wonderful, hardworking library volunteers: Linda Fei, Nancy Lundborg, Louise Merriam, and Ron Prieve! Want to see your name in the newsletter? Join the team!

UUA Common Read

On Repentance and Repair: Making Amends in an Unapologetic World by Danya Ruttenberg

Most of us know of harm we have directly caused another person. Many also recognize we have shared in doing harm, perhaps by benefiting from injustice suffered by others. Even as people of faith who wish to make ourselves and our world better, still we may struggle to name and accept our responsibility. Even when we wish to make amends, we can get stuck on how to make things right. This year's UUA Common Read, *On Repentance and Repair* by Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg (Beacon Press, 2022), provides a fresh, transformative perspective on how we make ourselves accountable to others.



As a UUA Common Read selection, this book invites us to follow our own Unitarian Universalist faith into transformative atonement, whether a harm has been done with family or friends, within a congregation or other community, or by sweeping wrongs such as genocide and racial oppression. Common Read details at uua.org/read.

Join us in reading, practice, and discussion.

Repentance and Repair in Our Lives and Relationships
Parts 1 and 2

Saturday, November 4 • 9:00 a.m.-noon

In-person at Unity Church

Led by Rev. Kathleen Rolenz and Rev. Lara Cowtan

Repentance and Repair in Our Lives and Relationships
Part 1 (75 minutes)

Tuesday, November 7 • 7:30–9:00 p.m. (Election Day with polls closing at 8:00)

Online via Zoom (watch for link)

The paperback will be out September 12, please watch for availability at Unity's Bookstall and in Anderson Library. If you find it difficult to read the entire book, we suggest you read chapters 1-4 and 7-8 in preparation for the discussion.

In The Justice Database

The Headwaters Foundation for Justice, headquartered in Minneapolis, is a community organization that prioritizes support of BIPOC. They say, "We use the power of relationships to raise and move money, supporting action that leads to change." In 2023, they partnered with the Bush Foundation to award the Minnesota Bush Prize. bit.ly/JusticeData



PARISH HALL EXHIBIT / FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

September Parish Hall Artists

Laura Burlis

My main medium is polymer clay. I've been entranced by this substance for around fourteen years. Many viewers assume that my polymer clay images are painted. My use of the medium feels like a cross between using clay as solid paint, and cutting and assembling the clay like a mosaic.

The polymer clay lends itself to making highly detailed designs. Just as the design of a millefiori cane can be "reduced" ever smaller and smaller, concentrating its detail and contrast, I like to distill the essence of a landscape to its jewel-like essentials.

The recurring themes I play with are landscape and nature, especially seasonal change and universal cycles. I have a deep artistic interest in plants, climate, geography, ecosystems, and astrology. I am fascinated by the relationship of the microcosm to the macrocosm. I return often to a Mandala form—the circular form of the mandala echoes the circular form of the millefiori cane, and vice versa.

I also combine the clay with other mediums: Bottle caps! Paint! Driftwood! I mix mediums up — painting on objects ranging from pianos to rocks. And I glue stuff together — from old jewelry to plastic toys. Nothing is safe from my artistic impulses.

In each piece, I try to express a particular feeling, and I hope that this in some form also expresses the universality of the interconnectedness of all things.



Maureen Carlson

My artwork follows two paths, both of which feature the human form. One path is about humor and the comfort of recognizing oneself in the outstretched arms or impish grin of a whimsical clay character. These figures delight the child self through which my creativity flows. On the other path I use these surrogate clay selves to explore questions about perspective, spirituality and authenticity. I create these clay characters and they, in turn, help create me through the resulting mirroring and internal dialogue. It's a circle, but it's not a closed circle. I believe that's the magic of art, it's potential to draw both the creator and the viewer into a shared circle of inquiry and wonderment. This interplay of creativity and contemplation is possible due to inspiration and materials received from nature, found objects, lyrical writings and soulful conversations.



Fellowship Groups

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

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

Caregivers Group meets on the third Thursday of the month.

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

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

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

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

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

Men's Conversation Group meets on Zoom Monday, September 4 and 18, from 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Men's Retirement Circle: Monday, September 11 and 25, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

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

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

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

Unity Book Club meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m. September 12: *Rough Sleepers* by Tracy Kidder

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

Young Adult Group (ages 18-35) — all are welcome. Email kp@unityunitarian.org



Pitter-pattering Questions

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

Rev. KP Hong, Minister of Faith Formation

In his travels examining American society in 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville wondered about the trajectory of the new social state emerging from a democratic revolution at work since the arrival of the Puritans. The colonial church building, doubling as both congregational worship space and town meeting house, captured the social imaginary of the established order, a symbiosis of interlocking economic, familial, educational, religious, and political spheres that bound people together and assigned roles in collective action. "Among democratic peoples, on the contrary, all citizens are independent and weak," Tocqueville reasoned, "they can hardly do anything by themselves, and no one among them can compel his fellows to lend him their help. So they fall into impotence if they do not learn to help each other freely." (*Democracy in America*) But the people of this emerging democracy had indeed learned to help each other freely, through a surprising new social technology designed for this task: the *voluntary association* that created and sustained social bonds. "Wherever, at the head of a new undertaking, you see in France the government, and in England, a great lord, count on seeing in the United States, an association." But this social imaginary would begin to unravel, and continues to unravel, a process of disestablishment traceable from its seed in the (dis)establishment clause of the First Amendment of the Constitution, to the fading status and membership across the spectrum of voluntary associations from the Boy Scouts and Masons to the Junior League and countless benevolent societies and civic organizations, most assuredly including denominations and congregations. Now a third

decade into the twenty-first century, every successive study documents the decline in religious affiliation. In 2018, the "nones" became the most common identity regarding religious life. In 2020, the number of Americans religiously affiliated with church/mosque/synagogue fell below fifty percent for the first time in eighty years of Gallup polling, across lines of race, ethnicity, region, faith tradition, and political party; a decline only further accelerated by the pandemic.

But what if beneath the *decline* visible on the surface, the complex underlying currents point to an *unraveling*? An unraveling of affiliation and voluntary association in favor of individualized identities. Surely there are dimensions of unraveling to be celebrated, like unraveling the projects of white supremacy and settlement. Surely the unraveling of religious strictures in favor of individual expressivist piety – the unaffiliated religion of personal commitment and devotion over against collective forms – offers a more authentic religious identity celebrated in a liberal, non-creedal tradition. Yet individualized identity remains mercurial and vulnerable, for no one makes themselves on their own. And the naïve promise that "anyone can be whomever they want to be" falls unevenly along lines of race, class, gender, sexuality, immigration status, and other markers that differentiate power relations in our society. The gains and losses of unraveling have never been evenly distributed.

What if the unraveling of affiliation points to underlying forces of *individualization* that trades in the rhetoric of freedom and authenticity even as it conceals the conditions under which it operates? Not *individualism* and our belief in the individual as the basic unit of society with rights to self-expression and self-

determination, but *individualization* that illuminates powerful social processes that relegate individuals as the basic unit of social reproduction, leaving individuals to assume risks and reap rewards in an "entrepreneurship of self" that waives any need for social safety nets. Unfettered individuals who are both free and abandoned to authoring their lives without necessary means to do so. Is not individualization everywhere about us, from deregulating industries and transferring risk to individuals to shifting health and pension benefits to individual accounts; from record number of children schooled at home to cutting public funding for education and passing costs to individual students whose education is framed as a private good; from the epidemic of loneliness to ways we increasingly "expect more from technology and less from each other"? (Sherry Turkle) Individualization happens to us beyond our choosing, socializing our youth into disconnected individuals who will never question their admission or rejection from Harvard as based on anything other than merit, our doctrinal basis for status differentiation.

In the unraveling of deep connections, of institutions and communities and narratives that once wove together our collective lives, what social imaginaries are we seeding in our children's dreams that will open possibilities? What practices will help them discern the contours of history that they can grab hold of? And from what kind of relationships will they experience an unshakable connection that grounds them in hope and faith and courage to dare imagining their world otherwise?

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

MUSIC MINISTRY



Music Notes

Ahmed Anzaldúa
Director of Music Ministries

*If you wish to see the immensity of
heaven and sea,
Reflecting the sunlight like a prism,
Tear out my heart, come and bow
To the vastness of my pain.*

These are the opening lines of “*Rasga o Coração*” (Tear Out My Heart), by the Brazilian poet Catulo da Paixão Cearense, set to music by Heitor Villa-lobos in his *Choros* No. 10 for symphony orchestra and choir. Next Spring I will be conducting the Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra in a program of Latin American music, and the centerpiece of the concert will be this amazing work from Brazil. Unity’s choirs will be part of this collaboration, coming together with singers from Border CrosSing, the Minnesota Chorale, and various other ensembles in the Twin Cities for the performance. I am very excited to have the chance to conduct this once-in-a-lifetime piece of music.

This coming church year I am equally excited for the regular participation of Unity’s newly-formed instrumental combo and pick-up choirs in worship. I am excited to welcome our new Youth Choir director, Shekela Wanyama, and also excited to play the organ more frequently in worship. I am looking forward to our Christmas pageant, Foote Sunday, and Tolling of the Bells, to see our Threshold Choir grow and live into its mission, to meet our next Artist-in-Residence and to continue to discover the many musical talents in our congregation.

All of these ways of making music could not be further apart and yet, Unity Church is a place where both a band playing pop tunes, professional singers at the top of their career, beginners taking their first steps into music, and a monumental symphonic choir and orchestra can coexist, collaborate, and be equally at home as part of the spiritual life of the congregation. This is what I love about my job and this community, and a culture that I hope we all continue to nurture. It is unique and lovely, and I have not encountered anything quite like it elsewhere.

What I have found over time is that there is no dull music. People are full of wonder, and what is music if not people? The people that create it, that perform it, and those that listen, have listened, and will listen to it, each person a universe. Like the poem says: every heart contains the immensity of heaven and sea, and a vastness of pain. What I love most about music is that you will always find wonder if you dig for it.

Sing with a Unity Church Choir

Rehearsals begin in September!
Email ahmed@unityunitarian.org to get connected.

Unity Choir • Rehearsal

Thursdays, 7:30-9:15 p.m., Parish Hall

Unity Choir is a large choral ensemble (typically between 60 and 80 voices) and is the strong component on which Unity's choral program is built; a vital and energetic presence in our community. New members interested in applying will have a brief interview with the director and will be asked to sing a few warm-up sequences and short tonal memory exercises.

Women's Ensemble

Rehearsals: Sundays, 10:15-10:50 a.m., Foote Room

Women’s Ensemble is a continually growing and evolving group (typically between 40 and 60 voices) that emerged organically at a Women's retreat at Unity Church. While this group emerged and continues to function as a space that supports and empowers women, all soprano and alto singers are encouraged to apply for Unity's Women's Ensemble, including transfeminine, transmasculine, and non-binary as well as cis male sopranos and altos. New members interested in applying will have a brief interview with the director and will be asked to sing a few warm-up sequences and short tonal memory exercises.

Unity Singers

Rehearsals: Tuesdays, 7:30-9:15 p.m., Foote Room

Unity Singers is Unity's auditioned, chamber choral ensemble (typically between 20 and 28 voices.) Each singer’s involvement is built on a passion for singing and for ministry through music. This ensemble has an outstanding trajectory of representing Unitarian Universalist music locally and nationally. Due to the requirement for independent learning and the pace of rehearsal and performance, membership in Unity Singers requires a yearly audition, scheduled individually with the director.

Children's Choir

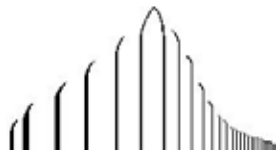
Rehearsals: Sundays, 10:15 - 10:55 a.m., Choir Room

Unity Children's choir is a vibrant group of singers comprised of children from grades one through five. Rehearsal activities are focused on hands-on music making. In addition to singing the children experience music through movement, games, playing instruments, reading music and learning about the elements of music. Contact Kathleen Radspinner, Children’s Choir Director, at kathleenr395@gmail.com.

Youth Choir

Rehearsals: Sundays, 10:15-10:55 a.m., Ames Chapel

Unity's Youth Choir for grades six through nine builds on the Children's Choir and responds to the interest and musical skills of Unity's youth and families. Youth Choir is a primarily-vocal group also welcoming instrumentalists to join in the ensemble. No prior musical experience is required.




UNITY CHURCH-UNITARIAN

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

REV. KP HONG, MINISTER OF FAITH FORMATION
BARBARA HUBBARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
REV. KATHLEEN ROLENZ, INTERIM SENIOR MINISTER
LOUISE LIVESAY-AL, CHAIR, BOARD OF TRUSTEES

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
TWIN CITIES MN
PERMIT NO. 1141

**TIME SENSITIVE
MATERIAL**



Cairns
The Unity Church Journal
of the Arts
Vol. 15, 2023

**Submit NOW
thru
September 27, 2023**

To submit or learn more go to:
unityunitarian.org/cairns

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?
SEND US YOUR:
ART
STORIES
PHOTOS
POEMS
FICTION
MEMOIR
REFLECTIONS
DRAWINGS
PAINTINGS
MUSIC
AND MORE!

"EVERYONE HAS A STORY, THE AIR IS FULL OF STORIES." -ISABEL ALLENDE

Unity Church-Unitarian

Antiracism Literacy Partners

Wednesday October 4, 2023 at 7:10 p.m.

On Zoom. Register here: bit.ly/ALPoc423

The only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it - and then DISMANTLE IT. -Ibram X Kendi



Join a Chalice Circle! Details on page 9!